



## TWO VOICES: THE WORLD OR WISDOM? Proverbs 7 & 8

November 4, 2018 | ED UNDERWOOD

*For whoever finds [wisdom] finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord. (Proverbs 8:35)* Proverbs may be the most practical book in the Bible because it teaches wisdom, or skillful living, in everyday life. In principles, stories, and short pithy statements, Solomon and a few other contributors offer about nine hundred proverbs—an inspired guidebook to life. It takes only a few seconds to read one of God's proverbs, but the dedicated Christian will spend a lifetime living out the implications of that truth. Not surprisingly, everything hinges on your attitude toward God: The key to skillful living is fear of the Lord.

Following the introduction, Solomon writes ten exhortations, each beginning with, “My son” (1:8-9:18). His messages present wisdom in the context of a conversation between father and son, parent and child. In chapters 7 and 8 Solomon uses personification to help us understand the two voices calling to us throughout life. The cry of this world's reasoning is personified as a seductress, leading her victims to ruin. The cry of God's wisdom is personified as a faithful and virtuous woman, leading her suitors to life abundant:

**Don't be seduced by this world's reasoning; listen to God's wisdom!**

Personification is a figure of speech that gives an idea, object, or animal qualities of a person. Solomon skillfully uses personification to contrast the two messages we hear through life—the messages of the world's reasoning vs. the messages of God's wisdom.

I. There are two voices vying for our attention as we walk through life: The seductive voice of this evil world's reasoning and the clear, open, and honest voice of God's wisdom (7-8).

A. Solomon, personifying the world's reasoning as an adulteress, exposes her tactics and alerts us to beware of her ambush (Chapter 7).

1. Prologue: Solomon begs his son to embrace wisdom as he would a faithful wife (sister, 4—personified in chapter 8) who will protect him from the world's reasoning, which he should view as an adulteress (immoral woman, 5—personified in chapter 7). (1-5)

2. Solomon compares the naiveté of those tempted by this world's reasoning to a young man meeting an adulterous woman on the street—she lurks on every corner looking for the gullible (6-12).

3. Solomon compares the process of succumbing to this world's reasoning to a young man succumbing to the tactics of an adulteress (13-21): Sudden sensual attack (13), justification of her objective (14), flattery (15), visualization of the pleasure (16), proposition (17), reassurance of safety (19-20), and finally—the kill (21-23). Note: The seven stages of her tactics are from Tom Constable, notes on Proverbs.

4. Epilogue: Solomon begs his son to avoid the living hell of listening to this world's reasoning as he would the embrace of an adulteress.

B. Solomon, personifying God's wisdom as a virtuous woman, exalts her merits and encourages us to listen to her to experience life in the way God meant (Chapter 8).

1. Prologue: Solomon reminds his son that wisdom too cries out to him, but her words are not secretive—they are open, honest, excellent, true, righteous, plain, and more valuable than riches (1-11)

2. Solomon gives voice to wisdom calling her followers to true success and blessing in life (12-21).

3. Solomon gives voice to wisdom's claim that she was valuable to the Lord in creation—timeless truth of the universe (22-31).

4. Epilogue: Solomon gives voice to wisdom's plea to listen and promise of the blessing of quality life and favor from the Lord (32-36).

II. A few observations about the two voices calling for our attention and devotion:

A. Though the two voices are everywhere, there are "neighborhoods" where the seductive voice of this world's sinful reasoning dominates the streets and "neighborhoods" where the clear and timeless voice of God's wisdom dominates the streets. Which of these "neighborhoods" are you "hanging out" in? The naïve young man's first mistake was turning down the street of the adulteress one evening.

B. The seductive tactics of this world's reasoning are clear (7 steps above)—whether it's materialism, sexual immorality, laziness, godless thinking, fame, or self-centered behaviors—see if you can identify how the world has seduced you, or is seducing you today.

C. There are two voices in this world: The inundating and deceptive voice of this world's sinful reasoning and the liberating and honest voice of God's wisdom. Which voice do you listen to the most? What is one change you can make to ensure that you spend more time listening to God's wise voice?

D. Some insights to help you disciple those you shepherd and love toward wisdom (from conversations with Bill Thrall): One of the greatest gifts you can give to a young believer is to provide a safe place (opportunity) where they can disclose what is true about the sin that is in them and where they can disclose what is true about the sin that has been done against them, to provide a place where they do not have to hide anything.

#### NURTURING WISE LIVING IN A WICKED WORLD:

- Maturing is a process. When nurturing someone make sure not to push them beyond the pace it takes for their character to mature. Right answers do not equate to right choices.
- IMPORTANT! Young believers and maturing leaders will adapt themselves to your expectations. Whenever we allow someone else to live according to our expectations, we are thwarting their maturity. We want to be about teaching them truth about who they are. And we want to be teaching them truth about who God says they are and what His purposes are for them.
- Spiritual maturity takes place when we actually learn to teach others to believe what God says is already true about them. Spiritual maturity takes place when people are taught to believe and live out of who God says they are. It isn't just that we know what the Bible says about who we are in Christ. It's that we actually believe who we are in Christ is true for us. The godly actually believe who they are in Christ and live out of it.
- As the humble come under His influence and obey His truth, they experience a suffering, a process that God uses to mature them. You can see if a person is growing in this process because God enlarges their sphere of influence. It is the obedient who are implementing the purposes of God. And that is God's process of maturing.
- The mature delight in the influence of others. The immature compete with the influence of others. (Saul was spiritually immature because he could not enjoy the benefit of David's influence.)
- The mature pursue the enriching and releasing of someone else into their destiny. In this pursuit, it is critical that we learn not to manipulate our influence, to retain position or control the expectations of those who follow us.
- The mature are careful never to be tempted by the power that can be inherent in position. Immature leaders will move to the power in their position because they do not have confidence in the influence of their person. Influence is in our person, not in our position. Mature leaders learn how to receive power; they do not pursue it.