

## **Listen to her!**

Proverbs 8

May 22, 2016

Lauren and Katherine, this is my advice to you on the occasion of your high school graduation. I will not say, "This is my parting advice to you," because even though you will be going to far away Iowa City, we are not parting. We will still be a part of you and you are always a part of us. We will still be on this journey together and there is much we have yet to share.

So, Lauren and Katherine, this is my advice to you on this occasion, at this moment, at this consequential moment of transition as you move into new challenges and new adventures. The rest of you will notice that I am speaking now to Lauren and to Katherine, but you are welcome to listen in as well!

Lauren and Katherine, this is my advice to you: Listen to her!

Listen to her! She was speaking to you, just moments ago. Did you hear her? Did you hear her speaking to you in the voices of Debbie and Gina and Barb and Lynette?

Do you know who she is? She is "Chokmah," which is her name in Hebrew. She is "Sophia," which is her name in Greek. She is "Wisdom," which is the name by which we know her, and she is calling out. She is calling out to you.

She is Wisdom, the first of all of God's creation. She has been there from the very beginning, from the beginning of this world, from the beginning of all worlds, from the beginning of time. She is God's companion, God's joy, God's architect. She has left her distinctive imprint on everything God has made, and on you!

She is the expression, the manifestation, the substance of God's character, of God's will, of God's way. She is Wisdom. She is Spirit. She is full of God. She is God. Listen to her!

Listen to her! Did you hear her? Did you hear what she is saying? She is saying: "Listen to me! Look for me! Wait for me! Choose me! Love me! Do what I say!"

Lauren and Katherine, listen to her and do what she says, because, if you do, you will be happy. You will be happy! The kind of happiness that stays with you and fills your life and spills over to other people's lives. The kind of happiness that nothing can change, that nothing -- no circumstance, no disappointment, no hurt -- can ever take away.

Listen to her, because she offers you treasures the like of which nothing else in this world can match. Her treasures are much better than silver or gold or jewels, much better than comfortable wealth or notable accomplishments or admirable success, much better than any knowledge or any skill or any human genius.

She offers the best of treasures: truth, good sense, maturity, righteousness, justice.

She offers truth ... the clear light that exposes the lies of pride and envy and greed, the lies that claim to tell you what you must have or what you must do or what you must be in order to be accepted or appreciated or loved.

She offers good sense ... the clarity of mind to understand that people matter more than things, that a good friend matters more any amount of praise, that intimacy with God matters more than anything. The generosity of spirit that understands that things are not always as they seem, that people labeled as losers may have more to offer this world -- and you -- than the supposed winners, and that those the world considers poor often have more, much more, substance to them than the "rich."

She offers maturity ... maturity that shows itself as patience, peacefulness, perspective, seeing more than one side of an issue, seeing more than one side of a person, being willing to lose in order to win, being willing to make sacrifices, not for the sake of your own long term benefit, but for the sake of love.

She offers righteousness ... doing the right thing, not because it works, but because it's right, being in the right, not so you can say you are in the right, but so you can bring delight to the God who loves righteousness for the delight it brings to those God loves.

She offers justice ... food for all who are hungry, water for all who are thirsty, shelter for all who are homeless, release for all who are enslaved, empowerment for all who are powerless, mercy for all who have sinned, love for all who have been unloved.

Listen to her! Look for her! If you look for her, you will find her, and if you find her, you will find life. This is what I want for you, Lauren and Katherine: life, full life, happiness, meaning, purpose, communion with God in every moment, every step of the way, and companions, always good companions, wise friends, caring sisters and caring brothers, all along the way. I want joy for you, the joy of being one with God, and the joy of being one -- in Christ, by the power of the Spirit -- with lots and lots of the members of God's family!

So listen to her! Listen to her, and she will show you who you are. She will show you that you are each one of the precious ones, one of the precious daughters of Eve, created like her in God's own image. This is the witness of the book of Genesis: "God created human beings, making them to be like God. God created them male and female."

Who? Who is made to be like God? Males. Men. They are made to be like God. They are made to reflect God's own image.

Who is made to be like God? Females. Women. You are made to be like God. You are made to reflect God's own image.

This is the truth and we know it, but in reality, in this world as it is, that truth gets rather twisted and muddled, because, of course, women cannot fully reflect all there is of God, right? Because, of course, God is a guy, right? And so men are like God and women are like God when they are like men, right?

Listen ... to her! Listen ... to her!

Who said God's a guy? He is called Father, but she is also called Sophia. God does father us, like the best of fathers -- protecting, providing, nurturing, guiding, and God mothers us, like the best of mothers -- protecting, providing, nurturing, guiding, loving, giving, saving.

Lauren and Katherine, you are made in God's own image, to reflect who she is in your own selves. So listen to her! Be like her! Love her! Choose her! Be hers, because you are hers. You are her own true daughters.

We are going to sing one of my favorite hymns:

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.*

I want this today to be Lauren and Katherine's song, Lauren and Katherine's prayer, so, for their sake, we are going to sing out of the New Century Hymnal, with a slightly different text, because it is not fair, it is not just, to ask them to sing:

*Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.*

They are not sons, but daughters, true daughters of God, their Mother.

So listen as we sing. Yes, it will seem different, but pay attention to the words. Listen to God's voice. Listen to Wisdom's voice. Listen to her!