

## **SLIDE 1. Life Hacks. Part 2**

*A Study of the Book of Proverbs*

Sunday July 9, 2023

Last Fall and Winter – Pastor Darrel and I hosted a # of prayer meetings. We would often work through the day – into the evening.

A long day happily broken up by a thoughtful invitation to dinner with one of you :)

One of you invited us to dinner – but it became complicated by busyness and timelines. So, you offered to meet and treat us to dinner at the Artful Doger Pub – just down the road.

But meeting somebody for dinner is not the same as having dinner with them in their home, is it? You get to know people in their homes. They're at ease. They're themselves. Even when 2 pastors come for a visit!

So, we declined the offer to meet for dinner at the Artful Doger and – instead – opted to get together for lunch that Wednesday. Little did I know how wise it was to accept that invitation. Little did I know that Pastor Darrel knew before I did – how wise it was to accept that invitation.

We arrived at noon. Pleasantly greeted at the door. With enthusiasm and energy and an infectious smile.

We were hit by a scrumptious aroma when we stepped into the house. The table was already set. A beautiful red runner down the middle. Main plates and side dishes, utensils and color-matching serviettes.

We moved into the kitchen to get the run-down of the menu. Then we grabbed our plates – like 2 hungry little boys – to line up at the stove for our portions. We gave thanks – and then we ate like kings.

Rempel sausage – basted in bbq sauce. Creamy cucumber salad – a nostalgic blast from Pastor Darrel's past. GF savory scones – too good to be GF! Tasty creole seasoning.

I cried when I ate them. And yes – I had more than one.

Potato salad. Now – there's potato salad and there's potato salad. You know what I mean! This was POTATO SALAD. Memorable. Not too much mayo. Not too much potato. Just the right ratio. Perfectly seasoned.

Our meal was capped with a slice of apple pie and ice cream. And this was LUNCH!

A lunch which kept on giving. Both Pastor Darrel and I were given "doggie bags" of leftovers to take with us – AND – a small jar each - labelled "JJ's Creole Seasoning."

We were both glad to accept this lunch invitation. It was a culinary gem – which I still haven't forgotten – even though our host said and would say – even today, "It was nothing."

We are in week #2 of our study of the BOOK OF PROVERBS – called LIFE HACKS – "a book of practical skills for living well om God's world."

**SLIDE 2.** Please open your bibles with me to chp. 9. – where we find a contrast of 2 different meals: one hosted by *Wisdom* and the other hosted by *Folly*.

The tables are set...

Both invite the "simple" into their houses for a meal, using the same invitation ("Let all who are simple come in here!" – vv. 4, 16).

Wisdom, however, built her own house, prepares her own meal, and makes an effort to invite people.

Folly, on the other hand, just sits at the door of her house, calls out to whoever happens to pass by (vv. 14-15), and her meals are – stolen! (v. 17).

Even worse – while wisdom's meal leads to life (v. 6) – folly kills her guests! (v. 18).

So that some have called this chapter – "Wisdom's Feast and Folly's Funeral."

Chp. 9 acts like a kind of personified summary of what has been said in chps. 1-8: that our lives – in general – will go well – when we heed wisdom – but our lives – in general – will go poorly – when we don't.

It also serves as a kind of conclusion to Solomon's overall praise of wisdom – which began earlier in chp. 1. After this chp. – the BOOK OF PROVERBS – specifically chps. 10-29 – are loaded with wise, rapid-fire one-liners – each of which are proverbs in and of themselves.

The first 6 verses of chp. 9 depict Wisdom. The second 6 verses contrast the responses humankind has to wisdom, and the last 6 verses present Folly as the opposite of Wisdom.

Let's get to it...

*Wisdom has built her house* (v. 1a). Prov. 8 describes Wisdom as a woman with blessings and benefits for those who listened and obeyed. Now – here – in chp. 9 – she is described as a woman of generous hospitality who discriminates against no one.

*She has hewn it* (her house) *out of seven pillars* (v. 1b). Pillars would only have been used to build a house of substantial size and quality – so we might also think of this as symbolic – meaning – in context: the house that wisdom built was spacious, perfect, and unshakable! Descriptors for wisdom itself!

SLIDE 3. SIDEBAR: Wisdom personified as a Woman.

You may be still wondering why Wisdom is personified as a Woman – here in the BOOK OF PROVERBS – maybe even more after I invited you to insert your own punchline explanation last Sunday.

It appears that it is as simple as this: “The basis for the particular personification of wisdom as a woman lies in - the feminine gender of the Hebrew word for wisdom – “*hokmah*” (f. The Working Pastor Commentaries Series, Scott Shauf). – which we mentioned last Sunday.

Sometimes the answer turns out to be less complicated than we imagined :)

*She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. "Come, eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding (vv. 2-6).*

This is a feast! From menu to table settings to invitations.

Wisdom has slaughtered and butchered several animals for meat (which – historically - was a man’s job to do – but here a woman’s work – because Wisdom is *that* awesome - which is already above and beyond the normal dietary intake of the average Israelite – whose typical meal did not involve meat – and certainly not Rempel sausage!).

Bread and wine were to be served (which is contrasted with the stolen water and secret food of *Folly* – evoking for me, anyway, memories of “secret meat” dinners in my college cafeteria).

Some commentators say that she mixed the wine with spices – to make it strong and tastier (see SS 8:2). Others say she diluted it to make it light and refreshing in a smokin’-hot climate, or maybe even to keep people sober for the feast.

Either way – win – win!

She sent out her servants to invite the masses – to learn to discern.

This, clearly, is a woman of means.

Wisdom has something to offer!

Wisdom is not something that can be bought or earned or that only the privileged few can have. Wisdom extends her offer to all who pass by her city, but esp. those who are easily persuaded (the simple – see 1:4), and those who are immature, inexperienced, and naïve (those who “lack judgment”) - and she invites them into her home.

*Come, eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed.*

But we must be willing to eat and drink of wisdom.

We must willfully *decide* to partake of *wisdom* and forsake *folly*.

The consequences are clear: good food and life OR bad food and death.

And Wisdom will not force herself on anyone...

*Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you... (vv. 7-8a).*

Because – sometimes – it ain't worth it. Mockers (those who reject wisdom and make fun of those who try to live by it) won't receive wisdom. Wicked men hate wisdom and will often hate the ones who try to share it.

**SLIDE 4.** There is a caution in this for us which goes like this: "Why correct and rebuke someone when more harm than good will be the result? Avoid irritations. Wait for the favorable opportunity" (Bridges).

On the other hand... *rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning (vv. 8b – 9).*

*Rebuke a wise man – and he will love you?*

"Rebuke" is not a word we use very often. So, what does it mean?

"To express sharp disapproval or criticism of (someone) because of their behavior or actions." Oxford Dictionary provides this example: "She had rebuked him for drinking too much."

A wise man who follows Jesus will love someone for disapproving of the things they do and say that don't align with God's best for our lives. A wise woman who follows Jesus will love someone who criticizes the destructive and hurtful things they do and say that violate the guidance of God.

Now, they might not love hearing it! Because it's tough to be criticized or to face disapproval. Even mature followers of Jesus don't typically say, "Um, I love me some good correction!"

But it is possible. And with practice – we might not just love the person for their correction – we might even get better at receiving it.

And why wouldn't we love the person who cared enough about us to point out when we hurt ourselves or hurt others with a thing that we said or did?!

Analogously – wouldn't we want someone to step in to stop us from punching ourselves in the face?!

Don't we want to know when we've said something mean or gone too far?

When we say something destructive and yet know what God has said about the words we use: *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen* (Eph. 4:29).

When we do something hurtful and yet know what God has said about how we should go about our lives: *Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together* (Eph. 4:2-3, CEB).

A wise person learns from correction and adds to their wisdom in doing so.

**SLIDE 5.** 2 Qs: How can we correct each other wisely? How can we wisely react to rebukes?

### **SLIDE 6.**

#### **1. Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).**

*Speak the truth.* Hold the Word of God (the *truth*) up to yourself (firstly) and to others to let it act as a mirror – to contrast it with what you say and do.

Letting the truth speak for itself.

I remember doing this a long time ago with a friend of mine. I remember holding up the Beatitudes to him (as I did for myself) – specifically when Jesus says: *But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart* (Mt. 5:28).

And I remember saying to him, “I’m not saying this. Jesus is saying this. So, it’s not about whether it is good or bad, right or wrong. It’s about how you will respond to what Jesus is saying!”

Speak the truth *in love*. We should rightly ask – when we’re out there doling out rebukes left, right, and center, “What is motivating me to criticize others? Is it out of love? Do I want better for them than they are choosing for themselves? Will they be able to hear it? Do I love them?”

#### **2. Listen to add to your wisdom (Prov. 9:8b-9).**

A wise person learns from correction and adds to their wisdom in doing so.

I don’t think the first questions to ask are, “Who are they to point this out?!” or “How could they, not knowing me or my circumstances?!” or “What’s motivating this correction?”

I think the first question to ask is, “Is it true?” Is the criticism valid? Is the rebuke justified? If it is – and maybe you have confirmed that it is - with a trusted friend or family member – then receive it with humility.

You might say something like, "That was hard to hear, but I think it's true. Thanks for caring enough about me to tell me."

If it's true – then add it to your learning – become wiser by making the necessary changes to what you say and do and to repair any relationship you may have damaged - seek forgiveness.

If it's not true – and maybe you have confirmed that it isn't – with a trusted friend or family member – then reject it – as you would reject anything that is *untrue*.

Are you a mocker or a wise person?

"You can tell by the way you respond to criticism. Instead of tossing back a quick putdown or clever retort when rebuked, listen to what is being said. Learn from your critics: this is the path to wisdom" (Life Application Study Bible, p. 1000).

Let's end here – with this common proverbial theme – and a warning...

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer* (Prov. 9:10-12).

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...*

Sound familiar? This is almost all we talked about last Sunday when we looked at Psalm 1 – and v. 7 - in particular.

Wisdom begins with knowing God. And knowing God leads us to awe, reverence, and a little bit of trembling. This is LIFE HACK #1.

Notice here what more wisdom adds: years of life!

Now – again – the proverbs within this book are not prophetic, nor are they promises. They are – as we said last week – probabilities.

It is more likely that you will live longer when you live wisely than if you live foolishly.

Which reminds me of this video clip I saw recently that made me shake my head: of a car speeding toward a man who is secured inside a large bumper ball (called a Zorbing, 2001). The car punts the ball (and the man inside it, of course) some distance and to some height – where he lands trapped in a very large tree in the distance – like a Velcro ball just attached to Velcro.

I believe the caption read something like, "This is why woman live longer than men!" Or, to turn the phrase here, "This is why the wise outlive the foolish!"

*If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer* (v. 12).

Wisdom rewards. Mockery leaves you to suffer – alone.

The woman, Folly - onto her next fool.

There is something hypnotic about her though – the woman Folly – who entices us to sin. One sin leading to the other. Always tempting, never satisfying.

Sinful behavior can often feel like it would be more exciting than living a faithful Christian life.

This is why so many people (as often as they do) skip the banquet of Wisdom for the stolen food snacks of Folly.

Hear her voice, "*Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious.*" (v. 17).

But the follower of Jesus should not be deceived – sin is dangerous.

So this chapter ends: *But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave* (v. 18).

"Wisdom's Feast and Folly's Funeral."

Beware - the one. Listen to the other.

Even when – maybe esp. when wisdom comes from a critic.

This is LIFE HACK #2: Learn from your critics.