

# PROVERBS

## Chapter 8

### *The Blessings of Wisdom*

**Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? 2 On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; 3 beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: 4 “To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. 5 O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense. 6 Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right, 7 for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8 All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. 9 They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. 10 Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, 11 for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. 12 “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. 13 The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. 14 I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. 15 By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; 16 by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly. 17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. 18 Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. 19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. 20 I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, 21 granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries. 22 “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. 23 Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, 26 before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. 27 When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man. 32 “And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. 33 Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. 34 Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. 35 For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, 36 but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.”**

Second poem about wisdom. The first poem was 1:20–33. (TLSB)

**8:1–36** Wisdom is personified as she addresses mankind in preparation for the final plea from both “Wisdom” and “Folly” in ch. 9. (CSB)

hokmah – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. Unlike the harlot who “lurks” at every street corner (7:12), wisdom loudly calls out. Wisdom’s purpose is also different. It’s not to deceive and destroy, but to enlighten and give life. (PBC)

**8:1** *wisdom* – Opening rhetorical question assumes that everyone reading is aware of wisdom’s invitation. (TLSB)

*her* – Wisdom is personified as a good woman, in stark contrast to the adulterous woman of ch 7. (TLSB)

**8:2–3** If we are not lose our way, we need to listen to wisdom. (PBC)

**8:2** *crossroads she takes her stand* – Here and in vv 3–4, wisdom stations herself to be heard in the midst of life. She calls out for travelers on their way in and out of the town. (TLSB)

**8:4** *children of man.* – This is for everybody. (PBC)

Wisdom’s invitation is for all; her call is universal. (TLSB)

**8:5** *simple ... fools.* Both are addressed in wisdom’s speech in 1:22, 32. (CSB)

Here, as elsewhere in Proverbs, wisdom offers her message and benefits to those who are unschooled and vulnerable. Because sin taints every human mind and heart, all people meet her description. (TLSB)

**8:6** *noble things ... what is right.* See Php 4:8. (CSB)

Wisdom’s message fills the mind and heart with all good things. Paul reflects this call to things noble and true in Php 4:8. To these, add truth (v 7) and righteousness (v 8). This is the first time these virtuous descriptors are clearly tied to wisdom’s message. Solomon is bringing his students to a new level of understanding wisdom. (TLSB)

The wisdom God offers does not have to do with one’s mental capacity. It is a spiritual matter. It involves what we believe and how we live, not simply how much information we can cram into our heads. (PBC)

**8:8** *twisted or crooked..* See Php 2:15; cf. Pr 2:15. (CSB)

Solomon contrasts the virtues of wisdom’s message with its opposites. The parallelism of the contrasting realities clarifies and heightens the value of wisdom’s virtues. (TLSB)

**8:9** *who understands.* The wiser a person is, the more he appreciates words of wisdom. (CSB)

*who find knowledge.* Especially the knowledge of God. (CSB)

Wisdom’s message is grasped rightly by those who have the knowledge of God (2:5). (TLSB)

**8:10** *instruction* – Discipline – *moo-sawr’* – properly *chastisement*; figuratively *reproof*, *warning* or *instruction*; also *restraint*:—bond, chastening, chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke. – This is another key concept in Proverbs. It is that quality of being able to follow through and apply our God-given wisdom. We might call it self-discipline. The ancient Jewish rabbis had a saying, “The wicked are under the control of their impulses, but the righteous have their impulses under their control.”

Self-discipline is especially important for us to keep in mind, since our society encourages just the opposite. In a thousand different ways we are told, “If it feels good, do it!” Proverbs does not deny emotions their due. Joy and self-satisfaction have their place. But they are fully realized only when kept within the limits of God’s Word. God sets up rules for living, not to make us unhappy, but to bring us real, lasting happiness. (PBC)

*silver ... gold.* Unlike Lady Folly, wisdom asks no money. The riches she offers surpass any object of human desire. (TLSB)

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**8:11** Almost identical with 3:15 (see note there). Wisdom – hokmah – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. God wants us to choose his wisdom. Make the Bible your top priority and God will see to it that everything else is taken care of, too. (PBC)

**8:12–14** Wisdom’s attributes parallel the gifts of the Spirit of the Messiah in Is 11:1–3, clearly identifying Christ as our wisdom. (TLSB)

**8:12** *I wisdom* – hokmah – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

*dwell with prudence.* Cf. Job 28:20. (CSB)

**8:13** *To fear the LORD is to hate evil.* The more we lovingly revere God, trusting exclusively in His wisdom, the more we will hate and shun evil. In this sense, we take on God’s own character in detesting what is evil in His sight (6:16–19). (CSB)

*pride and arrogance...evil I hate.* Since true wisdom comes from God, wisdom hates whatever God hates. Throughout the Bible we see pride as something God does not tolerate. For example, Jesus saved his harshest words for the proud teachers of the law and the Pharisees (Matthew 23). The proud cut themselves off from God’s grace in a way that other sinners don’t. Proud people fail to see their need for God, they are self-sufficient. True wisdom, however, begins in humble fear of the Lord. This includes the recognition of our sinfulness and of our complete dependence on God’s grace. (PBC)

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Luke 6:45, “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

Romans 7:18-19, 25, “<sup>18</sup> I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing... <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

**8:14** *Counsel and sound wisdom ... insight standing and strength.* These characterize the Lord (2:6–7; Job 12:13, 16; Isa 40:13–14; Ro 16:27) and the Spirit of the Lord (Isa 11:2). (CSB)

*Counsel.* See 1:25; 19:20. (CSB)

*power.* Cf. Ecc 9:16. (CSB)

**8:15** *By me kings reign.* See 29:4. Solomon prayed for wisdom to govern Israel (see 1Ki 3:9; 2Ch 1:10). (CSB)

Wisdom is a crucial asset for those who govern. Their just government evidences the wisdom of God, who sets governments in place and uses them for His purposes (Rm 13:4). (TLSB)

**8:17** *I love.* I pour out my benefits on. (CSB)

Wisdom is set into the context of an intimate relationship. The verse's second line adds to the thought of the first, promising that those who love and seek Wisdom will find her. Cf 1Co 12:8, 31. (TLSB)

*those who seek me diligently find me.* See 2:4–5; Isa 55:6; Jas 1:5. (CSB)

Words used often in Proverbs for the quest for wisdom (2:4–5; 3:13; 4:22). (TLSB)

**8:19** *My fruit.* Wisdom is called a “tree of life” in 3:18. (CSB)

Agricultural language accents Wisdom as a renewing resource, promising future blessings, in contrast with the stagnant wealth of precious metals and gems. (TLSB)

*fine gold ... choice silver.* See v. 10; Job 28:15. (CSB)

**8:20** *way ... paths.* Wisdom walks with those who seek righteousness and justice. Jesus described Himself as the way (Jn 14:6). (TLSB)

**8:21** *granting an inheritance to those who love me.* Riches that come to those who follow God's Wisdom, the Christ, are celebrated in several NT passages: Eph 2:7; 3:8–10; Php 4:19; Col 1:27; 2:2. *granting an inheritance.* Paul celebrates the rich inheritance of those who are in Christ (Eph 1:13–14; Col 1:10–12). (TLSB)

*filling their treasuries.* When we pursue the wisdom of God, we find that God blesses us in unexpected ways. (PBC)

**8:22–31**† A hymn describing wisdom's role in creation. Wisdom is here personified, as in 1:20–33; 3:15–18; 9:1–12. In addition, these verses have traditionally been understood as a Messianic prophecy, a description of the pre-incarnate Christ. They provide some of the language for the NT portrayal of Christ as the divine Word (Jn 1:1–3) and as the wisdom of God (1Co 1:24, 30; Col 2:3). Here, wisdom is an attribute of God involved with him in creation. (CSB)

Some commentators consider these verses the profound the most profound section in the entire book. Here wisdom takes on the nature of God Himself and plays a role in the creation of the world. Focusing on these verses, the followers of Arius argued that Jesus was a created being and not eternal. There was a time when He was not, they contended. (In our day the Jehovah's

Witnesses have taken up this ancient heresy.) Much of their argument rested on a faulty Greek translation of verse 2: “The Lord create me,” instead of “The Lord brought me forth.” (PBC)

Poem about God’s use of wisdom in creation. (TLSB)

**8:22** *possessed me at the beginning.* The Hebrew for this verb is also used in Ge 4:1; 14:19, 22 (“Creator”). (CSB)

Here wisdom is much more than a gift given by God. In this chapter Wisdom is the One in whom the Lord delighted from eternity and with whom God created the universe. That is, the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 is none other than the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God before His incarnation. (LL)

nawthan - To bring, cause to change.

*me.* Wisdom. (CSB)

Here wisdom takes on the nature of God himself and plays a role in the creation of the world. Closely connected to Christ who was also from the beginning.

*the first of his acts of old.* Cf. Job’s statement about the behemoth (Job 40:19). (CSB)

Just as Solomon’s students are encouraged to acquire or possess Wisdom (1:5; 4:5, 7), so the Lord possesses Wisdom in eternity, even before His act of creation. This personification of wisdom points to the eternal nature of the pre-incarnate Christ, present at creation (Jn 1:1–3). Just: “The Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me, when He speaks by Solomon” (ANF 1:227). (TLSB)

**8:23** *was set up* – Hebrew word here is used elsewhere in the Bible only for God’s coronation of a king (Ps 2:6). Variant of the word can also mean “to weave,” as woven or knit in the womb (Ps 139:13), here then referring to Wisdom begotten of God. For Christ as appointed Messiah before creation, cf Mi 5:2; Jn 17:5. (TLSB)

### **Christ as Wisdom**

According to Proverbs, Wisdom was present already in eternity, before the creation of the world and, consequently, before there even was such a thing as time. Along the same lines, Jesus said, “And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed” (Jn 17:5). In Pr 8, Wisdom is given birth by God, even though Wisdom was present from eternity. Likewise, Jesus is God’s only-begotten Son; that is, “His only Son” (Jn 3:16). (TLSB)

John’s Gospel begins with a description of Jesus as “the Word.” This description connects Jesus with the Wisdom of Proverbs, which calls out and makes its appeals. John declares, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (Jn 1:1–2). Wisdom was also present with God in the beginning (Pr 8:22). (TLSB)

## **An Ancient Yet Modern Controversy**

In the fourth century after Christ, a controversy broke out in the Christian churches. Focusing on this portion of Proverbs, the followers of the priest Arius argued that the Son of God was a created being and not eternal God. They argued that there was a time when the Son of God did not exist. Much of their argument rested on a faulty Greek translation of Pr 8:22: “The LORD *created Me*,” instead of “The LORD possessed Me.” (TLSB)

In our day, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have taken up this ancient heresy and contend that Jesus, the Son of God, is not true God. To support their false doctrine, they even mistranslate Scripture, such as Jn 1:1. Their *New World Translation* says, “The Word was *a god*,” instead of, “The Word was God.” Their false translation makes Jesus a second-level god alongside the heavenly Father. Clearly, this teaching does not fit with Holy Scripture, which teaches that there is only one God! (Cf Is 45:18–21; see p 1815.) (TLSB)

At the time of creation, Wisdom said, “I was beside [God], like a master workman” (Pr 8:30). Passages in the NT attribute this to Christ, e.g., Col 1:15–17; *firstborn* in this passage is used in a specific sense. It does not mean the first child born into a family. Rather, it refers to the inheritance rights of the one who held the honors of a firstborn son. (E.g., King David is called “firstborn” in Ps 89:27, even though he was the youngest son in his family [1Sm 16:11–13]. In view of this, when Paul calls Jesus “the firstborn of all creation,” he means that Jesus rules all creation, not that He was created, for “all things were created through Him and for Him.”) (TLSB)

Faithful Christians in the Early Church, led by the great Church Father Athanasius, carefully studied Pr 8 and other passages of Holy Scripture. They recognized that while the Son of God is begotten, He is also co-eternal with God the Father. Out of this research into God’s Word came the Nicene Creed, by which Christians still confess faith in Jesus Christ as “the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” (TLSB)

When we come face-to-face with the eternally begotten Son and other mysteries concerning the triune God, we are in realms beyond human comprehension. We can no more capture the eternal, omnipotent God within our minds than we can hold the ocean in a bucket. The wonder of it all is that the almighty Creator has come to us to save us. Jesus is God. He is also our Brother (Heb 2:11) who has suffered, died, and risen for us. (TLSB)

### **Clear through Christ**

It is often said that the OT is revealed in the NT, while the NT is concealed in the OT. In other words, what is not entirely clear in the OT becomes clear in the light of the coming of Jesus the Christ. That is what has happened with Pr 8. (TLSB)

The NT explicitly states that Jesus is the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Or, as St Paul puts it in 1Co 1:24, Christ is “the wisdom of God.” As you read Proverbs, hear the voice of your Redeemer. As the “Word of God,” these are His words for you. (TLSB)

*before the beginning of the earth.* Descriptive also of Christ (see Jn 1:1; cf. Mic 5:2) (CSB)

Although present from eternity, wisdom is “given birth” by God (verses 24-26). Likewise, Jesus is God’s only begotten Son. (PBC)

Wisdom was already there before God began to create the world (cf. Christ’s statement in Jn 17:5). (CSB)

**8:24-26** Special form of Hbr verb *chul*. Term can describe various forms of movement, such as dancing or writhing in pain (as in giving birth). This anticipates the NT language describing Jesus as “begotten,” the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, before time and space were created. *Before ... before ... before*. Threefold repetition shows Wisdom to be eternal (cf “before all things” [Col 1:17], clearly not a part of creation). (TLSB)

**8:24** *I was brought forth*. Elsewhere it is the sea (Job 38:8-9) and the mountains and earth that are “brought forth” (Ps 90:2; Job 15:7). (CSB)

Although present from eternity, wisdom is “given birth by God. Likewise, Jesus is God’s only begotten Son (John 3:16). (CSB)

**8:26** *dust* – Plural in Hbr. The countless particles that make up the world. (TLSB)

**8:27-29** Provides a picture of the first three days of creation (Gn 1:3–10), placing Wisdom there from the creation of the heavens to the creation of the earth’s foundations. Wisdom saw it all, from the heights to the depths of creation. (TLSB)

**8:27** *established the heavens in place*. John’s Gospel begins with a description of Jesus as “the Word.” This connects Him intimately with the wisdom of Proverbs, which calls out and makes it appeals. John declares, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1,2). Already in Genesis 1, the mystery of the Trinity is hinted at. “God created the heavens and the earth...the Spirit of God was hovering...And God said [repeated each day of creation, indicating the presence of the Word]...God said, ‘Let us make man in our image.’” (PBC)

**8:28** *fountains of the deep*. Earth’s springs and streams. (CSB)

**8:29** *the sea its limits*. See Ge 1:9; Job 38:10–11; Ps 104:9. (CSB)

**8:30-31** *delight ... rejoicing ... rejoicing ... delighting*. Chiastic arrangement links the joy between the Lord and Wisdom to the joy between the Lord and humanity at creation. Athanasius: “In whom does the Father rejoice, except as seeing Himself in His own Image, which is His Word?” (NPNF 2 4:393). (TLSB)

**8:30** *master workman*. A craftsman was sometimes called a wise man. See, e.g., Bezalel, who designed and built the tabernacle (Ex 31:3). Here the term stresses the skill demonstrated in creation. (CSB)

More than just an observer, Wisdom crafted creation. Earlier, wisdom is depicted as a woman. However, in this poem (vv 22–31), the feminine imagery is replaced by a first-person address (“Me,” “I”) and depiction of wisdom as a “workman.” This points forward to the description of the man Jesus as God’s Wisdom in the NT. (TLSB)

John 1:3 says, “Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made” (PBC)

*before him always* – The universe was created by God’s Word, a powerful companion to His presence. God said, “Let there be,” and there was (Gn 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). God spoke (wisdom), and things that never were came to be (Heb 11:3). (TLSB)

*his delight*. Cf. the joyful shouts of the angels at the time of creation (Job 38:7). (CSB)

Wisdom, Christ, the Son of God, was and is an object of delight and pleasure for the Father (Mt 3:17) (TLSB)

As the Father finds pleasure in the Son, the Son delights in His Father. The reciprocity within the Trinity is evident here as the close mutual relationship between Father and Son is clear (Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22; Jn 5:19–21). This could also refer to the Son’s daily pleasure in creation, which His Father declared good (Gn 1:31). (TLSB)

God’s delight in His creation is also seen in His assessment at the end of the sixth day, “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). (PBC)

**8:31** *rejoicing in his inhabited world*. Cf. v. 4. Man, made in the image of God, represented the climax of creation (see Ge 1:26–28). (CSB)

As the creation account ends with the creation of mankind (Gn 1:26–28), so this poetic presentation of creation recalls Wisdom’s pleasure in seeing human beings created in God’s image (Gn 1:31; Ps 8:3–5). (TLSB)

**8:32–36** Concluding address returns to the appeal of vv 1–21. (TLSB)

**8:32** *blessed*. The blessings associated with gaining wisdom are also given in 3:13–18; see also Ps 119:1–2; 128:1. (CSB)

The word “blessed” means happy. To enjoy God’s blessing is to possess more than the passing pleasures of the moment. It’s having the happiness that comes from knowing that no matter what the circumstances of life, we are in the loving hands of the eternal, almighty God. (PBC)

**8:34** *watching daily at my gates*. Contrast the warning not to go near the door of the adulteress’s house (5:8). (CSB)

In 5:8, Solomon counseled students not to go near the door of the adulterous woman. Here, though, they are encouraged to wait eagerly at Wisdom’s doorstep. Wisdom alone grants entry into her home. (TLSB)

**8:35** *finds life*. The adulterous woman brings death (5:5; 7:27); Wisdom brings life (cf promises in Jn 3:16; 8:51; 10:10). (TLSB)

Earlier “my son” was urged to stay away from the door of the adulteress’s house (5:8). Now wisdom urges us to sit and wait “at the doorway.” Here, not at the other place, is where true blessings await us. (PBC)



*favor.* Wisdom's invitation, like that of Christ, is one that offers God's favor (2Co 6:1–2; Lk 4:19). (TLSB)

**8:36** *all who hate me love death.* Stakes are high where following Wisdom is concerned. (TLSB)

To turn away from wisdom is really to hate life and to love death. We think it's tragic when we see someone drink himself to death or ruin his life in some other self-destructive way. Ultimately, anyone who turns from the wisdom of God in Christ and tries to go his or her own way is doing the same thing. All roads that lead away from God end up in eternal death, no matter how pleasant and appealing they might seem in this world. (PBC)

**Ch 8** The Lord is our Wisdom. His words and atoning works call from the heights and the crossroads of life for all humanity to hear. Like Wisdom in ch 8, Christ calls us from worldly foolishness, judgment, and death to obedience, God's favor, and abundant life. Christ's eternal nature, His relationship with the Father, and His work in creation all mark Him as the very wisdom of God. As such, He hates the sins of pride, arrogance, evil, and perverted speech (v 13). He calls us to do the same (Rm 12:9). He reaches out in love to all who love Him and diligently seek Him. In Christ, our Wisdom, we are rich beyond any human measure! • Lord Christ, Your wisdom brings life. You favor both the great and the humble, rulers and children, calling us from foolish sins to righteousness and truth. When we have lost our way, You are the door to all that is good and right, noble and true. Lord, make us wise unto Your salvation, that by Your gracious wisdom we may truly live. In Your name. Amen. (TLSB)