

An interview with Donna Gaines, Author of *Choose Wisely, Live Fully*



Fortune, fame and power mean nothing without godly wisdom. King Solomon learned this in his day, and it is a truth that stands today. Author Donna Gaines' new book, *Choose Wisely, Live Fully: Lessons from Wisdom & Folly, the Two Women of Proverbs* (Abingdon Press/August 15, 2017), draws from the timeless wisdom of Proverbs 1–9 to help women apply the same principles in practical ways to the issues they face today.

Q: Women are often referred to Proverbs 31 when it comes to an example of being godly wives and mothers. Why did you decide to focus instead on the first nine chapters of Proverbs and the women described as Wisdom and Folly?

Proverbs 1–9 is the foundation of wisdom that leads us to Christ. Chapters 10–31 contain the practical advice for living out that wisdom.

In Proverbs 1–9, Wisdom and Folly call out to those around them. Each is on a path. One leads to blessing and life and the other to curses and death. It was after I compared the two paths that I saw the wisdom of God plainly explained so we might choose to live life the way God designed it to be lived. The path of Wisdom is the path that not only leads us to Christ, but to all the blessings of the abundant life He died to purchase for us.

The Proverbs 31 woman is simply a woman who made the choices consistently leading to wisdom and blessing. She was not perfect, but she was wise.

Q: If you had to narrow it down, what are three of the most important lessons we can learn from the two women of Proverbs?

One of the main lessons we learn is every one of our choices has consequences. God made it very apparent in His Word that we reap what we sow. I call these verses in scripture the “if, then” verses. God told us over and over in His Word that He blesses obedience. It is in obedience to His Word that we:

1. encounter the fear of the Lord,
2. which gives us wisdom
3. and the blessing of spiritual understanding that leads to life.

We also learn as we obey that we develop a God-confidence, which enables us to stand boldly for truth as we live and speak it in love.

When we obey, we are granted a spiritual sight enabling us to live every day for “that day” — the day we stand before Christ.

Q: Describe how fairy tales from our childhood correlate to the longing for more we have as adults. How do we often wrongly pursue what will fill that emptiness?

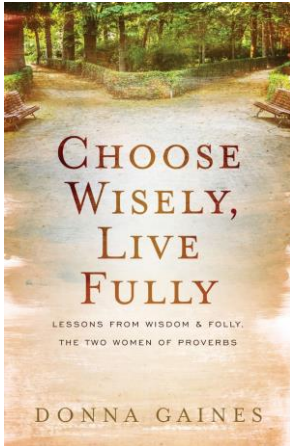
God is relational and has created us in His image. Even though that image is grossly marred, we still have an awareness that we were created for more than this life has to offer, and we long for what should be. God's story of redemption is woven into all of life — music, movies, literature and even our fairy tales. We long to be rescued, much like the damsel in distress in the fairy tales of our childhood.

As young girls, we were drawn to these stories of heroism and rescue because of that longing for more. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that God has set eternity in our hearts. The desire for life as it should be has been firmly planted in each person's soul. We know there is more to life than we are experiencing, and we are constantly searching for “happily ever after.”

Reflect on the familiar fairy tales. What do they all have in common? They all contain a rescued damsel who lives happily ever after with her prince. Some have called this longing a faint memory or imprint from creation,

an awareness of being created in the image of God and a longing for life eternal, where there is no sickness and separation.

Fairy tales, art, music and literature all reflect our longing for more. We all know that death is unnatural and this life cannot be all there is. This longing leads many to try to fulfill these legitimate desires with illegitimate things, but we always come up empty. The new job, new house, new car or new spouse — they only satisfy for a while. Then the insatiable longing returns. Our childhood fairytales give us a glimpse into this longing for life as it should be.



Q: What is Biblical literacy, and how do you address modern Christians' lack of it in *Choose Wisely, Live Fully*?

Bible literacy is the ability to understand the grand narrative of God's Word and apply its truths to life. We must read and study that we might "rightly divide the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Then, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are able to choose to bring our lives into conformity to God's Word.

Biblical illiteracy (the lack of knowing what the Bible says) is rampant. Most of us honestly don't know what God has said in the first place. Many church attendees profess Christ yet deny Him by their behavior . . . so what are we to do?

I encourage people to read the Bible annually. Reading what someone else says about the Bible is no substitute for reading it yourself. When I disciple women, my goal is for them to become self-feeders. I want them to feed spiritually on the Word of God on a daily basis. If we knew God's Word we would not be so easily discouraged or led into false teaching.

Q: How does the general lack of Bible literacy in today's world create havoc in everyday life? What are some examples of hot-button issues further complicated by Christians not personally knowing what God has to say on the subject?

We all must be cautious not to lean on our own understanding but instead to ask, "What does God's Word say about this?" It is easy for us to be influenced by our emotions, friends, media or what current culture dictates.

Many Christians only know what other people say about God, which leaves the door wide open to individual interpretation, personal agendas and propaganda to make a point. People in the church have been as impacted by media and culture as those outside the church.

The only way to be wise and live the life of spiritual blessing is to immerse ourselves in God's Word and obey it. God is not just an idea or a concept. He is the Creator, Savior and King. When we come to Him through Christ, He becomes the reality around whom all the rest of our life conforms. Then it doesn't matter what the issue may be: marriage, divorce, immorality, lying, or caring for the least of these — we choose to line up with God's Word.

Q: Why is mentoring younger women in discipleship important to you? Should every older woman actively aspire to be a mentor?

In Titus 2, every older woman is commanded by scripture to teach the younger women. We are also commanded by Christ to make disciples and teach them all they need to know (Matthew 28:19-20). This call is for all believers. I find as the mentor and teacher, I always get the most out of it. That is why it is important for those we disciple to disciple others themselves later. The truths of scripture really become our own when we can articulate them to someone else.

Q: Is it ok for a younger woman to search for a mentor instead of an older woman seeking her out? What should a younger woman look for in a mentor?

It is absolutely fine for a younger woman to seek out a mentor. She should look for a woman who walks in wisdom, peace and Christian love. She needs to be a woman of the Word and prayer. I have had several women in the churches where my husband served as pastor I approached and asked to spend time with. It

was not a formal mentoring or discipleship relationship, but I learned and was challenged spiritually by time spent with them.

Q: What are some of the things you wish you had done differently when you disciplined your daughters in high school?

I look back on those times and am so grateful for the Lord's grace in allowing me to disciple them. I think if I would change anything, it would be to spend even more time with them, reading God's Word, exposing them to great biblical teaching and praying with them. You will never regret the time you invest in someone spiritually.

Q: How were your three daughters involved in the writing of *Choose Wisely, Live Fully*?

As you work through the book you will see the chapters devoted to the characteristics of Wisdom and Folly. Each chapter features the blessing of wisdom and the very opposite curse associated with Folly. At the end of each of these chapters my daughters wrote a "blog post"-type article about how they learned this particular truth or how it was manifest in their lives.

Q: *Choose Wisely, Live Fully* includes a built-in study guide. Is the guide intended for personal use or group study?

The study guide is intended to be used in a small group. You can work through it by yourself, but you will experience much greater growth and accountability if you share the experience with a small group.

Q: Where can readers find your free downloadable resource on how to start a mentoring program?

By visiting www.AbingdonPress.com/DonnaGaines, readers can download a free resource giving them a schedule for a year-long discipleship program. This schedule is designed for a two-hour weekly study. The mentor guide also includes suggestions for books to study in addition to reading through the Bible. There are also scriptures to memorize.

Learn more about *Choose Wisely, Live Fully* at <http://donnagaines.org> and follow Donna Gaines on [Twitter \(@donnadgaines\)](https://twitter.com/donnadgaines).