

Woman: Folly [9:13]
Meaning:
 Human Understanding [3:5-7]

Theology:
 Great satisfaction in mischief and
 fleshly pursuits [9:17]

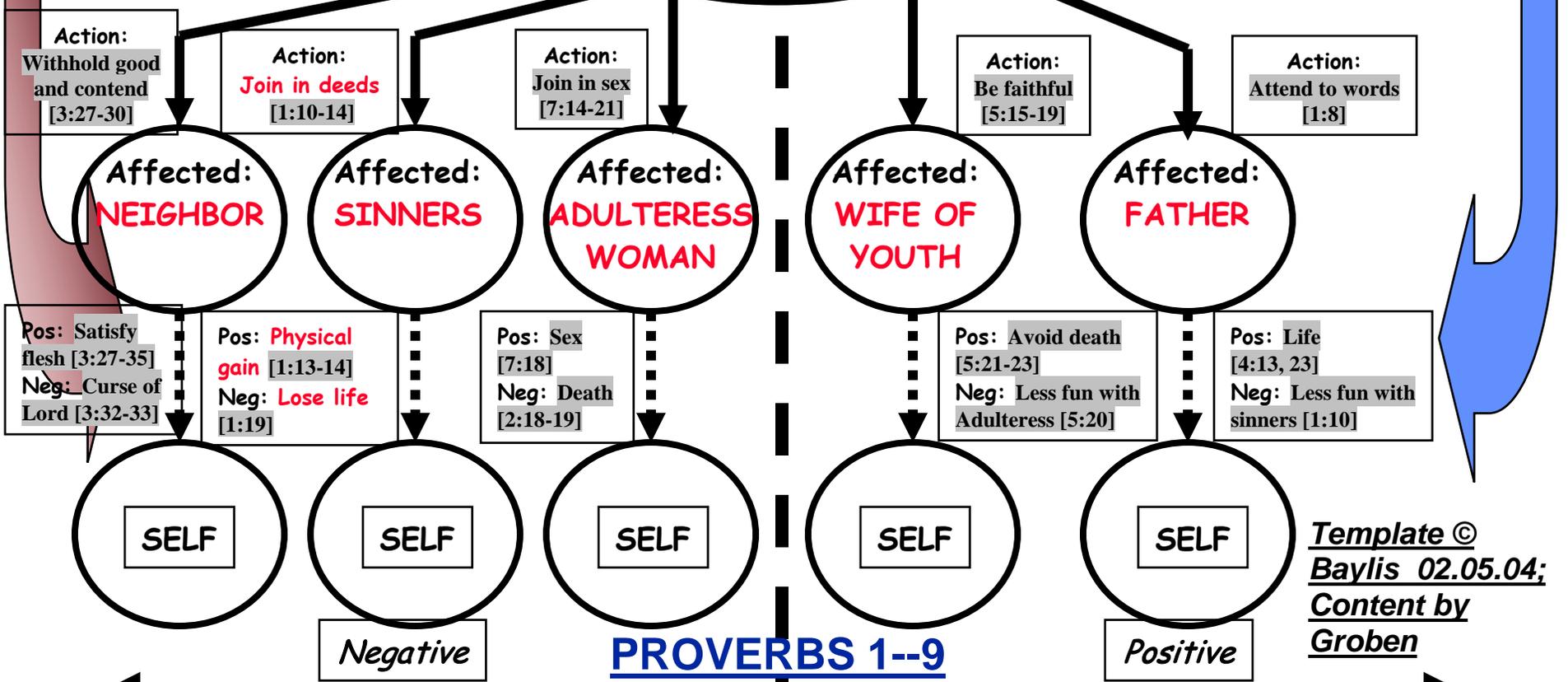
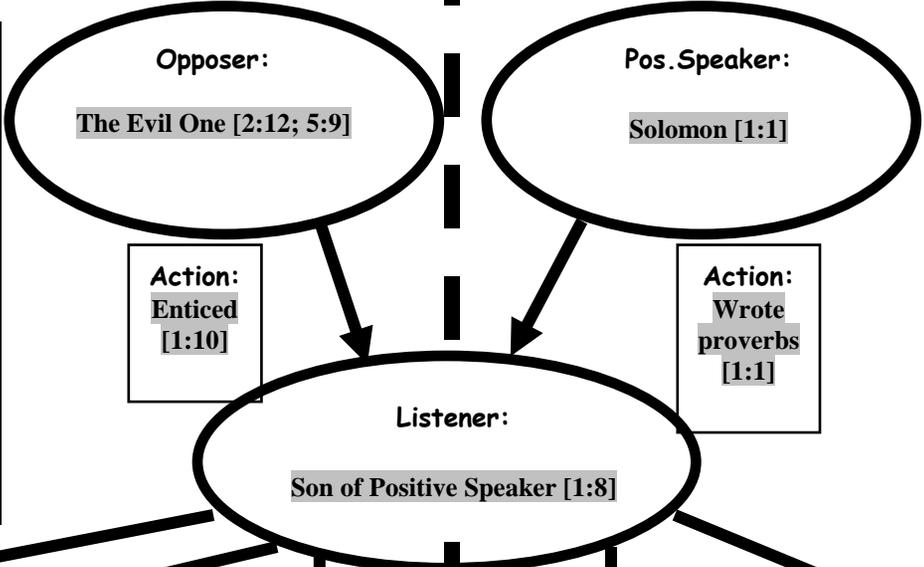
Promised Results: Satisfy physical
 desires and have fun [9:17]

Positive Speaker's:
 Death [9:18] and evil [3:7]

Woman: Wisdom [8:1-4]
Meaning:
 Revelation of God [2:5-6]

Theology:
 Fear of the Lord [2:5; 3:7]
 Knowledge of God [2:5]
 Turn away from Evil [3:7]

Results:
 Life [8:35]
 Wisdom [2:2-11]
 Walk in righteousness [2:20]



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The Listener

Who: The Listener was the son[s] of the Positive Speaker [1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24].

Attributes: The Listener was naïve [1:4] and youthful [1:4], and perhaps involved with an adulterous woman¹ [7:6-9].

The Positive Speaker

Who: The Positive Speaker was Solomon [1:1].

Attributes: The Positive Speaker was God's representative: the present King of Israel [1:1]. He had learned wisdom² from his father, King David [4:3-9], and was now wise himself [4:2, 11, 20-22; 5:1].

The Positive Speaker's Action toward the Listener: The Positive Speaker wrote proverbs to the Listener [1:1], to pass on wisdom and instruction [1:2-8; 3:1; 4:1-2; 6:20; 7:1-2, 24].

Attributes or reasons for using this action to convince: The Positive Speaker was trying to mitigate the Listener's naïveté and youthfulness [1:4], which would have made him vulnerable to mistakes in life.

The Negative Opposition

Who: The Negative Opposition was the Evil One [2:12; 5:9], whose work was manifested through wicked sinners [1:10; 3:25; 4:14; 6:12], the adulterous woman [2:16; 5:3; 6:25; 7:5, 12-22], fools and scoffers [1:22], and sluggards [6:6-11].

Attributes: The Negative Opposition was anti-God: hating knowledge³ [1:22, 29; 5:12], disdainful of reproof [1:25; 5:12], not fearing the Lord [1:29], walking in darkness⁴ instead of uprightness [2:13], delighting in doing evil and rejoicing in its perversity [2:14], and devious [2:15].

The Negative Speaker's Action toward the Listener: The Negative Opposition enticed, allured, flattered, and seduced the Listener [1:10; 2:16; 5:3; 6:25; 7:5, 12-22].

Attributes or reasons for using this action to convince: The Negative Opposition, being itself compelled to seduce others to stumble [4:16], approached the Listener because he was naïve and youthful [1:4], which would have made him vulnerable to such approaches.

¹ See discussion of the Adulterous Woman below.

² Throughout this discussion, wisdom will mean the revelation of God, and thus one who is wise is one who applies the wisdom of God to life, while the fool is one who does not.

³ Throughout this discussion, knowledge is of the Lord or of the content of wisdom.

⁴ Throughout this discussion, darkness refers to the way of evil, the opposite of light which means the way of the Lord.

Positive Theology

Source

Woman: The source of the Positive Theology was represented by a woman called Wisdom [1:20; 2:2-4; 4:5-6; 8:1-4; 9:1-6].

Real meaning [for what she stands]: The real meaning of Wisdom was the spoken revelation of God [1:7, 29-30; 2:5-6; 3:5-7, 19-20; 8:22-31].⁵

Attributes or means of communicating: Wisdom was valuable [8:10-11, 19] and she uttered truth and righteousness [8:5-9, 20]. Wisdom communicated by shouting in the streets [1:20-21; 8:1-4; 9:3-6], meaning Wisdom was readily available to the Listener. This Wisdom communication sometimes took the form of reproof and discipline [1:25, 30; 3:11-12], or counsel [1:23, 25, 30; 8:14].

Content [why the speaker thinks the listener should act positively]: The content of the Positive Theology was primarily fear of the Lord [1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10] and knowledge of God [2:5; 9:10], but also included honor for God [3:6, 9], trust in God [3:5], kindness and truth [3:3], and a turn away from evil [3:7; 8:7-8, 13].

Results [what the speaker attests will come if the theology is acted upon]: The results to the Listener for adhering to the Positive Theology included both spiritual benefits and earthly ones. Primarily, the Listener would have a walk in the way of God [2:20; 3:6], instead of in the way of evil [2:11-19], and thus would represent God and have life⁶ [3:18, 22; 4:13; 8:35; 9:6]. This would come about by the gain of knowledge, wisdom, counsel and discernment [1:22-23, 29-30; 2:2-11; 4:5-8; 8:5-9, 12, 14-16; 9:6].

Related blessings would be intimacy with God [3:32], favor with God and man [3:4; 8:35], integrity and righteousness⁷ [2:7-22; 4:12; 8:6-8, 18, 20], and honor [3:16, 35; 4:8-9; 8:18].

More temporal blessings would be peace [3:2, 17, 24-26], security from evil [1:33; 2:7-8; 3:23], happiness [3:18], living in the land [2:21-22], riches [3:10, 16; 8:18, 21], long life [3:2, 16; 9:11], healing [3:8], and general blessings [3:13, 33-34; 4:8; 8:32-34].

Negative Theology

Source:

Woman: The source of the Negative Theology was represented by a woman called Folly [5:23; 9:6, 13].

Real meaning [for what she stands]: The real meaning of folly was human understanding [1:31; 3:5, 7].

⁵ If Wisdom was the spoken revelation of God, one then might also call her the word of God and thus conclude she represents Christ.

⁶ Throughout this discussion, life is defined as representing God. It can only come through acting for God according to His desires and is present only in revelation. All activities done for selfish purposes are death and come to naught for the person's benefit, temporal or otherwise.

⁷ Throughout this discussion, integrity and righteousness refer to obedience to God's revelation [alliance with God who is righteous].

Attributes or means of communicating: Folly was naïve and ignorant [9:13], as well as boisterous [9:13]. She communicated by calling out to those passing by [9:15], meaning she was readily accessible to the Listener through the culture.

Content [why the speaker thinks the listener should act positively]: The content of the Negative Theology was that there is great satisfaction involved in mischief and fleshly pursuits [9:17].

Results [what the speaker attests will come if the theology is acted upon]: The results to the Listener of adhering to the Negative Theology would be satisfaction of physical desires and mischievous fun [9:17].

Result attested by Positive Speaker: The Positive Speaker warned the Listener away from Folly, for this Negative Theology would lead the Listener astray from God's ways [5:23] to death [1:32; 9:6, 18], even evil [3:7], which in turn would result in calamity, dread, and destruction [1:25-32].

Actions to Affected and Results to Self

Positive Affected #1

Who: The first Positive Affected person was the human father of the Listener, who was King Solomon⁸ [1:1] and wise [4:2, 11, 20-22; 5:1], and who learned from his father [4:3-9], King David [1:1].

Action by Listener: The Positive Speaker urged the Listener to listen and attend to the father's wise words [1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 21; 4:1-2, 10-11, 13, 20-21; 5:1, 7; 6:20-21; 7:1-4, 24].

Results to himself: The Positive Speaker promised the Listener benefits, primarily life [4:13, 23; 5:23; 6:23; 7:2], through the gain of wisdom, discretion, knowledge, prudence, understanding, and instruction [1:2-6; 4:1; 5:2; 6:22] and discernment of fear of the Lord and knowledge of God [2:5]. There was also a promise of general blessing [1:9], health [3:2; 4:10, 22], peace [3:2, 24-26], and success [4:12].

There would be costs for the Listener too: reproof and discipline [6:23], no fun with the adulterous woman [5:8; 6:24; 7:5, 25], and no fun with sinners [1:10].

Positive Affected #2

Who: The second Positive Affected person was the wife of the Listener's youth, who was a blessing to him [5:15].

Action by Listener: The Positive Speaker urged the Listener to rejoice in his wife [5:18], be faithful to her [5:15-17], be satisfied with her [5:19], and be exhilarated by her [5:19].

Results to himself: The Positive Speaker promised the Listener benefits of pleasing God [5:21], and thus avoiding death, sin, and downfall [5:22-23].

⁸ This is the same person as the Positive Speaker.

There would be costs for the Listener too: no fun with the adulterous woman [5:15-17, 20].

Negative Affected #1

Who: The first Negative Affected person was the sinner,⁹ who was evil [1:16], violent [1:11-12, 16; 3:31; 4:17; 6:17], greedy [1:13-14], haughty and lying [6:17], bearing false witness [6:19], sinful [5:22], spreading strife and devising evil [6:14, 18-19], deceitful and devious [2:15; 4:24], delighting in doing evil and rejoicing in its perversity [2:14; 4:16-17, 27; 6:18], walking in darkness [2:13; 4:19], seducing others [1:10; 4:16; 6:13], lazy [6:6-10], self destructive [1:17-19; 8:36], loved death [8:36], proud and arrogant [8:13], perverse [2:12; 6:12; 8:13], lazy [6:9-10], not fearing the Lord [1:29], and despising reproof, counsel, knowledge, wisdom, and instruction [1:7, 22-24, 29-30; 9:7-8].

Action by Listener: The Negative Opposition would have the Listener join in the evil activity of the sinners [1:10-16; 3:31; 4:14-16], envy them [3:31], and fear them [1:25-26].

Results to himself: The Negative Opposition promised the Listener immediate physical benefits such as wealth [1:13-14].

The Positive Speaker warned of costs, primarily loss of life [1:19, 32; 4:13; 5:22-23], walking in the darkness [4:18-19], a loss of intimacy with God [3:32; 6:16], being cursed by God [3:33] and mocked by God [3:34], and having his actions held abominable and hated by God [3:32; 6:16-19]. They also included being broken with no healing [6:15], experiencing calamity, distress, dread, and anguish [1:26-27], self destruction [1:31-32], being cut off from land [2:22], poverty [6:11], and dishonor [3:35].

Negative Affected #2

Who: The second Negative Affected person was the Adulterous Woman¹⁰, who forgot her covenant with God [2:17] and left her husband [2:17], was seductive [2:16; 5:3; 6:24-25; 7:5, 13, 16-21], deceived and unstable in her ways [5:6], evil [6:24], beautiful [6:25], cunning [7:10], boisterous and rebellious [7:11], wayward and adulterous [6:26; 7:11-12, 19-20, 26], brazen [7:13-15], and harmful [7:26].

Action by Listener: The Negative Opposition would have the Listener join the Adulterous Woman in sex [7:14-21].

Results to himself: The Negative Opposition promised the Listener the benefit of delightful and exhilarating sex [5:20; 7:18].

The Positive Speaker warned of costs, particularly death [2:18-19; 5:4-5, 11-14; 6:32; 7:22-23, 26-27] without any chance to return to God's paths of life [2:19], but also including suffering and punishment [5:8-11; 6:26-29] for serving evil [5:9], wounds and disgrace [5:14; 6:30-35], poverty [6:26], and the animosity of a vengeful husband [6:34-35].

⁹ Sinners are referred to by that sobriquet [1:10-18], as the wicked [3:25-33; 4:14-19; 6:12-19; 9:7], as fools, the naïve, and scoffers [1:7; 22-33; 3:34-35; 9:7-8], and as sluggards [6:6-11; though this last is directed more at the listener].

¹⁰ The adulterous woman was specifically identified as a woman cheating on her husband in several passages. However, it would be appropriate to apply this material to any wayward woman who did not honor God and otherwise acted in the ways of the adulterous woman depicted in these scriptures.

Negative Affected #3

Who: The third Negative Affected person was the Listener's neighbor, who lived securely beside the listener [3:29].

Action by Listener: The Negative Opposition would have the Listener withhold good from his neighbor [3:27-28], devise harm and for contend with the neighbor without cause [3:29-30], fail to fulfill his surety to the neighbor [6:1-5], and have sex with his neighbor's wife [6:29].

Results to himself: The Negative Opposition promised the Listener benefits of satisfying his desires for violence, mischief, and wickedness [3:27-35], satisfying his laziness [6:6-11], and satisfying his lust for sex [6:29].

The Positive Speaker warned of costs, primarily becoming an abomination to the Lord [3:32] and being cursed by him [3:33]. The warning also included the lasting debt to the neighbor for the unfulfilled surety [6:3], and, if the Listener had sex with the neighbor's wife, he could expect punishment, destruction, reproach, wounds, lasting disgrace, and the animosity of his vengeful neighbor [6:29-35].¹¹

Summary:

Positive Solution: The Positive Speaker wanted the Listener to heed the wisdom shared in the proverbs, so that he would fear the Lord and turn away from evil, and thus have life and righteousness.

Negative Solution: The Negative Opposition wanted the Listener to be enticed into folly, so that he would act on his desires, and thus have immediate physical gain.

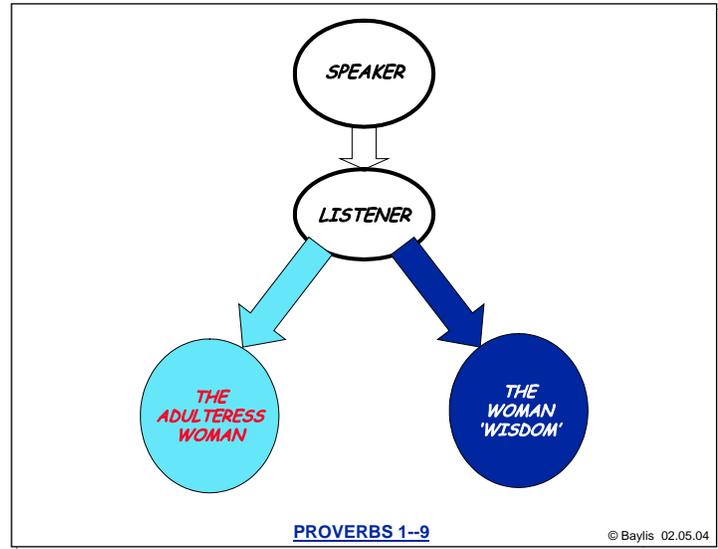
Literary Presentation:

In speaking to the listener, the author has basically used two women as his major characters to whom the young man may listen.

The Two Women: There are two women who both occupy a large amount of text. One is physical (the adulteress woman) and the other is immaterial (the woman "Wisdom"). One would think that the woman "Folly" would be contrasted with the woman "Wisdom" and the "wife of one's youth" contrasted with the adulteress woman since they are in the same categories. However, both "Folly" and "the wife" are given only a short paragraph each. Why do the "adulteress woman" and the "woman, 'Wisdom'" occupy so much dialogue in offering choices to the listener? Describe why he uses two women and what the difference is between these women so their differences illustrate exactly the two realistic options for the listener (Hint: Recall "Top Line"/"Bottom Line" in class).

¹¹ See other negatives under Adulterous Woman, above; these here are just the negative results directly linked specifically to the wife of a neighbor].

Adulteress Woman: The Adulteress Woman represents what is attractive and dangerous about sensual life. She offers what is most enticing to [most desired by] the flesh: delightful and exhilarating sex [5:20; 7:18], perhaps all the more exhilarating for being forbidden. She is pleasing to the eye [6:25], she appeals through touch [7:13, 18] and taste [7:13], she offers pleasing odors to smell [the thought of which might trigger memories of past experiences or lustful fantasies; 7:17], and she is seductively pleasing to the ego [through the ear: 2:16; 5:3; 6:24-25; 7:5, 13, 16-21]. She thus appeals to the flesh thoroughly and strongly, and offers immediate sensual satisfaction of the strong desire she creates. However, she also offers what should be most feared about the pursuit of fleshly pleasures: being cut off from the life of God [2:18-19; 5:4-5, 11-14; 6:32; 7:22-23, 26-27], serving evil [5:9], and bondage to sin that is humanly impossible to escape [2:19], along with some worldly ramifications [5:8-11, 14; 6:26-35].



The Woman 'Wisdom' (Describe her literary function and how she fulfills it): The woman Wisdom represents the benefits and costs of the spiritual life. She offers what is truly valuable [8:10-11, 19], the revelation of God [1:7, 29-30; 2:5-6; 3:5-7, 19-20; 8:22-31], which leads to truth and righteousness [8:5-9, 20]. She appeals to the spiritual part of man, which longs to know God [2:5; 9:10] and righteousness [3:3, 7; 8:7-8, 13], and which recognizes the great respect due to God [1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:6-7, 9; 8:13; 9:10]. Ultimately, she offers true life with God [3:18, 22; 4:13; 8:35; 9:6]. She also offers the costs of such high-minded pursuit: a turn away from all that is evil [2:11-19], which prohibits the physical pleasures associated with the sinners [1:10] and the adulterous woman [5:8; 6:24; 7:5, 25].

Summarize why the author uses these two: The author hopes to present for his son a contrast between the life of sensual pleasure seeking and the life of pursuing God. He chose to use personification, representing the sensual life by the adulterous woman and the life of God by the woman Wisdom. With this personification technique, he could clearly present the costs and benefits of each course of life in a way more interesting and engaging than dry discourse, hoping to engage his son's intellect and emotions in such a way that the son will choose life with God.¹²

¹² The modern correlation would be to choose Christ.