

Intro:

Last week I introduced you to the two women who personify much of the wisdom in Proverbs 1-9. What were their names?

Dame Wisdom and Madame Folly

Last time we considered the general passages that dealt with these two subjects and began to contrast their character.

These two women are literary devices used to teach us things about wisdom in two ways:

1. Wisdom in male / female relationships
2. Wisdom vs. folly in general

Robert Service, the great poet of the Yukon, wrote a poem about these two women, although he was no spiritual man. The poem has a question mark for a title: “?”

If you had the choice of two women to wed,
(Though of course the idea is quite absurd)
And the first from her heels to her dainty head
Was charming in every sense of the word:
And yet in the past (I grieve to state),
She never had been exactly “straight”.

And the second — she was beyond all cavil,
A model of virtue, I must confess;
And yet, alas! she was dull as the devil,
And rather a dowd in the way of dress;
Though what she was lacking in wit and beauty,
She more than made up for in “sense of duty”.

Now, suppose you must wed, and make no blunder,
And either would love you, and let you win her —
Which of the two would you choose, I wonder,
The stolid saint or the sparkling sinner?¹

¹ Robert Service, *Rhymes of a Rolling Stone*

Now Service paints a contrary picture. He is following Madame Folly, he has been deceived, but he doesn't know it. I hope to show you why.

Proposition: You are sought by two women. One is wise, the other is trouble. Which will you follow?

I. The pursuit of men

A. Madame Folly

Proverbs 9.13-18

Proverbs 7.6-7

1. Identity of her prey: "those who pass by" (9.15), "whoever" (9.16)

anybody

2. Characteristics of her prey

1. The naïve (simple)

2. The man who lacks understanding

Why are these the focus of Madame Folly?

What is it about youth that makes them particularly vulnerable?

What makes someone "simple" and "wanting understanding"?

B. Dame Wisdom

Proverbs 9.1-6

Proverbs 1.22-23

Proverbs 8.4-5

Compare the men Wisdom pursues with the men Folly pursues. Who are they?

The same men

What is different about Dame Wisdom's appeal?

What makes a response to Dame Wisdom different from a response to Madame Folly?

II. The “product” offered

A. Dame Wisdom

1. Negatively [warning] (1.30-32) **against death/destruction**
2. Benefits of Wisdom’s teaching
 - (1.33) **Security**
 - (3.16-17) **Peace, long life, wealth**
 - (3.18; 7.1-2) **life**
 - (8.6-8) **truth/nobility/righteousness**
 - (8.14-15) **sound mind/strength/leadership**

What is unappealing about what wisdom offers?

“She does not tell men what they *want* to hear, but what they *need* to hear if they are to be delivered from death.”²

What kind of perspective or view of life is needed to appreciate wisdom’s value?

B. Madame Folly

- (2.16) **flattery**
- (6.24-25) **glamour, promised pleasure**
- (7.17-18) **love, pleasure**
- (9.17) **thrills, excitement**

Madame Folly’s primary weapon (5.3-4; 2.16; 7.5; 22.14)

Her tongue

Consider 9.15. What does Folly’s tongue attack?

Those making their paths straight

Consider these verses: 6.25; 7.10, 16-17

Dame Wisdom appeals to the **spiritual**; Madame Folly to the **sensual**

² Robert Deffinbaugh, *The Way of the Wise: Studies in the Book of Proverbs* (www.bible.org: Biblical Studies Press, 1996), p. 19

But how beautiful is Madame Folly? What do we know about her in 2.17?

She is one who has been married some time — her beauty is masked and false, just like her.

Crucial wisdom about folly: The end of her ways is _____ **death** (2.18-19; 6.26; 7.22-23; 9.18).

III. Primary lesson of these two women

“I am the father of five daughters. I do not have sons who need this warning. But the teaching of Proverbs is just as relevant to my daughters. If Proverbs instructs a young man about the kind of woman to seek and the kind to shun, it teaches my daughters the kind of women they should strive to be, by God’s grace. The world is reinforcing the model of Madam Folly. The popular movie stars, the glamorous models, the women who advertise — all are those whose moral life is sinful, and whose wiles and flattery are like that of Madam Folly. Girls are told that they can find approval by flaunting their bodies, by wearing provocative clothing, by putting on sensuous perfumes, by adorning their eyelids, and so on. The godly woman, Dame Wisdom, is not the model our young women are familiar with. The words of chapter 31 have a foreign ring, when we read, ‘Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised (31.30).’”³

How can Christian women adopt a Proverbs perspective on this wisdom? (1 Tim. 2.9-10; 1 Peter 3.1-6)

Pursue spiritual character more than adornment

How should Christian men adopt a Proverbs perspective on this wisdom? (Proverbs 5.18; 2 Tim 2.22)

Rejoice in your own wife, flee youthful lusts

³ Deffinbaugh, pp. 20-21