

# SHE'S GONNA MAKE YOU AN OFFER YOU SHOULDN'T REFUSE

PROVERBS 8:1-17    FEBRUARY 27, 2022

Have you ever had to live with roommates? It can be tough to find a good one, especially if you have to resort to a classified ad. Consider this craigslist post from 2013:

*"[Roommate wanted for] a...unique living arrangement...Let's...lay out all the cards...I have two pot belly pigs who will be an unavoidable part of your life. They are intelligent, sweet, and adorable, but they also behave like pigs and so anyone who lives here must understand how to interact with them. That I can teach you, but...the oldest, will bully you-they are herd animals and while I am ultimately alpha, he feels the need to climb the hierarchy. If you live here...you are in his herd, [so] he will challenge you every so often to establish who is where in the hierarchy. He can also be very sweet and cuddle with you on the couch while you watch [tv]...We can discuss the pig topic further."*<sup>1</sup>

Quite an offer. At least she volunteered to *teach* new roomies in the ways of swine politics.

Proverbs 8 is an In-Search-Of ad made by Lady Wisdom. She makes quite an offer to instruct and to enrich and to enhance the life of anyone who wants in.

What is wisdom? When the Bible uses that term, it's much more than smarts or knowing a lot of trivia. Bruce Waltke writes, *"Wisdom means...masterful understanding...The possession of wisdom enables humans to cope with life and achieve what would otherwise be impossible...and includes knowledge of the Holy One Himself."*<sup>2</sup> Wisdom, in the Bible, is a method of knowing and evaluating and deciding according to a set of truths revealed by God. Wisdom is not restricted to religious pursuits - it is meant to be applied at every level of life. The physical life, the spiritual life, the emotional life, the economic life, the relational life - God's wisdom is *necessary* for all of it. Derek Kidner writes, *"The wisdom of God is as relevant to the shopping center as to heaven itself."*<sup>3</sup>

In this passage, God pleads with us, inviting us to receive the gift of His perfect wisdom so our lives can be sustained and enriched in all the most ways that matter. And this offer comes not a moment too soon. People all throughout history have needed wisdom, but we live in a time *desperate* for it. Today, polls show that our trust in most institutions is dropping. When it comes to the economy, the military, higher education, our political leaders, the media, the medical system, courts, and more, our confidence is sagging.<sup>4</sup> The world doesn't know what to believe. We see people grasping for *some* standard, some rudder to guide our thinking. We go to places like podcasts and social media

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.craigslist.org/about/best/chi/3578983270.html>

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Waltke *The Book Of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*

<sup>3</sup> Derek Kidner *Proverbs*

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/352316/americans-confidence-major-institutions-dips.aspx>  
<https://thehill.com/policy/finance/economy/586898-economic-confidence-drops-back-to-early-pandemic-low-gallup>  
<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/americans-faith-election-integrity-drops-poll/story?id=82069876>  
<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/12/02/public-confidence-military-drops-again-survey-finds.html>  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/09/gallup-survey-finds-falling-confidence-higher-education>

for insight into life. We grope around for one study or another to verify what we think. We aren't sure *who* to believe but, at the same time, feel very sure in *who not* to, no matter what they say.

*Pew Research* writes: "Many think America is experiencing a crisis in facts and truth...the vast majority of adults say that Americans' level of agreement on the basic facts about issues and events is a problem."<sup>5</sup> Illustrated by the way that everyone thinks everyone else is a fascist today. You voted Red? You're a fascist! You voted Blue? Fascism! It would be funny if it weren't so pitiful.

In *this* distressed and exhausted world, the Lord God calls out, offering the Master's understanding and with it His peace, His insight, and the richness of joy that can *only* be found by going His way. And He says that true, masterful understanding for life and Godliness, is available to us right now.

**Proverbs 8:1-3 - Doesn't wisdom call out? Doesn't understanding make her voice heard? <sup>2</sup>At the heights overlooking the road, at the crossroads, she takes her stand. <sup>3</sup>Beside the gates leading into the city, at the main entrance, she cries out:**

Proverbs is a collection of the true teachings of God in poems. They are presented as tools to be used to living a life that not only pleases God but avoids the folly and failure we're prone to fall into as finite human beings. Wisdom is pictured here as a lady, but as we read, remember that it is *God Himself* reaching out to *you*, His dearly loved, special creation. And though this chapter is speaking originally of the teachings collected in this book, we know that *all* Scripture is God-breathed and given that we might be complete and equipped for every good work. So, this morning, when we hear the word wisdom referenced, it means the Word of God.

As the poem opens, we find Wisdom calling out everywhere people are found. On the highways and byways. She's downtown and at the county line. She presents herself in the places where disputes are decided, politics are discussed, business is transacted,<sup>6</sup> and life is lived. As you, the traveller, come up to a crossroads in life, she stands there, waiting for you, asking for your attention, hoping you'll take a moment to listen before going on.

**Proverbs 8:4-5 - <sup>4</sup>"People, I call out to you; my cry is to the children of Adam. <sup>5</sup>Learn to be shrewd, you who are inexperienced; develop common sense, you who are foolish.**

God's offer is for everyone. Every son of Adam and Daughter of Eve, as C.S. Lewis would put it. Though none of us want to think of ourselves as foolish or inexperienced, the reality is that we *all* need continual growth in understanding of God's truth. Moses said in Deuteronomy 4:

**Deuteronomy 4:9a - ...be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don't forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don't slip from your mind as long as you live.**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/07/22/americans-struggles-with-truth-accuracy-and-accountability/>

<sup>6</sup> Waltke

To answer Wisdom's call means to embark on a lifelong development of shrewdness and sanctified common sense. Your Bible may say "prudence" in place of "shrewd." We often think of shrewdness in negative terms, but in the Proverbs it is always presented in a positive way.<sup>7</sup> It means to be able to foresee and deal with difficulties - to be cunning in a common sense way, using thoughtful tactics to attain your goals. If you travel somewhere where pickpockets are known to frequent, only a *fool* wouldn't take extra care of their belongings. *That's* shrewdness. But we also see the difference between the kind of person who lets life happen to them as they are just swept along by the decisions of others, by circumstances, by the traditions and lies of this world, and then those who are empowered by God to understand life on a different level - a person who is actively applying God's truth to their life.

So, in verses 1 through 5, we are being made an offer - we've received a collect call and have the choice of whether we will accept it or not. And, it's a great offer! God is very straightforward in the book of Proverbs. To pass on this deal He's making you is absolute foolishness and ends in misery.

**Proverbs 8:6-9 - <sup>6</sup>Listen, for I speak of noble things, and what my lips say is right. <sup>7</sup>For my mouth tells the truth, and wickedness is detestable to my lips. <sup>8</sup>All the words from my mouth are righteous; none of them are deceptive or perverse. <sup>9</sup>All of them are clear to the perceptive, and right to those who discover knowledge.**

All God's ways are good and perfect. Everything He does is right. Whenever there is some sort of collapse, whether it's a bridge or a building or an economy, there's usually *someone* who had been sounding the alarm before the disaster. Three years before the tragic Miami apartment collapse, an engineer had warned of the major structural damage.<sup>8</sup> Michael Lewis' book *The Big Short* catalogs the small group of people who saw the coming housing market collapse in 2008. With hindsight we look back and say, "Those people were right all along."

Well, for all eternity, God has been right all along. And He is not *guessing*, He *knows*. He has perfect understanding of every occurrence in this universe, past, present, and future. And He's giving you and I a chance to be on His regular mailing list! What He speaks is excellent and trustworthy and *necessary* for us to hear. It is a remarkable thing that God has laid out for us the principles we need to be the best type of parents and husbands and wives and citizens and employees and church-members and neighbors. It's all contained in His revealed truth.

But notice: In order to benefit from this vast supply of wisdom, a person must have a seeking mentality. These true and noble things are for those who are *perceptive* and those who will *discover*. God does not force His wisdom on you. He waits to see who is interested. But, if you seek Him, you will find Him. That's a promise. God rewards those who diligently seek Him. But, that means that you and I must turn aside from our own pursuits and instead commit our lives to the Lord and trust that the paths that God has for us are better than those we planned for ourselves.

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<sup>7</sup> *CSB Study Bible Notes*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/26/us/miami-building-collapse-investigation.html>

Human beings think we do a pretty good job navigating life. But God comes along graciously and with compassion and says, "Actually, you're like sheep who've gone astray. The path you're on leads to death. But if you come with Me, you'll not only get life in the end, along the way I'll give you more than you could ever imagine in treasure that cannot be stolen or ruined."

Notice: Wisdom says there in verses 8 and 9: "All the words. All of them." We need the *whole* counsel of God - everything between the two covers of the Bible. I had a professor in college who told us that his habit was to read the same 10 or so verses each morning. Perhaps he read more than that, but I remember getting the impression that *that* was his routine. We need a lot more than 10 verses. We need 66 books! And we need to absorb them for the rest of our lives.

**Proverbs 8:10-11 - <sup>10</sup>Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold. <sup>11</sup>For wisdom is better than jewels, and nothing desirable can equal it.**

This conversation just got real. Wisdom is there, offering us understanding and discernment and all that. But *now*, she says something with a very sharp edge: "Don't live your life in pursuit of material wealth." She *assumes* that each of us will come to a point in life (or multiple points) where there will be an opportunity for us to either go the way of God's wisdom or the way of earthly enrichment.

Wealth is relative and money *is* a necessary tool in this world. But, as people living in the richest country in the richest time of human history, we need to listen carefully to the Lord's direction and warnings when it comes to how we live life and how we order our relationship with money.

**1 Timothy 6:9 - <sup>9</sup>But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction.**

*Having wealth* is not the problem. Solomon was maybe the richest person to ever live. Some estimate his peak net worth at \$2 trillion.<sup>9</sup> Paul acknowledged there would be rich Christians. The issue is whether wealth has *you*. We live in a culture that is enslaved to the pursuit of wealth and we must guard against that worldly idol creeping into our attitudes, our decisions, or our pursuits.

**Proverbs 8:12-13 - <sup>12</sup>I, wisdom, share a home with shrewdness and have knowledge and discretion. <sup>13</sup>To fear the Lord is to hate evil. I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech.**

Lady Wisdom is ready to bring you on board and give you access to all her cabinets. But there *are* prerequisites. To receive this gift, you must turn from evil and instead fear the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom. That's where it all starts. Think of roommate ads: "No smokers, no pets." Well, Lady Wisdom says, "No arrogant pride, no evil conduct, no perverse speech."

We learn several things here: First, that life is fundamentally spiritual. Our physical needs are real and they are important, but the spiritual life is much *more* important. You can drive your car without

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/richest-men-in-history-vladimir-putin-bill-gates-and-warren-buffett-arent-even-close-2017-08-09>

windshield wipers, but do you want to drive without brakes? One system is more important than the other. A healthy spiritual life will work itself out in your heart, your hands, your mouth.

A second important truth we see here is: If a person is arrogant, if they are proud, if they conduct themselves in ungodly ways, if they refuse to control their speech, *they cannot be wise* - not according to God's standard. They may have earthly power, they may seem impressive, but they are bankrupt when it comes to real insight. We should not invite people like into our lives as influencers or leaders or role models. Their perspective leads to ruin.

**Proverbs 8:14-16 - <sup>14</sup>I possess good advice and sound wisdom; I have understanding and strength. <sup>15</sup>It is by me that kings reign and rulers enact just law; <sup>16</sup>by me, princes lead, as do nobles and all righteous judges.**

Do you want a better society? Do you want a stronger nation? Do you want a better life for you and those around you? Then *Godly wisdom* is the road to take. We want strength and smarts and success. Ok, then seek God's wisdom and ally yourselves with others who seek God's wisdom. Because, in *this* book, the *opposite* of wisdom is folly. One route ends in life, the other in death.

But, I think if we're honest, we have to admit that we are often afraid that God won't hold up His end of the deal. We decide we *have* to use worldly "wisdom." We *have* to use worldly methods, otherwise we'll get trampled on, right?

Perhaps this might help illustrate: In the United States we have a wonderful treasure called "The write-in vote." Now, I understand that voting is a complicated issue and, for Christians, one rooted in personal, spiritual liberty. But we *often* hear talk about how we "have" to vote for one bad candidate since the alternative candidate is so much worse. I would suggest that there are other options that we should seriously consider according to what God says is true. Do we believe that God wants to involve Himself in the affairs of men? If so, do we believe His desire is to elevate wicked people? Do we believe that ungodly people will - inexplicably - make Godly choices? Proverbs says they won't. And we should apply what God says to our real life choices.

There comes a time when believers must make the personal choice to stand with the Lord, rather than try to score a temporary, temporal victory. This is what Lady Wisdom is saying to us. There will be many times, small and great, where we'll be presented with the question: "Who is on the Lord's side?" If we, as Christians, never have moments in life where we stand and say, "I'm Spartacus," in our obedience to God, the Word would tell us we have compromised and that we've stopped trusting the Lord and His strong arm.

But if you trust in the God of the Bible, if you follow Him and listen to Him, you can have strength and understanding enough to guide a nation.

**Proverbs 8:17 - <sup>17</sup>I love those who love me, and those who search for me find me.**

God wants to relate to you through *love*. We're not just talking about data or a flow chart for decision making. We're talking about a living, dynamic relationship between you and your Creator.

We relate to people different ways. Those closer to our hearts have a greater impact on the way we think and behave. It's getting toward tax time. Some of you have a tax professional prepare your filing. You *probably* don't have a tender relationship with your accountant. You interact a couple times of year, you're thankful for their help, but they're not someone you spend your life with.

Looking back on your life, maybe you have a mentor of some sort - a beloved teacher or coach who really made an impact on the person you've become. That's a different level of connection. And then, some of us are lucky enough to have a deep and vibrant relationship with someone we spend a lot of life with. A parent or a spouse, maybe a very close friend. Not just someone you enjoy being with but someone who also improves who you are. The Lord's desire is to be the ultimate example of *that* kind of friend and teacher and partner to you. God the Father may be Invisible, but He has made Himself known. We see His power and character in creation. We hear Him speak through the Scriptures. We can know the Son of God, and if we've seen Him, we've seen the Father. The more we look on the Lord, the more we should love Him. The more we love Him, the more we will listen to Him and trust Him and follow as He is able to lead us through life.

But, as we see here, these blessings of God, these promises of life and strength and joy, begin with you and I choosing whether we will turn toward God or whether we will try to go it our own way.

Wisdom goes on in this chapter, explaining who she is and how much we need her, but time fails us to take it all in this morning. But, as the poem closes, she becomes very blunt and very serious about what is at stake here:

**Proverbs 8:32-36 - <sup>32</sup>"And now, sons, listen to me; those who keep my ways are happy. <sup>33</sup>Listen to instruction and be wise; don't ignore it. <sup>34</sup>Anyone who listens to me is happy, watching at my doors every day, waiting by the posts of my doorway. <sup>35</sup>For the one who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, <sup>36</sup>but the one who misses me harms himself; all who hate me love death."**

The Lord loves you and His desire is to lead you to life and joy and reward and fulfillment. But, we can't just buy His wisdom or simply add it in to all our other philosophies. It's a binary choice. To go His way means to forsake all others and surrender to what He says is true. And it requires that we love Him and love His truth at the core of who we are. That this love for God compels us to go to Him and ask for Him to do what He wants to do - to give us what He wants to give.

We have a little nephew named Charlie. When he was 2 years old, we were at a birthday and there was an ice cream cake. On top of the cake there were 5 or 6 little mini-cones with different ice cream scoops. When he saw the cake, he *marveled!* He fixed his eyes on one of those cones and walked over and said to Kelly, "Anki...I WUV dat one! I WUV dat!" And he kept getting closer to it. He wanted to touch it. He had to have it. He hovered around the cake to lay hold of that little cone.

Jesus said we're to receive the Kingdom of God like a little child. With *that* kind of affectionate, emboldened love. Had he the vocabulary, Charlie would've said, "You can have all this world, just give me *that* cone." That's how the Lord wants us to choose Him. To see how good He is and to desire Him and move toward Him and lay hold of Him.

God presents His wisdom in ways that are hard to overstate. What He's offering sounds too good to be true, but of course, it *is* true, because God is true and He is good and He loves you. We have the opportunity today to not miss what He's offering. And so, let's listen and trust and obey and obtain the life and the favor and all the rest that God desires to give.