

Wisdom's Correction

COMPETING CALLS • PART 2 • PROVERBS 9:7-12

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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We'd like to welcome you to the Four Lakes Church of Christ this morning! If you are visiting with us today, we are especially glad that you are here, and we hope that you will take a moment to fill out a visitor card online. The QR code is on the bulletin (on the wall, right inside the front door), and the web address for that is very simple: www.fourlakescoc.org/visitor.

Once again, we have an opportunity to collect commodities for Shults-Lewis Child and Family Services, a residential care and treatment facility for children with severe emotional and behavioral issues. As we have learned in the past, the average resident at Shults-Lewis has a father who is not in the picture due to death or prison, and a mother who maybe in prison herself or going through rehab for something. Shults-Lewis is operated by faithful members of the Lord's church, and we consider it to be a mission opportunity. We have visited down there, and it seems to be a solid program. For years, we have collected various items to be picked up during the first week of December, and this year they are asking us to collect CANNED PINEAPPLE. They have a huge pantry that's basically like a small grocery store, where the houseparents come through to get their groceries. And when they get canned pineapple this next year, that's on us! They also collect old cell phones, used inkjet and toner cartridges, as well as the "Box Tops for Education." They could also use help with "perishables" (funds to be used for milk, and meat, and fresh vegetables), about \$500 a week. If you can provide an entire week, great! But anything helps. We could also use some sturdy boxes with lids for the canned pineapple. Thank you for helping with this!

We are here this morning, to share the good news that Jesus the Son of God came to this earth to save us. He died in our place on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up on the third day. We obey this good news by turning to God in obedient faith, confessing our faith in Jesus as the Christ, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. We do have several examples this week, starting with an update from the church in Honolulu. They say,

Rejoice church for our new sister in Christ, Jewel. Jewel decided one day to change the music she listened to. She shared that she was not into podcasts but while in the process of finding wholesome and good music, she decided to look for a Christian podcast. Of all the hundreds on Spotify, she found "The Authentic Christian" podcast from the [Gospel Broadcasting Network](http://www.gospelbroadcastingnetwork.com). She said, "The name stood out to me." She listened and she ended up being in contact with Aaron

Gallagher of the Authentic Christian Podcast. They studied the word of God together which led to Jewel's decision to obey the gospel. This morning, I (Lima) received the call from Aaron to meet Jewel and to baptize her into Christ. Church, this is the work we are called to do for the Lord. Working together in truth to win souls to Christ. Praise God for Jewel's tender heart and her decision to follow Christ. Sister Bernice and brother Iona (her husband) were there to witness the baptism along with everyone who was at Ala Moana beach park. And then, we went to Liliha Bakery to for delicious meal and talk story. Mahalo to our sister Susan for sponsoring the meal.

Winning souls requires the church to work together. This is one example. To God be the Glory!

Great news from Hawaii this morning!

Another baptism that caught my eye this week came from my old supervisor in the Office of Public Information down at Freed-Hardeman University. I was a photographer and darkroom technician back then (30 years ago now), and I pretty much took my assignments from Micah Brinkley. He is now the CEO and Executive Director of a children's home down in Arkansas. He posted a few days ago and says that "...Alexis, one of our young ladies at CHI, put on Christ in baptism. We are thankful for her decision to be a follower of Christ. We love the idea of signing the wall beside the church baptistry with her name and the date of her baptism." I have never seen that before, but what an interesting idea! I don't know whether we will ever do that here, but how neat to be able to look at that wall and to see those names down through the years.

And then we have some good news out of Ukraine this morning. About a week ago, we got an update from Mark Posey (a preacher from Alabama who spends a lot of time in Ukraine), and he says, "Four baptisms in Ukraine today. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!" A few days later, he posted again and says, "Two more baptisms in Ukraine. Praise God! This is Marina Kryuchkova and her eldest daughter Nastya. Welcome them to the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Slavic baptized them today." Great news from Ukraine, and we share all of this to remind us what it means to obey the gospel, and if you would like to do what these people have done, we invite you to get in touch, and we would love to study with you. Our contact information is on the front of the bulletin each week. Or you can simply either call or text me at 608-224-0274.

This morning, I'd like for us to return to our study of Proverbs 9, which is a small part of an ongoing very sporadic series of lessons from the Proverbs! In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon is basically warning his sons, "Don't do stupid stuff!" But instead, as they grow older, he wants them to make wise decisions. And this is what we see from King Solomon, continuing in Proverbs 9, as he presents the choice between wisdom and foolishness as two women offering competing invitations to a dinner. Last week, we looked at Lady Wisdom's invitation to dinner. The venue itself is stable and secure, the dinner is lavish, the invitation is calm and rational – aimed at those who are simple (or open-minded), and the meal itself is quite appealing with some amazing benefits.

Well, next week, we hope to look at the dinner invitation that comes from the foolish woman. But today, right in the middle of this chapter, we have another issue we need to deal with. Last week, you might remember how Lady Wisdom aims her invitation particularly at those who are simple, and we noted that all are welcome, but that she is especially looking for those who are open-minded. She's looking for those who are willing to learn. Well, in verses 7-12, King Solomon elaborates on this a bit. As this invitation goes out, some are willing to consider it, but others have already made up their minds; others have already accepted the invitation from foolishness. In verses 7-12, King Solomon explains to his sons how to distinguish between the two, between those who are open-minded and those who are stubbornly ignorant. This is an important life skill, especially for

those who may reign as future kings. But also, as important as this skill may be, these young men must also understand how to determine whether they personally are open-minded and willing to learn. And as we are about to discover, the determining factor here is how we respond to correction. Obviously, we really need to be able to give correction, but perhaps even more importantly, we must be able to receive correction, because, many times, how we respond to correction demonstrates either our wisdom or our lack of it.

Today, then, we continue in Proverbs 9 by looking at WISDOM'S CORRECTION (in verses 7-12), and as we look at this paragraph, I'd like for us to notice Wisdoms' correction of those who are scoffers as opposed to what happens when Wisdom corrects those who are truly wise. Let's notice how King Solomon distinguishes between the two in Proverbs 9:7-12,

- ⁷ *He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself,
And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself.*
- ⁸ *Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you,
Reprove a wise man and he will love you.*
- ⁹ *Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser,
Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.*
- ¹⁰ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*
- ¹¹ *For by me your days will be multiplied,
And years of life will be added to you.*
- ¹² *If you are wise, you are wise for yourself,
And if you scoff, you alone will bear it.*

In this paragraph, then, we have a description of what happens when wisdom offers a correction – both to the foolish (the scoffers) and to the wise.

I. **Let's start where Solomon starts, by describing what happens when WISDOM CORRECTS THOSE WHO ARE STUBBORNLY FOOLISH.**

And that's my summary of what a "**scoffer**" is. A "**scoffer**" is someone who is stubbornly foolish. The word itself has been translated elsewhere as "**scorn**," or "**mock**," or "**deride**." It's the idea of making fun of somebody. The Message (by Eugene Peterson) is more of a paraphrase than an actual translation, and he has Solomon warning against reasoning with an "**arrogant cynic**." That's the idea here: We have a guy who is truly foolish, he needs correction, but he stubbornly refuses to receive that correction. In fact, Solomon warns his sons that whoever "**corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself**." Or, going back to The Message, "**If you reason with an arrogant cynic, you'll get slapped in the face; confront bad behavior and get a kick in the shins. So don't waste your time on a scoffer; all you'll get for your pains is abuse**." Interesting! Again, half those words aren't actually in the text itself, but this is the idea here.

Back in the NASB (in verse 7), "**He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself**." The word "**dishonor**" is translated in other passages as "**shame**," "**dishonor**," or "**disgrace**." It's the idea of being dismissed as unimportant, "brushed off," we might say. In the second half of verse 7, Solomon warns that "**he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself**." So, it's not just getting dismissed, but there may be some "**insults**" involved. The word translated here as "**insults**" has been translated in other passages as "**blemish**" or "**defect**." It's a word that was sometimes used to refer to a sacrifice that had something wrong with it. The people were

forbidden from offering a sacrifice with a **“defect.”** If a wolf attacked your flock and ripped a leg off of one of your sheep, you couldn’t say, “Well, let’s give that one to the Lord!” No, that sheep now has a **“defect,”** and can no longer be offered as a sacrifice. And here, Solomon warns that if you dare reprove a wicked man, that wicked man may cause you to be defective; that wicked man may very well maim you for offering that reproof. To **“reprove,”** by the way, is to make a judgment, to make a decision about somebody’s behavior. And I think we have noted this a number of times through the years: These days, it seems the only sin we can commit in the eyes of the world is the sin of judging somebody else’s behavior. I may be involved in all kinds of aberrant behavior, and the world is fine with just about anything...until I speak up concerning somebody else’s behavior. At that point, I have committed the mortal sin of “judging,” which opens me up to being judged myself. This is what Solomon is warning about here. If we dare correct a scoffer, we are inviting dishonor and insults upon ourselves. In verse 8, we are pretty much begging to be hated.

The reason for this, I believe, is that the truly foolish person pretty much loves being foolish! And if anyone dares offer any kind of correction, the reaction is often, “You can’t judge me.” And the idea is, “You cannot restrain me. How dare you try to prevent me from living my life the way I want to live it!” They are callous and irreverent and will actively ridicule anyone who offers any kind of correction. This past Friday, I was driving through the intersection of HWY PD and Verona Road and pulled up behind a minivan with the bumper sticker, “ONLY DOG CAN JUDGE ME.” I have definitely been judged by our dog before (especially when I am eating bacon and not sharing). I laughed out loud when I saw this. But the reference is to the idea that “Only God can judge me.” That’s a scary thought, isn’t it? I’d much rather be judged (or corrected) by somebody here and now than by God at some point in the future. I was judging the dirtiness of this person’s car, but I thought it was probably best to not say anything. Some people just do not appreciate being judged.

Well, in verses 7-8, King Solomon is warning his sons: Be careful with these people! Be very cautious in offering any kind of rebuke. And the reason is: Not everybody appreciates being corrected! In fact, many will retaliate. So, be careful! Make some judgments before making judgments. Perhaps we’re thinking about what Jesus said in the context of judgment in Matthew 7. In Matthew 7, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes that famous statement, **“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”** Well,

this right here is how many people read this passage: They don’t! In fact, verse 1 may be the only verse they know in this chapter. Verse 1 might even be the only thing they know Jesus ever said. People who don’t even believe in Jesus know Jesus said this! As we know, however, Jesus continues on after saying this, **“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be**

Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces (Matthew 7:1-6).

measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” And then, in the context of judgment, Jesus continues and says, **“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”** And this, I believe, is what King Solomon is warning about back in Proverbs 9: Be extremely cautious when it comes to correcting someone who is stubbornly foolish! **“He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself.”** If you reprove a wicked man, you only get insults and hatred in return. Like Jesus, I believe Solomon is basically saying (when it comes to correction), **“Do not throw your pearls before swine.”** Just as pigs don’t appreciate pearls, so also those who are stubbornly wicked do not appreciate being corrected.

So, this is one side of correcting fools: A word of caution to the one doing the correcting. But the other side of this is: Make sure you are not the one who is stubbornly wicked! And I think this points to the fact that there is a difference between those who are stubbornly wicked and those who are wicked but may be open to correction. We see this distinction toward the end of Jude (in verses 22-23) where Jude says (in the context of those who teach what is false and their victims), ***“And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”*** In other words, some people just don’t know any better, some are lost but can still be saved, and then there are others where we just need to keep our distance as if they have just tested positive for the virus (there is nothing we can do). Once we invite someone over for a lavish dinner, if they outright reject that invitation, we really cannot force them to come and enjoy that dinner. I believe this is why Jesus didn’t case down the Rich Young Ruler. That young man rejected the Lord’s message, he walked away sorrowful, and Jesus let him go. It’s the same reason why the Father did not chase down the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. That was the son’s decision to make. Be very careful, then, in correcting those who are stubbornly wicked. Well, with this in mind, then, let’s look at this other category here...

II. ...as we come to the CORRECTION OF THOSE WHO ARE WISE (in verses 8-11).

Starting in the middle of verse 8, ***“Reprove a wise man and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.”*** We might think of what Jesus says in Matthew 13:12, ***“For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”*** Those who are foolish (those who do not have wisdom) will many times refuse to listen to correction (causing them to spiral out of control into their own ignorance), but those who are wise will continue learning and will become ***“still wiser,”*** Solomon says. One author compared it to an island in a river, as sediment flowing downstream hits that island, perhaps it sticks, vegetation starts to grow, and that island gets bigger over time. In my mind, here in Wisconsin, I might compare it to making a snowman and rolling that snowball. We start with something small, and if we have the right conditions (good “packing snow”), we roll that little ball through the snow, and it has a way of growing into something so large we can no longer push it! That’s how those who are wise deal with correction. They take what they hear, and they learn from it, improving themselves all along the way.

Those who are wise know that there is always more to learn. There is always room for improvement. Those who are wise are teachable. Based on what Solomon says here, we need to ask ourselves: Are we teachable? And, are we willing to be corrected? If our attitude is, “Nobody can tell me what to do! How dare this person point out the mistake in what I said or did here!” If that’s our attitude (if we respond with anger and hate), then we are probably more like the scoffer in this passage. On the other hand, it seems that Solomon is encouraging his sons to be wise, to listen to correction, and to use that correction to increase our learning.

I would also point out that we have something of a double blessing here – for the wise who take correction well, but we also have a blessing on whoever does the correcting. When you ***“reprove a wise man...he will love you.”*** Later in this book (in Proverbs 27:6), Solomon will say, ***“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”*** Those who are wise will appreciate this and will truly ***“love”*** those who correct them. Of course, we should probably assume here that the correction is truly helpful in some way, and not just whining. This is not somebody just overjoyed that they have found us in some error, but this is wise correction.

The other aspect of this comes in verse 10 as we find that ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*** This simply continues the thought that wisdom is an ongoing

process. And for those who are truly wise, it's a process that never ends. When we fear the Lord, that's just the beginning of wisdom. We think of turning from a life of sin to God in the act of baptism. That's the beginning. At baptism, we are just getting started. We might compare it to getting married. We might think we know somebody on our wedding day; no, we are just getting started! In the same way, when we fear God, this is the ***"beginning of wisdom,"*** Solomon says. His wisdom shapes who we are, over a lifetime, as we learn more and more about him through his word. I'm thinking of what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-15 when he said, ***"You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."*** Truly, the ***"fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*** We study God's word to make us wise.

And the benefit comes in verse 11, ***"For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you."*** The benefit of listening to correction and increasing our wisdom is that we tend to live longer. We might even say that the "nobody can tell me what to do" attitude is the secret to a short and miserable life! Of course, there are no guarantees; this is a "proverb," not a promise. But, generally speaking, those who listen to wise counsel will live longer than those who do not. This is something that King Solomon has learned by experience as king. He has seen some things, and this is his conclusion. This is his message to his sons: Listen to wise counsel.

Conclusion:

And this brings us to verse 12, pretty much a summary of this paragraph. These are the **CONSEQUENCES**, ***"If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it."*** This choice, Solomon says, is up to you. If you are wise, good for you – you reap the benefits. But on the other hand, if you scoff, if you ridicule and hate those who may dare correct you, ***"you alone will bear it."*** As a dad, King Solomon is saying to his sons: This decision is on you. I cannot make this decision for you. You are responsible. And what was true for them continues to be true for us. We will grow in our faith, we will grow in wisdom, about as much as we want to grow in wisdom. It's up to us to choose how we react when we are corrected and challenged in our faith.

And again, this comes right in the middle of the choice. This comes right between the competing invitations. So, we have Lady Wisdom inviting Solomon's sons to her dinner (as we studied last week). In the next paragraph we have Foolishness inviting Solomon's sons to her dinner (we hope to study this next week). And right here between these two invitations, we have Solomon's warning and encouragement, begging his sons to listen to good advice. There are two ways you can go on this, he says: You can listen to correction, incorporating it into your life, and you can live; or, you can very foolishly turn on those who would dare suggest that there may be a better way and you will do that to your own destruction.

Next week, hopefully we can learn something from the invitation that comes in from Foolishness.

As we close our thoughts on this passage, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the God of all wisdom, and we come to you this morning with the utmost of respect, worshiping you as the Almighty and all-knowing God of heaven. We recognize that all wisdom comes from you. We pray that we will have teachable hearts, open to correction – the correction that comes straight from your word, but we also pray that we would be open to the correction

that comes from the good influences that you have put in our lives. Please, Father, surround us with good friends, and give us your wisdom.

Help us, save us, and forgive us. We come to you through Jesus our Savior. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com