

## AN URGENT CALL TO SPIRITUAL DRIFTERS

*9 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. 2She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has set her table. 3She has sent out her maid servants, and she calls out from the tops of the heights overlooking the city, 4“Whoever is naïve, let him come in here!” She says to him who lacks understanding, 5“Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. 6Forsake your ways, you who are naïve, and you shall live; walk in the way of understanding!” 7Whoever corrects a scoffer incurs abuse; and whoever rebukes a wicked man receives a wound. 8Do not rebuke a scoffer, if you do he will hate you. Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. 9Give instruction to a wise man and he will become wiser; teach a righteous man and he will increase in knowledge. 10The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11By me your days will be multiplied and the years of your life will be increased. 12If you are wise, your wisdom will be of benefit to you; but if you scoff, you alone will suffer for it. 13The woman Folly is boisterous; she is naïve and knows nothing. 14She sits at the door of her house, on a seat overlooking the heights of the city. 15She calls to those who pass by, to those who are going about their business, saying, 16“Whoever is naïve, let him come in here!” And to him who lacks understanding, she says, 17“Stolen waters are sweet; bread eaten in secret is delicious.” 18But he does not realize that the dead are there; her guests are in the depths of Sheol. (Prov. 9:1-18)*

### **Introduction**

On graduation night, Dennis Plummer packed his knapsack, gave his remaining clothes to friends, entrusted his car keys to his mom and dad, flew to Maine, and there began his journey.

Dennis Plummer is a college graduate who spent the next three years walking up and down and all across America. He journeyed from Maine to Florida, then out to Minnesota, then south to Texas, back up through Colorado and Washington State, then down along the west coast to the Mexican border. Along the way he picked up a variety of odd jobs: a steward on a luxury yacht, a huckster at a carnival, a farmhand on an Amish farm.

In the course of his journey Dennis encountered a myriad of lives: he mingled with cocaine dealers and prostitutes on the streets of New York; he played checkers with retired farmers in a small town Minnesota café; he slept in countless backyards and had dinner at as many American tables across the country.

Listening to Americans throughout the course of his journey, Dennis has heard one question beneath the surface of their lives: Where is something that is meaningful? In Dennis' words, “The number one killer in America is boredom. From region to region, and city to country, the way people search for meaning differs, but their search is the same.” (POWER, 3/17/91)

Maybe you can identify with what Dennis found as he interviewed America: the quest for something meaningful. Maybe on a spiritual level, you can identify with Dennis on his 3-year journey: constantly on the move, with no permanent residence, no long-term commitments, no clear-cut destination. Maybe you are a spiritual drifter; if so, Proverbs 9 has an urgent message for you: become a disciple of Christ.

## I. Become a Disciple of Christ, If You are Presently a Spiritual Drifter

To determine whether or not you fit the description of a spiritual drifter, all you need do is compare yourself with the various types of men described in this passage of Proverbs.

Verses 7-8a describe *“the scoffer.”* This is the individual who is absolutely hardened and settled in the way of godlessness, as though he were set in concrete. The scoffer is one who arrogantly assumes the place of God, setting himself in the judgment seat: *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers”* (Psl. 1:1.) The Apostle Paul’s description of the anti-Christ is the description of the ultimate scoffer: *“the man of lawlessness ... <sup>4</sup>opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped; so that he sits in the temple of God, presenting himself as God”* (2 Thess. 2:3-4.) The scoffer has so far removed himself from God that he actually thinks he is beyond the reach of God; he assumes that he is immune to the judgment of God. Consider the arrogance and self-delusion of the scoffers of Old Testament Israel: *“Therefore, hear the word of Jehovah, you scoffers ... <sup>15</sup>... you have said, ... when the overwhelming scourge passes through [the land] [i.e., when the judgment of God passes through the land like a great flood] it shall not reach us”* (Isa. 28:14-15.) The scoffer is one who will ridicule the very Word of God, as in the case of those to whom the Apostle Peter refers; they treat the Word of God with contempt and scorn, not with reverence:

*You may be sure that in the last days scoffers will come, expressing their scoffing, and living for their own evil desires. <sup>4</sup>They will say, “Where is [the fulfillment of] the promise that he will come? From the time the fathers fell asleep [in death] everything goes on as it has since the beginning of the creation.”* (2 Pet. 3:3-4)

Here is an individual who sets himself against divine wisdom and will not consider it: choosing to attack it rather than receive it and submit his life to it. *“Whoever corrects a scoffer incurs abuse;”* whoever admonishes a scoffer receives contempt and rebuff for his effort. If you present the Word of God to a scoffer what you receive is a response of contempt: he will hiss and snarl at you with disgust and cursing. *“Whoever rebukes a wicked man receives a wound;”* whoever rebukes a wicked man receives abuse. If you make an effort to step in the roadway of an evil man driving the fast lane to hell, he’ll run over you: your efforts may literally be met with physical violence.

Verses 8b-9 describe *"a wise man."* In contrast to the scoffer who has a firm connection with wickedness, the wise man has a firm connection to righteousness. Note that, whereas the scoffer and the wicked man are spoken of together, so too are the wise man and the righteous man. A wise man has a humble spirit that is receptive to correction: *"rebuke a wise man, and he will love you."* This attitude stems from the fact that he wants to be in a right relationship with the LORD and therefore he welcomes correction. He has the attitude as exhibited by the Psalmist in his prayer: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. 24 See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psl. 139:23-24.) A wise man has a teachable spirit that has the capacity and the desire to grow in godliness: *"give instruction to a wise man and he will become wiser."* He is the man who will heed the counsel given by the Apostle Peter: *"earnestly desire the pure spiritual milk, like new born infants, so that by it you may grow in your salvation"* (1 Pet. 2:2.)

Verses 7-9 set before us two distinct categories of men. On the one hand, the scoffer and wicked man—the person who sets himself in opposition to the wisdom and Word of God. On the other hand, the wise and righteous man—the person who places himself in submission to the wisdom and Word of God. Whereas the former is the declared enemy of Christ, the latter is the disciple of Christ.

But in this chapter of Scripture you also find a third category: *"the naïve."* The word translated *"naïve,"* or, *"simple,"* comes from the Hebrew root word, פָּתַח, with the meaning "to open wide;" hence, "to be easily persuaded or enticed." In Proverbs 14:15 *"the naïve"* is contrasted to *"the prudent": "The naïve believes every word, but a prudent man carefully considers his steps."* *"The naïve"* may be described as follows. He has no strong Christian convictions that serve to govern his life and determine his decisions. He is easily driven by impulse and persuaded by his present company, whoever his present companions may be. He shows little discernment in evaluating opinions or suggested courses of action, and he has little concern for such evaluation. He seldom if ever bothers to look beyond the immediate present to the long-range consequences and outcome of his present actions and decisions. *"The naïve"* may be classified as a "spiritual drifter;" drifting in and out of contact with Christ, drifting in and out of sinful conduct. The naïve is not hardened in the depths of sin (like the scoffer,) but he is certainly not committed to Christ (as is the wise man.)

Are you a spiritual drifter? Do you fit into the category of *"the naïve,"* as opposed to that of the wise man or the scoffer? If you discover that you do fit the description of the naïve, the spiritual drifter, this ninth chapter of Proverbs has an urgent message for you: Become a disciple of Christ.

## II. Become a Disciple of Christ, Rather than Heeding the Call of Folly

Verse 13 introduces us to *“the woman Folly.”* This “woman” figuratively represents such negative attributes as the lack of good godly sense and foresight; such foolishness is here personified as a seductive woman. She is described as being *“boisterous”* (turbulent, restless, unstable) and *“naïve,”* and she *“knows nothing.”* That is to say, her lifestyle and decisions are impulsive, uninformed by the knowledge and truth of God, and reckless.

Verse 16 indicates that *“the woman Folly”* especially directs her attention towards the naïve. He is a likely candidate for her seductions, for he is aimless, impulsive, thoughtless, and not rooted into Christ. He has a natural affinity and identification with her, they both are described by the same term: *“naïve.”*

Verse 17 reveals the seductive approach the woman Folly makes towards the naïve: *“Stolen waters are sweet, bread eaten in secret is delicious.”* She focuses on the exotic, the exciting, the adventurous aspects of sin, the forbiddenness of that which is the object of temptation (*“stolen waters are sweet.”*) Such a presentation of sin is especially appealing to someone who is impulsive, thoughtless, and lacking strong Christian convictions.

In verse 18 we are informed, however, that those who accept Folly’s invitation (i.e.; those who accept her lifestyle and make it their own,) and come to her, finally end up in *“Sheol,”* (which here must be given the full sense of hell: the place of damnation.)

The urgent message of Proverbs 9 is, Become a disciple of Christ, rather than a disciple of “the Woman Folly.” In contrast to the call of Folly, let us heed the call of the Lord Jesus Christ:

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.  
29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; 30for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.* (Matt. 11:28-30)

## III. Become a Disciple of Christ, by Heeding His Divine Call

In verse 1 the wisdom of God is personified as a noble woman who has prepared a great banquet. Her house is a beautiful and solidly constructed mansion. She has set her table with an abundance of delicious foods. She now sends out her maidens, and she herself goes out, to invite guests to this wonderful banquet held in this beautiful mansion.

According to verse 4, note who is the object of her attention: *“the naïve.”* She invites the spiritually unattached, the uncommitted, the spiritual drifter, to come and take a place at her banquet table.

From verses 5-6, note the terms of the invitation. All her finest food and accommodations are offered to the naïve; but he must give up his ways—his ways of aimless, impulsive drifting; his desire to be in charge of his life, to do what he wants to do when he wants to do it—and place himself under her discipline.

The truth the LORD presents here by means of this poetic personification of wisdom is the same truth that is at the very heart of Psalm 23: when you receive the LORD as your Shepherd, submitting yourself to His lordship and leading, it is then that you experience the blessings enumerated throughout the psalm:

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing.* [The LORD is committed to meet our needs both physically and spiritually] <sup>2</sup>*He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,* [He grants to us the experience of His spiritual peace and blessing] <sup>3</sup>*he restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* <sup>4</sup>*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* <sup>5</sup>*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* <sup>6</sup>*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

As previously noted, the truth the LORD presents here in Proverbs 9 by means of this poetic personification of wisdom, is the same truth with which He confronts us in the New Testament in such places as Matthew 11:28-30,

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* <sup>29</sup>*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls;* <sup>30</sup>*for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

The message of Proverbs 9 is this: Become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, by heeding His divine call. Discipleship—coming under the gracious and loving control of Christ the Lord—is not an option for those who are more serious about their Christianity, it **is** Christianity; anything less is a soul-deceiving, soul-destroying counterfeit. Note the terms of the Great Commission:

*Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*** (Matt. 28:19-20a)

## **Conclusion (continued on next page)**

Are you a spiritual drifter? Do you find yourself roaming the spiritual countryside, looking for adventure, excitement, fulfillment? Are you searching the spiritual landscape for forgiveness, meaning, connection with God?

Are you a spiritual drifter? Are you drifting in and out of sin? Are you drifting in and out of contact with the Lord Jesus Christ?

If this describes you, then this passage of Scripture (Proverbs 9) serves as a spiritual crossroads before you. On the one corner stands Folly, urging you to become a lifetime drifter, until you are eventually and inevitably swept away into hell. On the other corner stands the Wisdom of God, an Old Testament manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, urging you to become a lifetime disciple, so that you may experience the good life of the kingdom of God.