



A Well-Defined
FAITH

[fāth] (noun)

Biblical words used in church...
Discover what they really mean.



Sunday
July 19, 2026

Proverbs 9:1-18

Example Teaching Rhythm

Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

Prayer: 10 Minutes

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

Highlight - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

Explain - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Apply - This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

Respond - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

“Wisdom” Living Life Skillfully

Introduction

Wisdom is one of those words that everyone agrees is important and almost no one stops to define.

It gets used to describe the elderly, the experienced, the cautious, the spiritually mature. In ordinary conversation it tends to mean something like good judgment – the quality a person has when they make sound decisions, avoid unnecessary trouble, and don't repeat the same mistakes twice. Useful. Admirable. The kind of thing you develop slowly over a long life.

Which is not what the Bible is talking about.

The Hebrew word behind Proverbs is *chokmah* – a word that appears first not in a philosophical context but in a craftsman's context. It describes the skill of the artisan, the precision of the builder, the competence of someone who knows how to work with the grain of the material rather than against it. Wisdom is not primarily a quality of the aged. It is a skill. And like every skill, it can be sought, practiced, and developed – or neglected and refused.

Proverbs 9 makes that choice as stark as it can be made. Two women are calling from the heights of the city. They use almost identical language. They set their tables in almost identical locations. And they are leading in entirely opposite directions. The passage is not a meditation on wisdom. It is a decision point – a moment in which the reader is confronted with two compelling invitations and asked, plainly, which one they will answer.

The wise person, Proverbs argues, is not primarily the person who has accumulated knowledge or avoided the most mistakes. It is the person who has learned to live with – and from – the grain of reality as God actually made it. Not as they wish it were. Not as their desires have led them to imagine it. As it is.

Before we go further: When you make decisions, what are you actually consulting? Your own best judgment, your desires, what feels compelling in the moment – or something outside yourself that tells you how things actually work?

Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- Where do you draw the line between wisdom and foolishness in your own life – and is that line where the Bible draws it, or somewhere you set it yourself?
- Has something that felt compelling ever turned out to be destructive? What was the gap between how it presented itself and what it delivered?
- Proverbs pictures wisdom hosting a feast and calling from the heights of the city. What does that image suggest about how wisdom comes to us – does it feel like that?
- Where do you find it hardest to consult anything outside your own instincts? What does that reveal?
- What's the difference between living skillfully and simply avoiding obvious mistakes?

In the 1930s, Trofim Lysenko dominated Soviet agricultural science by rejecting genetics as ideologically inconvenient. His theories promised faster results. The harvests failed, repeatedly. The problem was not lack of effort – it was working against the grain of how crops actually grow. Effort in the wrong direction produces exhaustion and ruin, not results.

- That is Proverbs' diagnosis of folly. Folly is not always lazy. Sometimes it is extremely energetic. The failure is not insufficient effort. It is working against the structure of reality – the way God made things to function – and expecting different results.

Highlight | Proverbs 9:1-18

Proverbs 9 is the capstone of the book's extended prologue. Chapters 1 through 9 have been building a sustained argument about wisdom and folly; chapter 9 brings it to its sharpest conclusion. Everything that follows – the individual proverbs of chapters 10 through 31 – is wisdom applied to specific situations. Chapter 9 is wisdom and folly set before you as a choice.

Wisdom has built her house and prepared her feast. The language is lavish: seven pillars, dressed meat, mixed wine, a set table. She calls from the highest point of the city – come, eat, drink, leave the simple life behind, walk in the way of insight. This is not a modest offer. It is a feast.

Folly is seated at her door at the same height. She calls with nearly the same words. She offers water and bread. What she does not tell her guests: the dead are there. Her house is the entrance to Sheol.

The parallel is deliberate. Both women are visible, calling, making invitations that seem appealing. What separates them is not their presentation – it is where their invitations lead. The text's hinge is verse 10: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom is not primarily an intellectual achievement. It is a relational posture – the orientation of someone who has learned to live in light of who God actually is.

- Both Wisdom and Folly call from the same heights with similar language. What does that tell you about how difficult it is to distinguish between them – and what does Proverbs say is the key?
- Verse 10 grounds wisdom in the fear of the Lord rather than a method. What changes when wisdom is understood as relational before it is practical?

Explain | Consider the Context

Proverbs was written for the instruction of the young – not in the sense of age alone, but anyone not yet formed by wisdom's disciplines. The Hebrew word translated "simple" (*peti*) does not mean stupid. It means open, impressionable, not yet committed in either direction. Both Wisdom and Folly are targeting exactly that person – someone at a crossroads whose direction is not yet fixed.

That framing has something to say to anyone who assumes they have already settled the question. The fool in Proverbs is often not the person who never heard wisdom's invitation. It is the person who heard it and turned aside because the stolen water was more immediately compelling.

The image of *chokmah* as craftsman's skill carries a specific implication: skill requires practice, feedback, and the willingness to be corrected by the material itself. Wisdom works the same way. It is acquired in submission – to God, to instruction, to the rebuke that verse 8 says the wise person welcomes and the scoffer refuses. The scoffer does not lack intelligence. They lack the posture that makes learning possible.

- Verse 8 says correcting a scoffer earns hatred, but instructing a wise person earns love. What does your response to correction reveal about where you actually are on that spectrum?
- What is the difference between acquiring information and acquiring wisdom? What does wisdom require that information alone can't give?

Apply | Discuss as a Group

Proverbs 9 does not diagnose a dramatic failure. It diagnoses a failure to choose. Both invitations are present. Both are visible. The fool is not someone who ran toward destruction – they are someone who never quite turned toward wisdom either, who remained open in both directions long enough for drift to make the decision for them.

That is the harder question the passage presses. Not: what have you done that was obviously foolish? But: what have you actually chosen toward? Is there a voice outside your own instincts that is genuinely forming you – a person, a practice, a habit of returning to Scripture – or have you been functionally self-directed, navigating by whatever feels true in the moment?

Because the fear of the Lord is where wisdom begins, the person who has not been cultivating that orientation is not starting from a neutral position. They are starting from the wrong side of the street, regardless of how responsible their decisions look from the outside. That is not a reason for guilt. It is a reason for honesty – and for a deliberate turn toward something outside yourself. The feast is ready. The question is simply whether you will make it.

- Is there a voice in your life – a person, a practice, a habit of Scripture – that is actually forming you toward wisdom? If not, what is forming you instead?
- Where have you been waiting for wisdom to arrive on its own rather than actively pursuing it? What would pursuit actually look like this week?
- What is the most compelling thing pulling at your attention right now – and have you asked whether it is Wisdom calling or Folly imitating her?

Respond | How should I live/pray?

Proverbs 9 does not end with an appeal. It ends with a verdict. The guests in Folly's house are already seated. They do not know the dead are there. The narrator does not intervene. He simply states what is true and lets the reader sit with it.

That ending is the passage's final gift. Proverbs is not trying to produce guilt or urgency. It is trying to produce sight – the ability to see clearly what two invitations actually are and where they actually lead. The person who has genuinely seen Folly's house for what it is does not need to be argued out of it. The appeal dissolves on its own when the concealment is removed.

Which means the posture this passage calls for is not effort or resolve. It is receptivity – the willingness to let God show you what you have not been seeing. Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, and the fear of the Lord is not something you manufacture by trying harder. It arrives when you look long enough at who God actually is that something in you reorients around Him rather than around yourself.

That is where this week begins. Not with a commitment to make wiser decisions. Not with a plan for better habits. With a gaze – turning your attention toward the God of Psalm 103, who is vast enough to be truly feared and tender enough to be truly trusted, and asking Him to let you see your own life as He sees it. The person who prays that prayer honestly is already standing closer to wisdom's door than they were before they asked.

- Is there an area of your life where, if you saw it clearly, you suspect you would recognize Folly's house? What would it cost to look honestly?
- What would it mean to begin this week not with a resolution but with a request – asking God for the sight to see your own life as it actually is?

Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

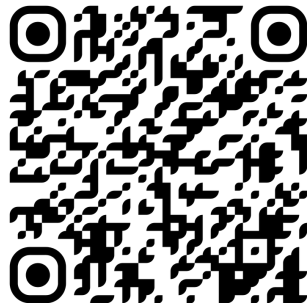
Additional Commentary

- On chokmah (חִכְמָה) – "wisdom": The word's earliest appearances describe skilled craftsmen – the tabernacle artisans are said to possess chokmah (Exodus 31:3). To live wisely is to work with the grain of reality as God made it, with the same precision a craftsman brings to wood. The wise person does not impose their preferred shape on the material. They learn its nature and work accordingly.
- On "the simple" (v.4, v.16) – peti (פְּתִי): The Hebrew root suggests an open door – someone whose orientation is not yet fixed, movable in either direction. Proverbs is addressed to everyone still in the process of becoming wise or foolish, and chapter 9's urgency reflects the seriousness of that in-between state.
- On Wisdom's seven pillars (v.1): Seven signals completeness in Hebrew thought. Wisdom's house is fully built, ordered, sufficient – not provisional. The feast is ready. The invitation requires only a response.
- On Folly's imitation (v.13-17): Folly does not announce herself as destruction. She uses nearly identical language, calls from the same heights, targets the same audience. The difference is what she conceals. The stark "but he does not know" (v.18) is a verdict on everyone who treats Folly's appeal as harmless because it has not yet shown its consequences.
- On reshit (רֵאשִׁית) – "the beginning of wisdom" (v.10): The word carries both senses: chronological starting point and foundational principle throughout. Wisdom does not begin elsewhere and eventually arrive at the fear of the Lord. It begins there – and that reorientation is not one component of wisdom. It is the ground on which wisdom becomes possible.
- On chayah (חַיָּה) – "live" (v.6): The verb carries the full weight of flourishing – not mere survival but the life the person was made for. Wisdom's invitation is not to a cautious, restricted existence. It is to the fullness of what human life is meant to be when oriented rightly.

Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our **leadership resources**.

From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.



Additional Study

Watch/Listen

Bible Project - Proverbs



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Proverbs**.

Bible Project - Wisdom



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Wisdom**.

Overview

Enduring Word - Proverbs 9



Text commentary, written materials, and audio/video recordings over **Proverbs 9:1-18**.

Got Questions - Godly Wisdom



Biblical Q&A, articles, translations, audios, videos, apps, podcasts and more on **Godly Wisdom**.

Expand

Bible Reference - Proverbs 9



Explore chapter and verse commentaries to deepen your understanding of **Proverbs 9**.

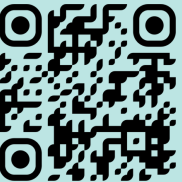
Bible Hub - Proverbs 9



Parallel translations, language tools, commentaries, and much more on **Proverbs 9:1-18**.

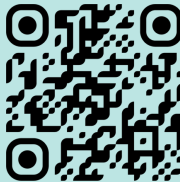
Deepen

Logos Factbook - Wisdom



Logos Factbook shares information resources and articles about **Wisdom**.

Blue Letter Bible - Wisdom



Original texts, Translations, Cross-Refs, Commentaries, Dictionaries + more on **Wisdom**.

