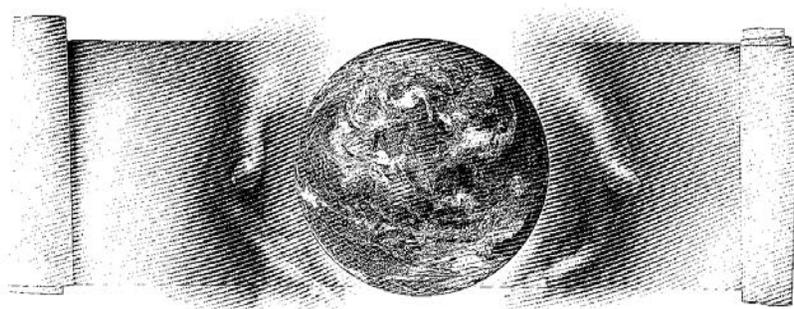


Godly Wisdom



SABBATH—JANUARY 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Proverbs 8:1–21; Matthew 16:26; Proverbs 8:22–31; Genesis 1:31; Proverbs 8:32–36; Proverbs 9:1–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD created me as the first of his works, before his acts of long ago” (Proverbs 8:22, NIV).

AT THIS POINT IN PROVERBS, WISDOM APPEARS AGAIN. (Read Proverbs 1:20, 21.) It is clear from the verses for this week that wisdom is truth. Wisdom is *the* truth that comes from God. He is the Author of all truth.

The focus here in Proverbs is on the idea that there is truth that applies to everyone. This idea is very different from some modern thinking. In the West, truth is seen as flexible, depending on culture. One person's idea of truth may be different from someone else's.

But this way of thinking is not from the Bible. My truth should be the same as yours. This is because “truth” is the same everywhere. It does not belong to any one person but to all people. Whether all people recognize it or not does not change the fact that it exists.

Pilate's famous question to Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38), came after Jesus said, “ ‘Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice’ ” (John 18:37, NKJV). God's truth is real. It even speaks to us. What is important for us is that we will listen to, and obey, what truth is saying.

WISDOM CRIES OUT (Proverbs 8:1–21)

Read Proverbs 8:1–21 (NKJV). According to these verses, what is the value of wisdom?

Wisdom is so important that it must reach everyone. God created all human life. And Christ died for each one of us. Wisdom is the knowledge of God and the salvation He offers. So wisdom is for every human person.

Study the words used to describe wisdom's voice: "cry out," "lift up her voice," "call," "voice," "speak," "opening . . . lips," "mouth," "lips," "words." It does not matter how a person understands these symbols. What is really clear is that wisdom is meant to be shared. All people are to listen to wisdom. As we learned last week, what wisdom says makes all the difference between life and death.

Eight times wisdom talks about the truthfulness of her words. The description of wisdom is almost the same as the description of the Lord in Deuteronomy 32:4. This comparison should not be surprising. This is because God is the Creator of all things. (Read John 1:1–3.) So, He is the foundation of all truth.

Read Proverbs 8:10, 11. What do these verses say about wisdom?

So many people have lived, and still live, in ignorance, in foolishness, and in darkness. Many live with no hope at all or with false hopes. What makes this situation even sadder is that wisdom and truth are so wonderful. They are filled with hope and promise for a better life now. And they also promise eternal life in a new heaven and a new earth. This is all because of the sacrifice of Jesus. All the riches in the world mean nothing. (Read Ecclesiastes 2:11–13.) But the knowledge of God is everything.

Read Matthew 16:26 and ask yourself how well your life shows the important truth of these words.

WISDOM AND CREATION (Proverbs 8:22–31)

Read Proverbs 8:22–31. How is wisdom connected with Creation?

In these verses wisdom is connected with the Lord as the Creator. This poem shares many common words with the Creation story in Genesis 1 and 2. The outline of the poem follows the same order of ideas found in Genesis 1 and 2. For example, the poem begins with heaven, then water, and then finishes with earth. This is the same outline, or plan for writing, used in Genesis 1 and 2. The reason for this comparison is to point to the “authority” of wisdom. For example, God Himself used wisdom to create. And wisdom is the oldest tool, older than the universe itself and so important to its life. So, we should use wisdom in everything we do in life.

There is also a strong focus on the beginning of wisdom. The first words of the poem are “the LORD,” *Yahweh*, who has “begotten [given life to]” (second word) wisdom. The Hebrew word *qanah*, translated as “possessed” in the NKJV, suggests the idea of “begetting [giving life to]” instead of “creating” (read Deuteronomy 32:6; Genesis 4:1). The next word is the scientific word that is connected with the Genesis Creation, *reshit* (“beginning”). This word is found in the first verse of Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Yet, the word *beginning* in Proverbs 8:22 is used differently than it is in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1:1 the word is connected with the Creation itself. But in Proverbs 8:22, the word is connected with God Himself and with His way (*derek*). This means His nature (who He is). So, wisdom is part of the very nature of God Himself.

Wisdom existed even before the creation of the universe. The “life” of wisdom, at that time when only God was present, is “from everlasting.”

So, wisdom does not begin with us. Instead, wisdom is shown to us. It is something that we learn, something that is taught to us. Surely, to walk in our own light is to walk in darkness. We are told that Jesus is “the true Light which gives light to every man” (John 1:9, NKJV). Every man needs it too.



To walk in our own light is to walk in darkness.

REJOICING IN CREATION (Proverbs 8:30, 31)



At the end of Creation week, God stops to fully enjoy His creation.

In Genesis 1, we see that each step of Creation week closes with the same sentence: “God saw that it was good.” (Read Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.) The last step (verse 31) goes even further: “It was *very* good.” The Hebrew word for “good” means enjoyment. And it also suggests relationship. At the end of the whole Creation week, God stops to fully enjoy His creation (Genesis 2:1–3). The time of this rest, the Sabbath, is blessed. In the same way, our poem closes with wisdom’s enjoying the creation.

Read Proverbs 8:30, 31. Why was wisdom having joy?

Wisdom’s joy shows God’s joy about Creation. This joy happens “daily” at each step of Creation. But it also crowns (completes) the work of creation, when the Creation (of life on earth) itself was finished.

In Proverbs 8, we find the reason for wisdom’s joy: “My delight was with the sons of men” (verse 31, NKJV). At the end of the Creation week, on Sabbath, God entered into a relationship with humans. The results of God’s rest and joy, after the week of work, are closely connected with the human experience of Sabbath: “Following the example of the Creator, man too may look back upon his finished work with joy, pleasure, and satisfaction. In this way, man may find joy in both God’s creation and in his responsibility as a ruler over creation.”—Adapted from Gerhard F. Hasel, quoted in Kenneth A. Strand, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), page 23.

Read Colossians 1:15–17; Colossians 2:3; Revelation 3:14; and John 1:1–14. What do these verses tell us about Jesus’ work in the Creation itself? Why is His work as Creator so important in understanding His role as our Savior?

WISDOM'S GOODNESS (Proverbs 8:32–36)

The last few verses of this proverb return to what it means to have wisdom. It is true that knowledge about Wisdom's presence before Creation and during Creation is very deep. But in the Bible, truth must always be made simple enough to understand. This is so that we may follow it according to the light we have been given in Jesus.

Read Proverbs 8:32–36. What life-and-death message is given here?

The Hebrew word translated as “blessed” (NKJV) means “happy” (RSV). In these verses the word *blessed* is connected with two ideas. The first idea describes an action: “Blessed are those who keep my ways” (verse 32, NKJV). The same language is used in Psalm 119:1, 2 about the law: “Blessed are those who live without blame. They live in keeping with the law of the LORD. Blessed are those who obey his covenant¹ laws” (NirV).

The second idea describes an attitude (feeling): “Blessed is the man who listens to me” (verse 34, NKJV). In both cases the requirement suggests a continuing effort. It is not enough to have found the right way. We have to “keep it.” It is not enough to hear the word of God. We have to “watch daily” and follow what we know. As Jesus put it: “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28, NKJV).

“Do we find true happiness by walking in the path of disobedience and in breaking God's law? Christ's life points out the true author of happiness and how it is to be received. . . . If Christians would be truly happy, they should cheerfully do their duty, doing faithful work while fitting their hearts and lives with the example of Jesus.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, page 162.

Happiness can be hard to hold on to or find. The more we work for it, the harder it seems for us to receive it. Why should faithfulness to God, not happiness, be the most important thing for us to have? Which will bring us true happiness, and why: trying to find happiness, or putting the kingdom of God first in our lives?



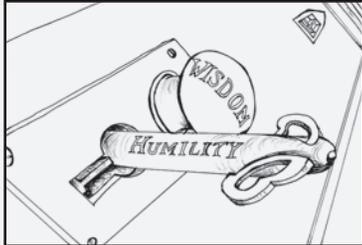
It is not enough to discover the right way. We must walk in it.

DEFINITIONS

1. covenant—having to do with the promise or agreement between God and His people.

EITHER/OR (Proverbs 9:1–6)

The author of Proverbs 9 encourages his readers to make a choice now between two lifestyles: wisdom or foolishness. The first and last six verses (Proverbs 9:1–6, 13–18) are well-balanced, showing the differences between the two opposite groups.



The key to wisdom is being humble.

DEFINITIONS

2. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

Compare² Proverbs 9:1–6 and Proverbs 9:13–18. What is the difference between wisdom and foolishness?

1. Wisdom is very good and is involved in Creation. Seven verbs are used to describe wisdom’s actions (verses 1–3). The seven pillars she has built (verse 1) suggest the seven days of Creation. But foolishness, unlike wisdom, sits and does nothing. Foolishness pretends to be someone when really “she is simple, and knows nothing” (verse 13, NKJV).

2. Wisdom and foolishness call out to the same people (read verses 4 and 16). But what they give to their guests is very different. Wisdom invites her guests to eat the bread and drink the drink that she has prepared (verse 5). But foolishness offers nothing to eat or drink. She just boasts about stolen food (verse 17).

3. Wisdom calls us to stop being foolish and to live. Foolishness is more “patient.” She does not demand that we stop doing wrong things. But the result is death. Those who follow wisdom will be growing in spiritual strength. They will “go in the way of understanding” (verse 6, NKJV). Those who follow the way of foolishness will never grow. They will “not know” what is true and good (verse 18, NKJV).

Read Proverbs 9:7–9. How do the wise man and the wicked man answer the instruction of wisdom? What makes the wise man wiser than the wicked man?

The key to wisdom is being humble. The wise man is the man who is humble and accepts instruction with an open mind. Wisdom comes only to the one who, like a child, feels the need to grow. This is why Jesus taught that “‘if you [do not become like little children], you will never enter the kingdom of heaven’ ” (Matthew 18:3, NIV).

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “The Ruler of the universe was not alone in His good work. He had a partner—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes. His partner also could share His joy in giving happiness to created humans. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.’ John 1:1, 2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father. He was one in nature, in character [goodness], in purpose—the only Person that could enter into all the meetings and decisions with God. . . . And the Son of God declares about Himself: ‘The L[ORD] possessed [had] me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, sharing joy always with Him.’ Proverbs 8:22–30.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders and Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 34.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Why is belief in the Genesis Creation story the foundation of Bible wisdom? Why is the idea of evolution very different from the Bible?
- 2 Think more deeply about the idea that true wisdom is something that we cannot make by ourselves. Instead, wisdom must be shown to us by God. What are some examples of important truths that we would never know if we had not received them from God? For example, how could we know about Christ’s death on the cross and what it offers if we had not learned about it from the Bible? What about the seventh-day Sabbath or the Second Coming?
- 3 How does God’s work, as shown in Genesis 1, prove the fact that good cannot be mixed with evil?
- 4 How does God’s enjoyment of the Creation help us to understand how we can have a deeper and richer Sabbath experience?