p 369 June 28 Lesson 4 (NIV)

FEAST WITH WISDOM

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 119:97–104 **BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 9

Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18

- ¹ Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars.
- ² She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.
- ³ She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city,
- 4 "Let all who are simple come to my house!"

 To those who have no sense she
- says, ⁵ "Come, eat my food
- and drink the wine I have mixed.
- ⁶Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."

- ⁸ Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.
- ⁹ Instruct the wise and they will be

wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

- The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
- ¹³ Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing.
- on a seat at the highest point of the city,
- 15 calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way,
- 16 "Let all who are simple come to my house!"
 To those who have no sense she
 - I'o those who have no sense she says,
- ¹⁷ "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!"
- ¹⁸ But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.



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KEY VERSE

Leave your simple ways and you will live;

walk in the way of insight. —**Proverbs 9:6**

p 370 MANY FACES OF WISDOM

Unit 1: Wisdom in Proverbs

LESSONS 1-4

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

- 1. Summarize the two lifestyles personified by the two women.
- 2. Compare and contrast the appeals personified in the two women.
- 3. Role-play planning a dinner party both to seek and honor wisdom.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

- A. Life-Changing Meals
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Wisdom's Home (PROVERBS 9:1-6)
 - A. Preparations (vv. 1, 2)
 - B. Invitation (vv. 3-6)
- II. Becoming Wise (PROVERBS 9:8–10)
 - A. Accepting Instruction (vv. 8, 9)
 Winning Them Over
 - B. Fearing the Lord (v. 10)
- III. Folly's Home (PROVERBS 9:13-18)
 - A. The Woman (v. 13)
 - B. The House (v. 14)
 - C. Temptation (vv. 15–17)

D. Departing Gift (v. 18)

Tourist Trap

Conclusion

- A. Only Two Choices
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

p 371 HOW TO SAY IT

Apollos Uh-pahl-us.

Aquila *Ack*-wih-luh.

Carnegie Car-nay-ghee.

De Wallen (*Dutch*) Deh Wall-ehn.

Laodicea Lay-odd-uh-see-uh.

Priscilla Prih-sil-uh.

Rembrandt *Rehm*-brandt.

van Gogh van Gof or van Go.

p 370 Introduction

A. Life-Changing Meals

Has a dinner ever changed your life? Examples of meals that changed a person's life abound. For instance, without a dinner party during a ferocious storm in Switzerland in 1816, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein would never have been written. The name Henri Rousseau might mean nothing to the art world if not for the dinner thrown by Pablo Picasso in 1908. Without a meal at Dooky Chase's Restaurant in 1960, we may never have seen the brave example of the men and women who participated in the sit-ins

that furthered the cause of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. Most of all, without the Passover there would have been no precedent for the Lord's Supper, which continues to be the most important meal for Christians.

In today's Scripture text, Wisdom invites us into her house; her meal is prepared, and she is ready to give a party to change your life. Folly is also ready. The choice is yours to make: Who will be your hostess and change your life?

B. Lesson Context

Today's lesson concludes our studies from the book of Proverbs. It is drawn from the final chapter in the opening section of Proverbs (chapters 1-9), in which Wisdom (personified as a woman; see Lesson Context in lesson 3) presents her case for being embraced—and followed as a way of life—by the hearer or reader (see Proverbs 9). From Proverbs 10 on, the book consists primarily of brief sayings and statements of advice covering a wide range of topics, often contrasting the life of wisdom with the life of folly.

I. Wisdom's Home (Proverbs 9:1-6)

A. Preparations (vv. 1, 2)

1. Wisdom has built her house; she

has set up its seven pillars.

The imagery of a house to represent wisdom is alluded to, from the close of the previous chapter (see Proverbs 8:34). Here Wisdom is described as having completed her house.

p371 Pillars suggest stability and a degree of magnificence or stateliness. That Wisdom herself has worked to carve them out shows her to be associated with hard work. Seven is a number representing completeness or perfection throughout the Bible (examples: Genesis 2:3; Leviticus 25:8; Revelation 5:6), and it may be viewed so here. Wisdom's house has no flaws or defects; it is the ideal dwelling place.

2. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.

Wisdom has prepared a sumptuous meal for her guests (compare Isaiah 25:6). Wine is something to be enjoyed (Genesis 27:28; Isaiah 55:1), though the Scriptures also warn of its abuse (Proverbs 23:29-35; 31:4, 5). Here it is part of what Wisdom has prepared to show that she has put forth her best efforts to prepare her table. All that is missing now are the guests (compare Luke 14:16-23).

B. Invitation (vv. 3-6)

3. She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of

the city,

Wisdom publicizes her invitation using two means. First, she sends out her servants. Second, Wisdom herself goes out to invite people to come to her feast, which may represent the second and more urgent invitation since it comes directly from her. She utters her cry at prominent points where she can be both seen and heard (Proverbs 8:1-3). The setting is similar to that in chapter 1, where Wisdom cries out to passersby in public places to get their attention (1:20, 21).

What Do You Think?

What is one specific lifestyle change you can make to reduce the "noise" that interferes with your hearing Wisdom's call?

Digging Deeper

What accountability procedure can you adopt to keep you on track in that regard?

4. "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says,

Wisdom's appeal is aimed at the simple, a group mentioned at the outset of Proverbs as those who can benefit from the book's contents (Proverbs 1:4, 22). Those who have no sense parallel the simple. The wording describes people who may be viewed as "neutral" in terms of wisdom vs. foolishness. These individuals

could be considered naïve or immature, people who clearly can benefit from what Wisdom has to offer but haven't yet chosen to do so.

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

The invitation from Wisdom begins by asking those invited to take part in the meal that she has prepared. Sharing food in the biblical world is considered the epitome of intimate fellowship with another person (compare Psalms 42:2; 63:1; 143:6; Isaiah 44:3; John 7:37, 38).

The implied fellowship is why, for example, the Jewish Christians were initially so upset with Peter for having eaten with uncircumcised Gentiles (Acts 11:2, 3). Jesus uses the language of intimate fellowship in appealing to the church at Laodicea to give him the opportunity to eat with them (Revelation 3:20). His desire is for such warm fellowship to end the "lukewarm" condition of the church (3:16). Wisdom desires a similar intimacy with those who respond to her call.

6. "Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."

For a person to accept Wisdom's invitation, the individual must abandon his or her *simple ways*. In so doing, that person will also turn from foolish actions that would hinder one's ability to follow wisdom consistently. A person cannot walk on both a wise and a foolish path

any more than a person can serve both "God and money" (Luke 16:13). What Wisdom offers, though, is life (Proverbs 3:1, 2, 18; 8:35).

p 372 What Do You Think?

What types of relationships should we sever, if any, to avoid ungodly influences?

Digging Deeper

How does your answer fit with Matthew 28:19, 20; John 3:16; and 1 Corinthians 5:9, 10?

II. Becoming Wise (PROVERBS 9:8-10)

A. Accepting Instruction (vv. 8, 9)

8. Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.

One way in which mockers and the wise demonstrate how different they are is in how each group accepts criticism. Scornful or contemptuous people reject any attempt to correct their behavior or to show the error of their ways (see Proverbs 15:12; Matthew 7:6). Pride usually lies at the root of such people's conduct. On the other hand, the wise person will appreciate any correction and express that to the person who conveys it.

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to make it safe for fellow believers to give us constructive criticism?

Digging Deeper

What, if anything, is there to be learned profitably from the wisdom of the world? How do Acts 5:34–39; 1 Corinthians 2:6, 7; 10:20, 21; Colossians 2:23; and James 3:13–16 help shape your response?

Just because a person is wise does not mean that he or she knows everything; indeed, genuine wisdom is characterized by humility and a teachable spirit. David, the man after God's own heart, was not too pious to say, "Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness; let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it" (Psalm 141:5).

9. Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

This expands on the second part of the previous verse. A truly wise individual admits that there is always more to learn (see Proverbs 1:5). He or she is not insulted by the person who offers instruction; the individual is grateful for whatever new insight or information is received (compare 12:15; 15:31; 19:25).

Apollos exhibited such an attitude when he was willing to receive the corrective teaching of Aquila and Priscilla. rective teaching of Aquila and Priscilla. And Aquila and Priscilla demonstrated wisdom in the way they took Apollos aside in private in order to instruct him (Acts 18:24–26).

WINNING THEM OVER

We all want others to see things our way. But how is that done? Since 1936, many have found answers in a best-selling book that promises to tell *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Dale Carnegie (1888–1955), American writer and developer of self-improvement courses, was the author of this manual for building interpersonal skills. Carnegie believed that it is possible to change other people's behavior by changing one's behavior toward them.

Carnegie encouraged leaders to become good listeners and to take a genuine interest in others. By taking a real interest in another person's well-being, it becomes easier to suggest changes that the receiver can consider and accept as being his or her own conclusions. By building nurturing relationships, a successful leader can grow personally while helping others do likewise.

Solomon also advised how to influence others. Trading insults with a scorner will only feed antagonism. Helping someone who wants to be just will allow the relationship to flourish and

improvement to continue. What kind of relationships are you nurturing?

—J. E.

B. Fearing the Lord (v. 10)

10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

The truth expressed in the first part of this verse has been encountered already in the book (Proverbs 1:7). The knowledge of the Holy One refers to part knowing the Lord (compare 2 Kings 19:22; Psalm 78:41; Isaiah 1:4; 43:3).

To many, the word holy implies a life that is removed from the practical concerns of this world and is thus unable to properly relate to it and live within it. But holiness implies a separation in a spiritual sense: being set apart for God. Though secular living (as the opposite of holy living) may seem fun, it detracts from a meaningful or enriching life. The best way to journey through life in a broken, sin-filled world is to follow the Creator's guidelines.

Lady Wisdom concludes her invitation (Proverbs 9:11, 12, not in our text) with the promise of rewards (not to be enjoyed by the scorner). These include a longer life (which is a general principle, not an ironclad guarantee).

III. Folly's Home

(PROVERBS 9:13-18)

A. The Woman (v. 13)

13. Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing.

This verse introduces Folly to contrast with the woman known as Wisdom. She is described as unruly: noisy, loud, obnoxious (compare Proverbs 7:11). Whereas Wisdom sends her appeal to the simple (9:4), Folly herself is simple (that is, unfocused or wandering: compare 5:6). Though one gets the impression that she likes to sound knowledgeable, in reality she needs wisdom for she knows nothing.

B. The House (v. 14)

14. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city,

While Wisdom has built her house (Proverbs 9:1), nothing is said about Folly's efforts to build her own. Nor does the text indicate that she has prepared any meal as has Wisdom (9:2). Folly simply sits idly at the door of her house (contrast 9:4).

Folly, like Wisdom, locates herself at a prominent point at the highest point of the city. Some suggest that because of the way in which high places are often associated with pagan worship in the Old

Testament, it may be that Folly is inviting passersby to join her in such worship (compare Ezekiel 16:24, 25). If so, that adds to the suspect nature of her appeal. But since Wisdom also resides on a high place (Proverbs 9:3), Folly's character more than her location is what makes her suspicious as a good hostess.

What Do You Think?

How can we work to turn down the volume on foolishness in our surroundings without denying the right to free speech?

Digging Deeper

Comparing Proverbs 9:3 with 9:14, what are the "high places" from which wisdom and foolishness proceed most noticeably near you?

Folly is contrasted with Wisdom in a manner that calls to mind the parables of Jesus. The house imagery anticipates how Jesus will conclude his Sermon on the Mount, with an illustration of two houses built on two different foundations: rock and sand. Both houses are subject to the same circumstances (rain, floods, and wind). The house built on sand collapses, while the house built on a foundation of solid rock remains intact.

The two houses, as Jesus will explain centuries later, stand for two different ways of living. The one built on rock represents the life lived in obedience to his teachings; the one built on sand represents the person who hears his teachings but refuses to obey them (Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 6:48, 49).

C. Temptation (vv. 15-17)

15. calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way,

Folly provides a distraction from Wisdom's call; she is trying to lure people away from the course they are on (contrast Proverbs 1:20-23). Her intentions are questionable, to say the least.

16. "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says,

Folly words her invitation in a manner similar to Wisdom's (Proverbs 9:4, 5). In that regard, Folly's invitation is to the same naïve population to which Wisdom calls. In this case, have no sense means that a person lacks discernment.

p 374 17a. "Stolen water is sweet;

Here, however, we see the difference between the two invitations. And the two potential hostesses cannot be more distinct! Folly has nothing of her own to offer as she brazenly refers to her provision of water as stolen (contrast Proverbs 9:5). She further has the audacity to boast of how sweet such fare is to taste (compare 20:17).

There is no sense of shame or remorse in how Folly has acquired what she is offering. Quite the opposite—there is an unmistakable sense of perverse pride!

17b. "food eaten in secret is deli-

One can assume that the *food* to be *eaten in secret* is also stolen. That is why it is devoured where no one can discover the theft of the ones who enjoy it.

D. Departing Gift (v. 18)

18a. But little do they know that the dead are there,

Hebrews 11:25 describes the pleasures of sin as "fleeting"—they do not endure. This is illustrated by the *but* statement of the verse before us as it follows the seductive appeal of the previous verse. What Folly has made to sound so enjoyable and so satisfying leads to a *dead* end (compare Proverbs 2:18; 7:26, 27). Instead of being a lifestyle of pleasure, her path produces a "death-style."

One is reminded of the lie posed by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The serpent promised much to the woman (and to the man through her) but could only deliver death, as God had warned (Genesis 2:17). Satan continues to be the master of deception. Jesus refers to the devil as the father of lies (John 8:44). One of his disguises by which he deceives is to appear as "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). There is nothing sweet or pleasant in following his counsel. Only Wis-

dom offers the tree of life (Proverbs 3:18).

18b. that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

The Hebrew word translated realm of the dead can also be translated "the grave" (examples: Genesis 37:35; 1 Kings 2:6). It refers to the depths below the earth (Job 11:8; Psalm 139:8), not necessarily to a place of punishment. The concept of Heaven and Hell as we understand today wasn't fully revealed by God when Solomon wrote. To grasp that entirety, one must consider the teaching of the entire New Testament. Only there is to be found the ultimate clarity on the subject of the afterlife (examples: Matthew 10:28; Mark 10:21; 12:25; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 21: 22).

The focus of the warning in the verse before us is that heeding Folly's invitation is a sure path to ruin. The clear contrast is found in Wisdom's appeal, which promises long life (Proverbs 3:16; 9:11). A life lived with wisdom, even one tragically cut short, is a good life. Since true wisdom begins with the fear of God, any such life, whether long or short, is the path to everlasting life with the Lord. In that way, a person can be said to have found the Old Testament's understanding of abundant life (compare John 10:10). And what has been avoided is the way of trespasses and sins, which leads to death (compare Ephesians 2:1).

What Do You Think?

Which Scriptures do you find most helpful in strengthening your resolve to make wisely measured decisions?

Digging Deeper

Which one of those Scriptures is most "shareable"? Why do you say that?

TOURIST TRAP

Amsterdam is a city with a rich history. For instance, the city claims that the Amsterdam Stock Exchange is the oldest in the world. Similarly, the Natura Artis Magistra is one of the oldest zoos in Europe and includes a planetarium and an aquarium. Museums display the works of renowned Dutch artists such as Rembrandt and van Gogh.

While these cultural sites attract their share of sightseers, one of the largest draws in Amsterdam is the neighborhood known as De Wallen, home of the famous red-light district. Prostitutes offer their services from behind the siren songs of windows illuminated with red lights. Beyond prostitution, p375 the area also lures visitors with drug-related activities.

Wisdom offers a rich feast in all cities, even Amsterdam. But the call of unrestrained sensuality is strong. Although Wisdom is built on a solid foundation of truth, Folly appeals to people's basest truth, Folly appeals to people's basest instincts. Whose call do you follow?

—J. E.

Conclusion

A. Only Two Choices

When I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, the choice of breakfast cereals was limited. Today many grocery store aisles are filled with nothing but cereals. In fact, almost anything we buy today involves selecting from a huge (and often confusing) array of choices. Truly we live in a world with an abundance of choices in a variety of areas.

However, as today's lesson from Proverbs has pointed out, the essentials of life and eternity come down to a single choice. The first psalm concludes with a contrast of this choice: "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction" (Psalm 1:6). The prophet Ezekiel urged the people of his day to turn from the way leading to death and thereby live (Ezekiel 18:23, 32). All this is reinforced by the teaching of Jesus concerning the good way leading to life versus the evil way (Matthew 7:13, 14), the two builders (7:24-27), and the two groups at the final judgment (25:31-46).

Throughout the book of Proverbs, the choices are presented as wisdom and

folly (or foolishness) dozens of times. Following wisdom leads to life (Proverbs 9:6), folly to death (9:18). Today's Scripture text from Proverbs 9 uses the illustration of two houses and two hostesses to present the choice that we all face. This is consistent with the choice that Moses gave the Israelites:

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

The same options are reflected in the choice that Joshua later gave to the Israelites as to whom they would serve: other gods or the true God (Joshua 24:15). Then as today, it's either/or, not both/and.



Visual for Lesson 4. Start a discussion by pointing to this visual as you ask what habits learners can develop to help them to feast with Wisdom daily.

Despite the many who advocate that

there are many paths to life from many different (and even contradictory) religions, the Scriptures still offer the only possibility. Jesus is the only way to life (John 14:6); every other path leads to death. This is why responding to the gospel with acceptance remains so crucial. It is a matter of great urgency because it makes all the difference between life and death.

Two houses stand, but one will fall. Two meals are offered, but one is poisoned. Two hostesses extend invitations, but one is deceptive. It is up to each individual to decide which house to enter, which meal to eat, and which invitation to accept. Choose wisely!

B. Prayer

Father in Heaven, thank you for Jesus, who reveals his treasures of wisdom and knowledge to those who seek him. Thank you for the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise concerning salvation. Grant us grace and strength to follow the way of wisdom, knowing that it is the way to life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

The path of folly is not a lifestyle; it's a death-style.

p 376 INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible
Student (from your curriculum supplier)
and the reproducible activity page (at
www.standardlesson.com or in the back of
the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Call for two volunteers to answer the following series of opinion questions (or others of your own devising):

What national park, monument, or historic site should everyone visit?

What is the best worship song or hymn?

What is the best fast-food restaurant?

What is the best movie ever made?

What is the tastiest snack food?

Alternate between the volunteers as to who answers first. After the last question, open the floor for the rest of the class to express their opinions as you repeat the questions.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the "Choices" exercise from the activity page, which you can download, for each learner to complete silently as indicated. Call time after no more than one minute. Tally responses on the board.

After either activity say, "Life is full of choices. Some are merely matters of personal taste, while others influence the very course of life. Let's see what Solomon had to say about the latter."

Into the Word

Divide the class in half, designating one of the halves as the **Wisdom Group** and the other as the **Folly Group**. Explain that the groups will debate this proposal: Wisdom is better than folly.

Each group is to prepare to debate either for or against the proposal as the group designations indicate. Stress that use of today's text of Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18 is to be first and foremost in their preparation. After several minutes, allow a representative of the **Wisdom Group** to go first in the giving of opening statements.

After both groups' opening statements, use a back-and-forth format appropriate for your class for groups to support and deny the proposal; an internet search in advance will help you decide on the best format to use.

After an appropriate amount of time, move to closing statements, with the Folly Group going first. The Wisdom Group has the privilege of going last because it has the burden of proof regarding the proposal. In fairness, however, the Wisdom Group is not allowed to present new arguments or new Scripture support since the Folly Group will have no chance of rebuttal. Mention this at the

outset of debate preparation.

Following the debate, ask the class how choosing between wisdom and folly is like and/or unlike the debate just witnessed. Jot responses on the board; correct misconceptions as they arise.

Into Life

Inform learners that next they will plan a dinner party intended to reflect appreciation for the guest of honor: Wisdom herself. In whole-class brainstorming, have learners suggest a guest list (people they know who reflect wisdom), the location of the banquet (a place wisdom is likely to be found), the menu (how wisdom results in spiritual nourishment), etc.

Returning to the guest list, ask learners to suggest the types of people (without using names) who would expect to be invited and who would be surprised when they weren't. Pause for a minute of silent reflection for learners to make private notes to themselves regarding what they need to do in the coming week to not be in that group.

Option. Distribute copies of the "Two Appeals" exercise from the activity page as a closing self-test. As you do, assure learners that you will not collect the results. Allow no more than one minute; have learners check their own answers.

Close with a prayer that thanks God

for his rebukes and teachings in wisdom, asking that he will continue to teach wisdom to each member of the class.

To print the reproducible activity page, simply click the highlighted text below to create a pdf file on your hard drive. Then open the pdf file in Acrobat Reader and print.

Activity Page (June 28—Feast with Wisdom)

Feast with Wisdom	
	Lesson 4, Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18, NIV
CHOICES	
Within each set below, circle the one that you prefer over the other.	
1. Dog or cat?	6. Spring or autumn?
2. Coffee or tea?	7. Burger or salad?
3. Tucked or untucked?	8. Movie or book?
4. Rise early or stay up late?	9. Beach vacation or mountain vacation?
5. Sedan or SUV?	10. Appetizer or dessert?
TWO APPEALS	
Circle the speaker of each paraphrase below. Then consult the Scriptures at the bottom of the page to check your work.	
1. "Focusing on learning is a waste of time." Spoken by Wisdom or Folly? (Circle one)	
2. "Don't leave my house; you have nowhere better to go." Spoken by Wisdom or Folly? (Circle one)	
3. "I have nourishment that is substantial." Spoken by Wisdom or Folly? (Circle one)	
4. "Don't work too hard; enjoy the provisions taken from others." Spoken by Wisdom or Folly? (Circle one)	
5. "My teaching will equip you to have a productive and satisfying life." Spoken by Wisdom or Folly? (Circle one)	
6. "I have a solid foundation for my instru Spoken by Wisdom or Folly? (Circle	
a. Proverbs 9:1 b. Proverbs 9:2, 5 c. Proverbs 9:6, 9, 10	d. Proverbs 9:13 e. Proverbs 9:17 f. Proverbs 9:18
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