

## Lesson 88

# Wisdom from God

Proverbs contains advice to help us make wise choices.

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

True wisdom comes only from God. God gave Solomon wisdom, and Solomon wrote many proverbs, which are wise sayings to help us live in a way that pleases God. The book of Proverbs gives good advice on many practical subjects, such as being a good friend, honoring parents, choosing our words wisely, working hard, and being humble.

## Key Passages

Proverbs 1:7, 2:1–6, 12:25, selected verses

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the source of all wisdom.
- Identify different things we can learn from Proverbs.

## Memory Verse

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

## Prepare to Share

### Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

God blessed Solomon with wisdom. In fact, God gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart such that he was the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:12). This wisdom came in response to Solomon's request as a young king for wisdom from God to judge the people properly and according to God's will. As a young king, he demonstrated his humble dependence on God. He knew that in order to properly discern between good and evil he would need godly wisdom (1 Kings 3:6–9).

Using the wisdom he gave to Solomon, God inspired the writing of the book of Proverbs, most of which was written by Solomon. The proverbs give us basic godly principles for life in simple, straightforward language. They deal with all aspects of life: money, time, friendships, lust, murder, laziness, theft, personal habits, faith, trusting God, etc. These statements are often not meant as absolutes but as general principles and instructions from God.

Care should be taken while studying the proverbs to compare scripture with scripture before conclusions are drawn. For example, Proverbs 22:4 says, "The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life." But is every humble Christian rich? Unfortunately, many teachers take passages like this and teach them as absolute promises of material wealth. We must be careful that our understanding of each of these nuggets of wisdom is applied alongside the whole counsel of God.

The opening lines from Solomon make it clear that it is the fear of the Lord that brings knowledge and understanding, which we need to interpret Scripture (Proverbs 1:7). Solomon repeatedly instructs his sons, the immediate audience of much of the book of Proverbs, to seek wisdom and understanding from God—the source of all wisdom. He tells them to call out, to raise their voice, to seek, and to search for wisdom as for hidden treasures (Proverbs 2:1–5). The truths contained in God's Word are there, but we must be diligent to search them out, to understand them, to meditate on them, and to apply them to our lives. None of this can happen apart from God's grace, which gives us the desire and ability to understand his truths.

As stated above, Proverbs teaches repeatedly that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, 2:5, 3:7, 9:10). That same fear of the Lord—reverence for who God is and fear of his wrath and judgment—will lead us to Christ in whom we find all the treasures and fullness of understanding and wisdom (Colossians 2:2–3). As we set our minds on Christ and meditate on how he is the perfect example of wisdom, we begin to understand better how to behave in a way that will honor God. Ultimately, true godly wisdom will come in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And this will happen only through searching the Scriptures in a way that will show ourselves approved to God (2 Timothy 2:15).

Apart from faith, nothing that we do pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). The proverbs offer wise and universal principles for living that people can put into practice, regardless of whether they have submitted their lives to Christ or not. And in many cases, according to God's goodness, living by these principles will provide benefits to both Christians and non-Christians. However, these blessings rendered to non-Christians are temporary.

The proverbs instruct on moral and right behavior. We must be aware that our behavior is not what brings us favor in the eyes of God. Nothing we do can commend us to God. It is only through the perfect obedience of Christ on our behalf that we are considered righteous in his eyes.

Obedience to God through works is pleasing to him, but our salvation is founded solely on the grace of God through the gift of faith—not by works (Ephesians 2:8–10). Gratitude for our salvation based on what Christ has done, and the fact that we are new creatures in Christ with new desires that want to honor and please him, will encourage (and enable) right behavior lived out according to the wisdom of Proverbs.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

Much of the book of Proverbs was likely written early in Solomon's reign. Scripture tells us that Solomon often failed to heed his own advice, and later in life, his heart was disloyal to the Lord (1 Kings 11:4). You might think that, being the wisest man on the planet, he would never make a mistake. Well, that just wasn't the case. Have you ever done something that you knew wasn't what God intended for you? Have you ever offered someone advice and then done the opposite yourself? This seems to be the case with Solomon. He knew it was wrong to offer sacrifices to other gods, but he did it (1 Kings 3:3). He knew God forbade the king to have multiple wives, but he married many (1 Kings 11:1–10). He knew that God himself was the only true source of fulfillment, yet he sought it within God's creation. We see in his later writing, the book of Ecclesiastes, that Solomon lamented the time and energy he squandered pursuing the things of the world and neglecting the things of God (Ecclesiastes 2). In fact, Solomon strongly warned the next generations to follow God to avoid the sinful mistakes he had made.

As you examine cultures around the world, you will find the wisdom of the ages preserved in various forms. Proverbs have been passed down through the generations in verbal and written form. You can find an example by simply visiting your local Chinese restaurant! While there may be some truth to many of these proverbs, they are born out of experience rather than wisdom from God. Because they are not grounded in a fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7, 2:5–6), those proverbs are worldly wisdom, not godly wisdom.

Another problem with many cultural proverbs is that they are often equated with biblical proverbs. If you took a survey, many people would not be able to tell the difference. For example, the phrase "God helps those who help themselves," is thought by many to be from the Bible when, in fact, it is the worldly wisdom found in Poor Richard's Almanac. This is why we must constantly check everything that we hear against Scripture and equip others to do the same. Only as we look to Christ and the truths found in the Word of God can we truly exercise wisdom.

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