

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 4: The Life and Writings of Solomon**  
*Direction and Drift – Proverbs*

**Message 5 – Lady Folly**  
**Proverbs 1-9**

**Introduction**

In the first 9 chapters of Proverbs we listen in as a father urgently admonishes his son to move from being young and naïve to being mature and wise. In the process, the son is warned of the danger of drifting into foolishness. Lady Wisdom – the personification of God’s true principles for life – is calling out to the young man to heed her voice and follow her advice. At the same time, Lady Folly – the personification of the voice of temptation to stray from God’s path – is seductively calling the young man to come her way and enjoy her delicacies. There is a *battle* for the *life* of the young man. Will he move from youthful naiveté toward wisdom? Or, will he be lured toward foolishness and eventually become a scoffer who openly mocks God’s ways? The opening father-son discussion ends in ch.9 with the two “women” making their final appeal, before the book of wise sayings begins (chs.10-31).

**Who is Lady Folly?**

In the book of Proverbs, “Folly” is not really a person; rather, a body of deceptive principles that influence common behaviors inherent to the human condition. Folly starts as the seed of foolishness and the nature of sin: self-centeredness. Without training, teaching + example, correction and the miracle of regeneration through believing in God and embracing His Son and His truth, (the fear of the Lord), the potential for the progression from 'simple' (naïve) to 'fool' to 'scoffer' (mocker) is probable. 'Lady Wisdom' is a strict teacher that celebrates and lifts up those who follow her training; but in contrast 'Lady Folly' is a tempter who allures with her schemes, with no intention to lead people to a place of joy and freedom, only to bondage and death.

**Three stages of Foolishness**

*"Folly (foolishness) is bound up in the heart of the child"...* (Proverbs 22:15). Every infant starts out life as naïve and deficient in judgment – lacking good sense and understanding.

Proverbs refers to them as a 'simpleton' or 'foolish'. The seeds of foolishness are rooted and imprinted into human nature at birth. They are driven to germinate and grow by the stimulation and activation of self-centered desires, the senses, varieties of temptations, and by current cultural values. Without heeding God's wisdom to guide and correct, (by parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, Biblical wisdom, literature, wholesome friendships etc.), he (she) will grow up and become a fool and, worse, a scoffer.

**1. The Simple (naïve):** Easily fooled, gullible, aimless, drifting into temptation without realizing it.

*"How long will you simple ones love your simple ways?" (1:22).*

*"For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them" (1:32).*

*"The simple believe anything..." (14:15).*

From birth onwards, both 'Wisdom' and 'Folly' pursue the simpleton. The simple one must choose to listen to wisdom and learn discernment, and grow in a myriad of skills. Also he (she) must become a follower of God's ways in faith and morality, even when the voice of Folly is calling in the opposite direction.

Eg: A child has to be taught not to be allured by a stranger to come over and accept a piece of candy. A youth needs to be taught not to be allured by an invitation to join in a night of secretive behavior with friends or the opposite sex.

If the "simple" person does not move toward wisdom, they will drift into the next stage . . .

*"The simple inherit folly..." (14:18).*

**2. The Foolish:** 3 different Hebrew words are used to describe the fool: **Kesyl** – One who is dull and stupid - stubborn by choice. **Ewiyl** – One who is corrupt, morally perverted and unreasonable. **Nabal** – One who is like a stubborn brute or animal. (eg. Nabal, Abigail's husband, was true to his name - 1Samuel 25.). Generally, with the fool there is no hunger for wisdom or understanding; they cannot imagine they are wrong; their mind is closed to God and to reason. The fool within us manifests in all types of behaviors and issues in life.

*"The way of the fool seems right to him... A fool shows his annoyance at once" (12:15,16).*

***"A wise woman builds her house, but a foolish woman tears hers down with her own hands" (14:1).***

***"He who trusts in himself is a fool... " (28:26).***

***"It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel" (20:3).***

**3. The Scoffer:** One who has contempt for wisdom and correction; the "fool" has now turned into an arrogant opponent or troublemaker, and one who desires to make followers. A scoffer is usually proud and toxic and wants to spread strife if they don't agree with or respect the leader (6:19).

***"He (the Lord) mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble" (3:34).*** [This proverb is repeated twice in N.T. at James 4:6 and 1Peter 5:5. Obviously a very important principle.]

***"Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man and he will love you" (9:8).***

***"A wise son accepts his father's discipline; but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke" (13:1).***

***"A scoffer resents correction; he will not consult the wise" (15:12).***

Lady Folly's goal is to take a simple person (one lacking understanding) and, over time, turn them into a scoffer (one actively and vocally opposed to wisdom). This is one reason we must deal seriously with any seeds of folly that might be present in our lives. Folly is a cancer that grows until it steals away our very lives. Is there some aspect of folly that needs to be uprooted from your life today? Cry out for wisdom. God will give it to you.

### **Symptoms of Foolishness**

How might we know if we are on the path of folly? There are many symptoms/areas of life where foolishness manifests (words, wealth, work, family, morality, etc); but a few key symptoms stand out as the most important:

#### **1. Choosing *not* to fear the Lord.**

***"They hated knowledge and did not choose the fear the Lord" (1:29).***

If "*the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord,*" then the first step toward folly is to stop fearing (having reverence for) the Lord.

The minute a person begins to say “No” to God and His word, they are stepping onto the path of folly. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote these words to the people in Rome:

***“For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools . . . (Romans 1:21,22).***

## **2. Neglecting wise counsel.**

Once a person has turned away from God, they will begin to turn a deaf ear to any people who represent the voice of God in their life.

***“Because I (Wisdom) called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof” (1:24,25; also 17:10).***

It is common for one on the path of folly to begin to *cut off relationship* with those who represent the voice of wisdom. Then, the next step is the obvious one:

## **3. Walking with the wrong crowd.**

The fool will surround himself/herself with those who will affirm the decision to reject God and His wisdom. He/she will become the *companion* of fools (or an adherent to opposing views).

***“He who walks with the wise will become wise; but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (13:20).***

## **4. Seeing folly as enticing and fun.**

The final symptom of the decline into folly is when the person comes to the settled conviction that *folly is life*. He/she begins to celebrate the life of folly, and even become an advertisement for it.

***“Folly is a delight to him who lacks sense; but a man of understanding walks straight” (15:21).***

A commercial came on TV depicting a crowd of young, successful, people in a bar, partying through the entire night with the help of vodka. The message was clear: Stay up all night with your friends, saturate yourself in vodka, and you will be happy and free. Another ad invites us more subtly to embrace views that are culturally popular, but opposed to God’s Word. Do you hear the voice of Lady Folly calling out from your TV screen?

## Consequences of Foolishness

Lady Folly *always* holds out the promise of a better, more satisfying life. Yet, she *always* leads us in stages toward death.

### 1. Self-destructive behavior.

*“These men lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves” (1:18).*

*“But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death” (8:36).*

### 2. Becoming increasingly enslaved to harmful behavior.

*“The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast” (5:22).*

### 3. “Death.”

*“But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead” (9:18).*

One of the saddest funerals I ever conducted was for a young man who died of a drug overdose. It all started so subtly. He joined a sports team and soon was invited to a party. The other athletes offered him some marijuana to lighten up his spirits. He accepted. It was not long before he was offered heavier drugs to heighten his mood. Soon, he was addicted to heroin. He went through detox during his time in a detention center, and things seemed like they were moving in the right direction. He even turned his broken life over to Jesus. But upon his release, he ran into an old “friend” who enticed him with some heroin. He accepted . . . and overdosed . . . and died. Standing over his body at the hospital, with parents weeping by his side, was one of the most sobering moments of my life. Here was a talented, handsome, winsome young man with his life still ahead of him. He was gone ... thanks to the voice of Lady Folly.

## The Two Rival Feasts of Wisdom and Folly

The 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Proverbs is the final charge from the father to the son before the actual proverbs begin. The two voices – Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly – will be competing for the young man’s attention and devotion. He must make the choice as to which voice he will heed, and which path he will walk.

*“WISDOM has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set*

*her table. She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, ‘Let all who are simple come to my house!’ To those who have no sense she says, ‘Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight’” (9:1-6).*

*“FOLLY is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way, ‘Let all who are simple come to my house!’ To those who have no sense she says, ‘Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!’ But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead” (13-18).*

The following chart compares the appeals of Wisdom and Folly:

#### LADY WISDOM

1. Wisdom (one with dignity).
2. Builds her house w/7 pillars.
3. Prepares an elegant meal.
4. Serves wine and meat.
5. Invites all who are simple.
6. Invites w/strength & dignity.
7. Promises life.

#### LADY FOLLY

1. Undisciplined/without knowledge.
2. Sits at the door of her house.
3. Entices to a delicious feast.
4. Serves stolen water, with secrecy.
5. Invites all “on the straight path.”
6. Invites with sensuality & flattery.
7. Hides the outcome – death.

Lady Folly never lets you know ahead of time that the consequences of your choices will inevitably take you into bondage *after* the adventure is over. Folly is really the personified *evil lie* that comes from *the Evil One*, who spurned God and His holy order and tried to overthrow Him. (See the link below for a detailed explanation of the fall of Satan – Lucifer. Here we see the origin of folly.)

<http://christianity.com/theology/theological-faq/how-did-lucifer-fall-and-become-satan-11557519.html>

#### How do I avoid Folly?

Genesis 3:6 is where humanity chose to doubt God and His loving wisdom, and follow the Serpent's counterfeit invitation to ‘wisdom

and freedom.’ This is the theme and ongoing struggle of humanity recorded in the entire Bible, and the story of humanity till today. So, HOW do we escape from the path of Folly and walk in the way of Wisdom?

**1. Humility.** We must recognize that we are ALL just steps away from choosing to follow Lady Folly because that is what comes most naturally. The road less traveled is the way of Wisdom. We need to humbly acknowledge *daily* that it takes God's strength and grace to keep us on His straight path. As the old hymn puts it: *Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. Take my heart, Lord, and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above.*

**2. Discernment.** We must learn to recognize the voice of Lady Folly when we hear it, and to know *where* that voice is seeking to take us. She will call out in many arenas of life to those who lack convictions. At the same time, we must fill our minds with God’s *truth* (wisdom) so that we have a strong filter to sift the various messages that are being hurled at us. The New Testament book of Hebrews puts it this way:

***“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).***

**3. Seek wisdom.** It is often said that: “the best defense is a good offense.” The best way to ward off folly is to *pursue wisdom* with your whole heart. Seek teachers and mentors that can impart skills for living in all areas of your life – work, wealth management, relationships, health, hobbies, education, retirement plans, etc.

***“For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:3-5).***

**4. Trust God’s LOVE for you.** The LIE says that God's ways are NOT good for us, and our OWN ways that feel and seem right and true. At the deepest root, there is this question: *Does God really love me? Does He want what’s best for me?* The more that God’s love for you becomes a settled conviction in your heart, the easier it will be to heed His voice (the call of Lady Wisdom) and to walk in His ways.

***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).***