

## Proverbs 8 - Wisdom's Autobiography

### I. Chapter Overview

- A. Once again, wisdom speaks
  - 1. Wisdom personified appeared first in chapter one
    - a. Chapter one highlights the consequences of not heeding her
    - b. Wisdom neglects those who neglect her
  - 2. This passages expands on the content of her call
- B. Three major sections
  - 1. (v.1-3) Introductory section
  - 2. (v.4-21) The credibility of wisdom
    - a. (v.4-11) Wisdom's words are true and valuable
    - b. (v.12-16) Wisdom guides good rulers
    - c. (v.17-21) Wisdom loves those who love her
  - 3. (v.22-31) Wisdom's Credentials
    - a. (v.22-29) God acquired wisdom before creation
    - b. (v.30-31) Wisdom was God's architect
  - 4. (v.32-36) Concluding exhortations to heed Wisdom
    - a. (v.32-33) Conclusion - Listen to Wisdom
    - b. (v.34) A Beatitude - The blessing of wisdom
    - c. (v.35-36) Antithetic Parallelism

### II. (v.1-3) Introductory section

- A. Translation:
  - 1. Does not Wisdom call?  
and understanding extend<sup>1</sup> her voice?
  - 2. At the head of the heights, by the way, between the pathways  
she takes her stand
  - 3. At the hand<sup>2</sup> of the gates, at the mouth of the city,  
the entrance of the doorways, she<sup>3</sup> cries aloud
- B. This is still the voice of the parent,
  - 1. This demonstrates that the teaching of the parent is allied with wisdom,

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<sup>1</sup> נָתַן *nātan* - To give, put, set, extend

<sup>2</sup> יָד *yād* - Hand. Used figuratively, it can mean strength, or spatially to mean "by the side of"

<sup>3</sup> רָנָה *ranan* - Verb here is a feminine plural, apparently to emphasize the greatness of wisdom. See 1:23

who is allied with God himself.

2. The parents word would tend to have much more credibility if the young man or woman knows that it is not just from the limited knowledge and experience of the parent
  - a. Parents are answerable to God for their role
  - b. Parents should be guided by more than mere human reason and wisdom, but by God's wisdom

C. Contrast between the Immoral Woman and Woman Wisdom

1. The immoral woman lurks in the darkness
2. Woman wisdom stands at very public places
  - a. At the head of the heights
  - b. By the way, between the pathways (crossroads)
  - c. At the gates of the city
  - d Significance:
    - 1)The gates was were much of public life took place
      - a) Examples: Decisions made by elders, daily business, lawsuits, etc.
      - b) This implies that the principles of God's wisdom needs to be central to daily and public life
    - 2) Wisdom extends her call to everyone
3. The immoral woman stands on the corner waiting for a passerby
4. Woman wisdom stands at the gates and crossroads in broad daylight

**III. (v.4-11) Wisdom's words are true and valuable**

A. Translation:

4. To you, O men, I call,  
and my voice is to the sons of man
5. Discern prudence, O simple ones!  
and Discern heart<sup>4</sup>, O fools!
6. Listen, for noble things<sup>5</sup> I speak.  
and the opening of my lips (is) uprightnesses
7. For truth will my mouth utter<sup>6</sup>  
and an abomination to my lips is wickedness
8. In righteousness are all the words of my mouth  
and nothing in them is twisted and crooked
9. All of them are straight to the one who discerns,  
and (are) upright to the who one finds knowledge
10. Take my discipline and not silver  
and knowledge above choice gold
11. For better is wisdom than corals<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sometimes heart is figurative for "intelligence"

<sup>5</sup> נָגִיד *nāgîd* - Ruler, prince. Used abstractly as an adjective, it could mean, "princely things"

<sup>6</sup> הִגָּה *hāgāh* - To mumble, moan, meditate, muse, or utter

and all pleasures<sup>8</sup> are not comparable to her

B. The call

1. Like the immoral woman, Wisdom calls to the simple
2. We now get a sense of two figures, the immoral woman and Woman Wisdom competing for hearts of the simple
3. The exhortation
  - a. Discern prudence and heart
  - b. In other words, "wise up" and recognize the dangers and choices in life
    - 1) The immoral woman seduces those who "hang out" and wander by her door
    - 2) The one who discerns his heart will not "wander," but have focus, purpose, and awareness of danger

C. The truthfulness of Wisdom's words

1. Noble Things
  - a. Literally, "princely" things
  - b. The idea is that what wisdom teaches is honorable
2. Truthful, upright mouth
  - a. Wickedness is an "abomination" to her mouth
    - 1) She finds wicked, deceitful words disgusting
    - 2) Lying and deceit are not in her nature
  - b. Her words are neither crooked or twisted
    - 1) Wicked friends speak deceitfully
    - 2) The immoral person speaks deceitfully
    - 3) So far, the text has shown the end result of following the perversity of wicked friends and of the immoral person
  - c. The teaching of God, parents, and the sage are all allies with wisdom
    - 1) In proverbs, what the parent and the sages say is what Wisdom and God says
    - 2) Implicit is the exhortation to trust in the words of parents and wise teachers
3. The truth and value of wisdom's words are only accessible to the wise
  - a. v.9 - The uprightness of wisdom is only for those seeking wisdom
  - b. The arrogant fool who thinks he has nothing to learn will not find straightness in Wisdom's teaching

D. The value of Wisdom's words

1. Wisdom v.s. physical riches
  - a. Discipline, or correction above silver
  - b. Knowledge above choice gold

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<sup>7</sup> פְּנִינִים *pēnînim* - Corals, something of high value

<sup>8</sup> חֵפֶז *hēpēs* - Delight, pleasure, desire

- c. These are interesting choices:
  - 1) In Proverbs, the unwise are usually in poverty
  - 2) Choosing silver is usually not an option for the fool
  - 3) The following verses may shed light on this
    - a) Prov 17:1
    - b) Eccl 5:10-11
    - c) 1 Tim 6:17
- 2. True delight - v.11
  - a. No delightful or pleasurable thing compares to wisdom
  - b. James' assessment on worldly pleasures
    - 1) Jas 4:1
    - 2) Jas 4:3
    - 3) Jas 5:5
  - c. Qohelet's assessment on worldly pleasures
    - 1) Eccl 2:10, 17
    - 2) Eccl 7:4
  - d. True pleasure is to delight in God's wisdom

#### IV. (v.12-16) Wisdom guides good rulers

##### A. Translation:

- 12. I, wisdom, have dwelt with prudence,  
and the knowledge of discretions<sup>9</sup> I will find
- 13. The fear of Yahweh is to hate evil,  
pride, and exaltation, and the way of evil,  
and the mouth of perversities I hated
- 14. I have counsel and sound wisdom<sup>10</sup>,  
I myself - understanding,  
I have strength
- 15. By me kings reign  
and rulers decree righteousness
- 16. By me prince's rule, and nobles,  
- all the judges of the earth

##### B. What wisdom offers

- 1. v.12 - Knowledge of discretions/plans
  - a. She will find the knowledge of discretions/devices/plans/scheme
  - b. The word devices is often used of evil plans. Examples:
    - 1) Job 21:27
    - 2) Psa 10:2; 37:7
    - 3) Prov 1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 5:2; 8:12; 12:2; 14:7; 24:8
  - c. Wisdom will recognize when a scheme is good or evil
    - 1) Job 42:2 - Only God's purpose/device/scheme will stand

<sup>9</sup> מְדֻמָּה - *m<sup>e</sup>zummāh* - Discretion, plan, device, evil device. Here the word is plural

<sup>10</sup> תִּשְׁטִיּיָהּ - *tūštyyāh* - sound, efficient wisdom, abiding success

- 2) Psa 21:11 - The plans of the wicked wont stand
      - 3) Solution: Be wise and fear the Lord
    - d. Being wise involves not swallowing everything
      - 1) Weigh all plans and schemes
      - 2). Do so with humility
  - 2. Know how
    - a. Counsel
    - b. Sound wisdom
    - c. Understanding
  - 3. Strength
    - a. Many do not associate wisdom with power
    - b. Wisdom is the one who has strength
      - 1) Prov. 21:22
      - 2) Prov. 24:5-6
      - 3) Eccl 7:19
      - 4) Eccl 9:14-16 - Don't despise the value of wisdom
      - 5) Eccl 10:10 - Lack of wisdom renders brute strength useless
      - 6) 1 Cor 1:25-27 - Wisdom of God
    - c. The answer in times of oppression and persecution is not brute strength, but God's wisdom
      - Jas 1:5
- C. v.13 - Wisdom hates pride
- 1. She contrasts pride with the fear of Yahweh
  - 2. The list of things Wisdom hates
    - a. Pride
    - b. Exaltation
    - c. The way of evil
    - d. The mouth of perversities
- D. The necessity of wisdom for rulers and officials
- 1. List of those who should use wisdom
    - a. Kings
    - b. Rulers
    - c. Princes
    - d. Nobles
    - e. Judges
  - 2. A contemporary list of those who should use wisdom would include the president, senators, mayors, judges, etc.
  - 3. Wisdom and rule
    - a. Eccl 4:13 - Contrast between a wise lad and foolish ruler
    - b. Gen 41:39ff - Joseph rules with wisdom
    - c. Dan 2:23, 48 - Daniel rules in wisdom
    - d. 1 Kings 4:29 - Solomon
    - e. Eccl 1:16-18 - Pitfalls related to wisdom

## V. (v.17-21) - Wisdom loves and honors those who love her

### A. Translation:

17. I myself love those who love me<sup>11</sup>,  
and those who eagerly seek me will find me.
18. Riches and honor are with me  
durable wealth and righteousness
19. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold  
and my yield<sup>12</sup> than choice silver
20. In the path of righteousness I walk about,  
in the midst of paths of justice.
21. To cause those who love me<sup>13</sup> to inherit stuff<sup>14</sup>  
and their treasures I will fill

### B. The value of being loved by wisdom

1. The "I" in verse 17 is emphatic
  - a. As if she is saying, "I" love my lovers, not the strange woman
  - b. Wisdom's love of seekers is far greater than the love of any other person
  - c. Wisdom's concern is the good of those who love her
2. Wisdom's love stands in contrast to the strange woman
  - a. The Strange woman's love is death, Wisdom's is life
  - b. The Strange woman's love brings dishonor, Wisdom brings honor
  - c. The Strange woman's love brings poverty, Wisdom brings riches
  - d. The Strange woman's pleasure is fleeting, Wisdom's is lasting

### C. How do you endear wisdom to yourself?

1. Love her, seek her honor her as you would a wife
2. Ways to love, seek and honor her
  - a. Listen to your parents
    - 1) In proverbs, it is the parents that are teaching wisdom
    - 2) Prov 4:3-4; 6:20-23
    - 3) Eph 6:2-3
    - 4) Prov 10:8
  - b. Listen to the Lord and strive to grow and learn
    - 1) Psa 19:7
    - 2) 2 Cor 2:6ff
    - 3) Matt 7:24ff
  - c. Discern false wisdom v.s. God's wisdom
    - 1) 1 Cor 1:19-20; 3:18-20

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<sup>11</sup> אֲהַבִּי could be translated, "those who love me," or "my lovers"

<sup>12</sup> תְּבֹאָה t'bu'ah - Product, revenue, income, yeild

<sup>13</sup> אֲהַבִּי could be translated, "those who love me," or "my lovers"

<sup>14</sup> שֹׁׁ yēs - Particle of existence - Substance, there is.

- 2) Jas 3:13-18
- d. Pray for Wisdom
  - 1) Eph 1:16-19
  - 2) Jas 1:5
- e. Follow in Christ's footsteps, know him
  - 1) 1 Cor 1:30
  - 2) Col 2:3

## VI. v.22-31 - Wisdom's Credentials

### A. Translation

- 22. Yahweh acquired<sup>15</sup> me at the beginning of his way  
from the ancient time of his works
- 23. From antiquity<sup>16</sup> I was installed,  
from the beginning,  
from the ancient time of the earth.
- 24. When there were no depths<sup>17</sup>, I was brought forth<sup>18</sup>  
When there were no springs made heavy with water
- 25. Before the mountains were sunk,  
in the presence of<sup>19</sup> the heights, I was brought forth
- 26. When he had not made the earth and the countryside<sup>20</sup>  
and the first of the dust of the world
- 27. In his establishing of the heavens, there was I  
in his decreeing<sup>21</sup> of the horizon over the face of the deep
- 28. In his making firm of the clouds above,  
in the making strong of the springs of the deep
- 29. In his fixing<sup>22</sup> for the sea its decree,  
even the waters did not transgress<sup>23</sup> his mouth  
in his decreeing of the foundations of the earth
- 30. And I was beside him, a master workman<sup>24</sup>  
and I was a delights day by day,  
merry-making<sup>25</sup> in his presence the whole time
- 31. Merry-making in the world of his earth  
and my delights were in the sons of man

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<sup>15</sup> קָנָה *qānāh* - To get, aquire, possess

<sup>16</sup> עוֹלָם *ʿōlām* - Long duration, antiquity, everlasting, eternity

<sup>17</sup> תְּהוֹם *t'hôm* - Sea, depths, the primeval sea. See Genesis 1:2

<sup>18</sup> חִיל - To whirl, dance, writhe. In polal form - "to be made to writhe" or "to be brought forth."

<sup>19</sup> לִפְנֵי *l'pñê* - Lit: "To the faces of..." Meaning, "in the presence of" or "before" someone/something

<sup>20</sup> חוּץ *hûṣ* - Outside, street, countryside

<sup>21</sup> חָקַק *hāqāq* - To cut, inscribe, decree

<sup>22</sup> שָׁם *šûm* - To put, place, set, ordain, fix,

<sup>23</sup> עָבַר *ʿābar* - To cross over, pass over, pass through, pass beyond

<sup>24</sup> אֲמֹן *ʾāmôn* - artificer, architect, master-workman

<sup>25</sup> שָׂחַק *sāhaq* - To laugh, make sport, jest, make merry

B. (v.22-29) The antiquity of Wisdom

1. God "acquired" wisdom in the beginning
2. Wisdom was present before the creation
  - a. She was "brought forth" before the deep was created
    - 1) This word is often used of giving birth
    - 2) Wisdom was born before anything existed
  - b. Wisdom was born and acquired "before" creation
    - 1) Before the deep was created
    - 2) Before the springs flowed with water
    - 3) Before the mountains were sunk
    - 4) Before the ground was created
3. Wisdom was present at the creation
  - a. When God established the Heavens
  - b. Solidified the clouds
  - c. Strengthened the springs
  - d. When God gave orders, or "decreed" his creation
    - 1) Literally, this means to inscribe or carve a decree.  
Inscriptions were usually made on stone
    - 2) Some of God's decreeing activities
      - a) Decreeing the horizon over the sea
      - b) Decreed the boundaries of the sea
      - c) Decreed the foundations of the earth
    - 3) This word casts God as the ultimate, cosmic designer and ruler, since rulers give decrees written in stone
    - 4) Wisdom was there at God's side, but not just as an observer

C. (v.30-31) Wisdom as God's architect

1. Wisdom was in essence an engineer
  - a. The delicate balance in creation is due to wisdom's design
  - b. Some observations about the engineering of the world
    - 1) Rotation of the earth
    - 2) Distance from the sun
    - 3) Amounts of various gasses in the atmosphere
    - 4) The size of the earth and gravity
    - 5) Amount of water
    - 6) All of these are just right for life to flourish on the earth
2. Wisdom was God's delight as they created the universe together
  - a. The countless species of animals
  - b. The countless species of plant life
  - c. The numberless stars
  - d. It was a great delight was God and wisdom created the universe
  - e. The text uses an interesting choice of words
    - 1) It is not the usual word for joy, or delight
    - 2) The word means to laugh, make sport, jest, make merry



- 3) The idea is of a playful delight
3. The ultimate delight in creation was the "sons of men"
  - a. The engineering involved in the creation of man is astounding
  - b. The information contained in human DNA is astounding
 

"An adult person has approximately thirteen trillion (13,000,000,000,000) cells in his body. Each living cell, except for reproductive and red blood cells, contains exactly the same copy of DNA as all the other cells. In other words, one liver cell contains exactly the same sequence of A,C,G and T in its forty-six chromosomes as a cell on the tip of one's nose. If the DNA in *any one* cell were represented by a continuous sequence of letters and printed on pages much larger than the pages of this book, the sequence would fill every page of every volume of forty complete sets of Encyclopedia Britannica!"<sup>26</sup>
  - c. Psa 139:14 - We are fearfully and wonderfully made

## VII. (v.32-36) Concluding exhortations to heed Wisdom

### A. Translation:

32. And now, O sons, listen to me,  
and O the blessedness of those who keep my ways
33. Hear discipline, and be wise,  
and do not neglect it
34. O the blessedness of the man who listens to me  
to keep watch<sup>27</sup> over my doors, day by day  
to guard<sup>28</sup> the doorposts<sup>29</sup> of my doorway<sup>30</sup>
35. For he who finds me finds life,  
and he shall promote goodwill from Yahweh.
36. But he who misses<sup>31</sup> me treats violently<sup>32</sup> his soul.  
All who hate me love death

### B. (v.32-33) Listen to Wisdom

1. Explicit and implicit exhortations
  - a. Listen to Wisdom
  - b. Keep her ways
  - c. Hear discipline
  - d. Be wise

<sup>26</sup> Don England, *God are you Really There?* (Nashville: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Christian, 1989), 43.

<sup>27</sup> שָׁקֵד *šāqad* - To keep watch, to guard

<sup>28</sup> שָׁמַר *šamar* - To keep watch, preserve, guard

<sup>29</sup> מְזוּזָה *mēzûzāh* - Door post, gate post.

<sup>30</sup> פֶּתַח *petah* - Opening, doorway, entrance

<sup>31</sup> חָטָא *hāṭā'* - To miss, sin

<sup>32</sup> חָמָס *hāmas* - To treat violently, to wrong

- e. Do not neglect discipline
- 2. Result - Blessedness
- C. (v.34) A beatitude. Blessedness for the one who:
  - 1. Listens to Wisdom
  - 2. Guards, or keeps watch over her doors
    - a. Contrast to the other woman's door in 5:8
    - b. Wisdom invites the young men to stay to her door
    - c. The exhortation is to stay away from the immoral woman's door
  - 3. Instead of just "going" to her, door, wisdom exhorts the men to "guard" her door
    - a. This suggests danger
    - b. In 7:12, the immoral woman lurks everywhere
- D. (v.35-36) Antithetic saying
  - 1. He who finds me
    - a. v.17 - Wisdom said those who eagerly seek her would find her
    - b. Wisdom brings life
    - c. Wisdom promotes goodwill from the Lord
  - 2. He who misses me
    - a. Treats himself violently
    - b. All who hate wisdom loves death
  - 3. Contrast
    - a. To love wisdom is to love life
    - b. To hate wisdom is to love death

### **Discussion Questions for Proverbs 8**

1. How does Woman Wisdom contrast to the Immoral Woman?
2. Where does Wisdom station herself and why? What does this communicate to you about Wisdom?
3. Why does Wisdom contrast her value with gold, silver, and corals? Why is the choice between wisdom and riches?
4. Why do you suppose the text personifies wisdom as a female? What does this communicate to you?
5. In what ways does wisdom make her appeal for young people to listen to her?
6. Who should use wisdom according to this chapter?
7. How can you "guard" the doors of wisdom's house? What dangers are there that you would have to "guard" it?
8. If wisdom were to make her appeal here today, where might she station herself and what might she say?
9. What can you do to demonstrate love for wisdom?