

## Intro:

We have been looking at a principle theme in the first nine chapters of Proverbs.

What is the device that Solomon uses to make his point?

*(Personification of Wisdom and Folly as two women)*

We have been talking a good deal in this discussion about how this device teaches us something about proper relationships between men and women. There are many valuable lessons here for us, but today I want to emphasize:

the contrast of these women as a contrast between two ways of life.

## I. The contrast of two ways

A. The fact is that Proverbs describes the two women as “ways”

1. Those who do not heed Dame Wisdom (1.31) are on their own **way**
2. The purpose of Dame Wisdom in 2.12 is to keep the simple from the **way** of evil
3. Characteristics of the ways of wicked men (2.12-15)
  - a. They speak ‘**perverse things**’ (12b)
  - b. Their leave the paths of **uprightness** (13a)
  - c. They walk in ways of **darkness** (13b)
  - d. Their ways are **crooked** (15a)
  - e. They are **devious** in their ways (15b)
4. What describes the paths of Madam folly? (2.16-19)

**her tracks lead to the dead**
5. What paths does Dame Wisdom want to keep you on? (2.20)

**the way of good men, the paths of the righteous**

The words ‘way’ or ‘path’ are used eight times in vv. 12-22  
(cf. 3:31; 4:11, 14; 5:21; 6:23; 7:24-27; 8:13, 20; 9:6, 15).

“The conclusion must be that Dame Wisdom and Madam Folly are not just women; they are the personification of two ways, the way of wisdom and the way of folly.”<sup>1</sup>

B. This metaphor of the two women is not about

1. Choosing the right wife (that is an application, not the point).

Consider Proverbs 5.5, 7.27, 9.18

What choice is presented by the contrast between the two women?

**The choice between life and death**

2. Madame Folly represents the woman as a seducer — not to make a point about women – it is to make a point about sin.

“Proverbs pictures Madam Folly as the aggressor because she personifies the evil way. While not all women seek to seduce men, Satan is aggressively seeking to draw men away from God and into the evil way. In other words, it is a woman who is the seducer in Proverbs because she, Madam Folly, personifies sin.”<sup>2</sup>

How does sin / Satan seek to attract men and women in our world?

**By enticement, temptation (Is this not just like Madame Folly’s methods?)**

C. The two women are metaphors (symbols) of a larger idea

Is Dame Wisdom’s banquet of 9.1-6 meant to be taken literally? How should it be taken?

**Not literally, but as the blessings of following wisdom**

How should Madame Folly’s bed in 7.10-20 be taken?

**As representing the pleasures of sin for a season**

<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *The Way of the Wise: Studies in the Book of Proverbs* (Biblical Studies Press, 1996), 21, www.bible.org.

<sup>2</sup> Deffinbaugh, 21.

We must avoid the bed of Madame Folly literally, but there is much more to sin than simply adultery. We need to turn away from sin of all kinds.

## II. The choice of the right way

A. Those in the “Way of Folly” express their folly in varied ways

*Consider Prov 1.10-14*

Are *all* sinners exactly like this? **no**

How do **most** sinners present themselves in our society?

**As moral and upright citizens (Note the moral man condemned in Romans 2)**

“What this means is that Madam Folly best portrays the message and the method which Satan uses to deceive and destroy the majority of those who do not choose to follow the way of wisdom. Satan, like Madam Folly, will appeal to sensual desires, urging them to fill to the brim the cup of passion and desire. He will seek to show the appeal of momentary pleasure, while minimizing the consequences which inevitably follow. He will stimulate our desire to disobey God and to reject wisdom by stressing that sin is stimulating and exciting. But in the end, Satan will lead men along the same path of destruction which he himself is following. Those who follow him, like those who follow Madam Folly, will suffer the consequences of their leader.

“Madam Folly is not just a seductive woman, nor immoral women in general — she personifies a system which leads men and women along a path of destruction. Those who are on the way of folly do not necessarily rob innocent victims or willfully cause injury to others (1:10-14), but they do choose to reject the way of wisdom. They choose to follow a way which seems to offer them pleasure for the present, while ignoring the future.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Deffinbaugh, 22.

## Compare Colossians 2.8, 16ff.

Col 2.8 ¶ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Col 2.16-18 ¶ Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — <sup>17</sup> things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup> Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

What can take saints captive by (Col 2.8)? (see also 16, 18)

By worldly philosophy and ways

Do these things have an appearance of godliness and self-discipline?

Yes

“Satan does not really care which lane you are in on the freeway to destruction. Some may choose the lane of violence and greed, while others may choose that of self-denial and asceticism. Satan will openly tempt some to commit sin and immorality, while others he will deceive with overly strict rules and regulations (*cf.* I Tim. 4:1-5). The distinguishing characteristic of the way of folly is that it begins with a rejection of God, with a refusal to ‘fear the Lord’ (Prov. 1:7,29). Satan allows men to be very creative in the way they go to hell. He does not care how you live, so long as you live trusting in yourself, rather than God, following your own way, rather than the narrow way of wisdom.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Deffinbaugh, 22.

## Conclusion:

The end of the matter is a matter of choice.

Folly will have all kinds of reasonable, attractive, enticing arguments about why we should pursue a way that puts a premium on how we feel and on immediate benefits.

Wisdom has the assurance of God's word at its foundation which lays out the right way to go, regardless of how we feel.

Doing right does not always feel right to me, but God will bless in the end. Do you have faith to believe that?