

Proverbs 1:1-7 Wisdom helps us know how to live in God's world.

Travelling south on the Freeway, brings you to Baldivis and a road sign that has intrigued me ever since it was put up last year. It is big and yellow and simply says, 'Folly Road is Closed'. It is a real road now closed due to the extension of the Freeway. Ever since spotting this sign, I've wanted to make my own sign and attach it next to this sign – my sign would read: 'Wisdom Road is Open'.

That is what Proverbs is all about. There are 2 roads: Folly Road and Wisdom Road. This special book within the big Book called God's Word, is addressed to anyone who wants to know how to navigate life successfully. E.g., vv. 2-6 list the primary benefits you can have by going on Wisdom Road. While there are fools who love their folly, this book invites those open to learning life skills, to make their way down Wisdom Road – it is open. Once you taste of wisdom, Folly Road is closed. It offers no more interest to you. It leads to death but those who take the path of wisdom, find the benefits better than anything offered down the path of the fool.

Let me take a moment to orient you to how to get the most out of Proverbs. V. 1 is like the title page of a modern book – the title is Proverbs. Next we find the author and like the inside back cover of a book, v. 1 gives us some information on our author. Then vv. 2-6 gives us the Table of Contents – a preface of what is to come. Here we are provided with the basic vocabulary of wisdom which becomes a list of the benefits of reading Proverbs – such things as attaining wisdom, discipline, prudence, guidance, etc, all the things you and I need for life. Then v. 7 gives us the summary of the whole book, a motto that alone is enough to motivate you to purchase the book and settle into a comfortable chair and have a nice long read!

You have 31 easy to read chapters looking at wisdom's way of navigating life. What is a proverb? - 'short sentences founded on long experience'. They are observations on life. They are not guarantees or promises to be claimed but observations that imply advice. The range of topics is breathtaking. If Proverbs were sold at a good bookshop, the question would be, 'In what section do we put Proverbs'? Not fiction, not biography (that's Job and Ecclesiastes) not management, science fiction, business, travel, self-help. NO, it would go right out the front of the shop in big piles at the entrance - all because of v. 7a: all the knowledge of all the world starts with God Who is all wise. To understand life, start with wisdom.

Proverbs, then, is written from the standpoint that every one of us is on a path. Even today we refer to life as a journey. What Proverbs does for us, though, is to help us figure out which path we are on, for there are 2 paths – a straight path or a crooked path. Which road are you on?

Wisdom Road vs. Folly Road. When you visit a place you are unfamiliar with, a map is welcome – what is particularly helpful is when the map has a note that states, 'You are here' – then you can work out how to get where you want to be.

Proverbs helps you find out where you are on life's journey and how to get to the right destination. If you are on Folly Road, there are dangers, traps and snares that can foul up your life. For the Christian, Folly Road is not the place to be. It is closed. The Christian wants the right path – it is straight, well lit – it leads to life.

For example:

1. Folly Road is full of people who give bad advice, vv. 10-33.

Those travelling on Folly Road tempt you to join them, vv. 10, 11a. Here the temptation is to try and get ahead in life by dishonest, immoral, illegal and even violent ways. The push and shove of competition in the workplace, office politics, the devious ways, the lies, spin, cheating, all end in disaster, v. 19. Conversely, Wisdom Road is wide open for the Christian and available to all who want to avoid folly, vv. 20, 21. Woman wisdom invites us to join her on the best path, v. 23, but she sees so many reject the offer, vv. 24-26. There are consequences for rejecting wisdom, vv. 30, 31, even complacency is foolish, v. 32 but she ends her speech with an attractive offer, v. 33. If you are on wisdom Road you'll carefully filter all the advice you are given by the standards of God's wisdom.

Allow me another example of the choice we have of taking the path of wisdom over the path of folly.

2. Folly Road is full of people controlled by destructive anger:

14:16, 29 – Jesus will show you how to get control of your emotions.

15:18

17:27

19:11 – Don't be quick to respond angrily to someone.

Anger can destroy a family, a business, a church. Anger can stir a person so that they only make difficult situations even worse, 29:22.

A wise person is patient. A wise person is sparing in speech. It is not that they are emotionless or never angry or disappointed or suppress their feelings. That would not be real. Rather a wise person expresses appropriate anger appropriately. Moderate expressions of anger or frustration allow the wise person to think a situation through. Emotions don't cloud their thinking. They navigate life responding rightly to the evils and frustrations of life without being hotheads. If you have a problem with uncontrolled anger, get off Folly Road now – it is closed to a Christian. Wisdom's Road offers a way of dealing with those things that cause anger: lack of security, underlying fears, lack of trust – 3:5 – try to control circumstances through anger. Jesus, the Wisdom of God, will help you with these things.

The offer has now been made. To navigate life successfully, continually remind yourself that Folly Road is closed to the follower of God. Wisdom Road is open and the benefits of travel on this path are endless and eternal. For Wisdom Road is Jesus. Jesus is the wisdom of God. Jesus is the full expression of God's wisdom. Jesus leads us to God – a relationship with God.

If you are accepting the bad advice of those on Folly Road or giving into anger, you need to get on Wisdom Road. Jesus will rescue you from advice that is bad and anger that is destructive. Jesus will expose why you are giving into anger or tempted by bad advice. He'll forgive you for any of your sins and will clear you of shame and guilt if you come to Him. Then you'll walk with Him and as you do, you'll hear His wise counsel and you'll trust Him when those things that normally trigger your anger face you.

See Romans 11:33-36, Colossians 2:3!