

The Book of PROVERBS

(Proverbs is wisdom, “the ability to live life skillfully”)

Introduction & Chapter 1

> **Introduction:** Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon all belong in the same package because they are written as Hebrew poetry. Solomon is the writer of three of these books of poetry: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. A Proverb is a saying that conveys a specific truth in a pointed and pithy way. Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience. A proverb is a truth that is couched in a form that is easy to remember, a philosophy based on experience, and a rule for conduct.¹

According to Jeremiah 18:18 and Ezekiel 7:26, three groups communicated to the people on behalf of God: **the priests** imparted the Law; **the prophets** communicated the divine word and visions; and the **sages, or elders**, gave counsel to the people. The sages provided the practical application of godly wisdom to specific problems and decisions. The Hebrew tradition ascribed the Book of Proverbs to Solomon just as it ascribed the Psalms to David. Israel thought of King Solomon as her sage par excellence. And there is sound justification for this acclaim. Solomon’s forty-year reign in Israel was most brilliant. Granted these years were not without their mistakes. Solomon’s multiple marriages were not to his credit (1Kings 11:1-9). In the latter portion of his reign he set the stage for the dissolution of his great empire (1Kings 12:10). Nevertheless, he reigned well in Israel’s golden age of prosperity and power. Archaeology testifies to his skill in architecture and engineering, his competence in administration, and his ability as an industrialist. The sacred historian of 1 Kings tells us that Solomon loved the Lord (3:3); he prayed for an understanding heart (3:3-14); he demonstrated wisdom in the practical matters of administration (3:16-28); his wisdom was God-given (4:29); he was known for his superior wisdom by surrounding nations (4:29-34); he composed 3,000 proverbs and more than a thousand songs (4:32); and he was competent to handle the more difficult questions of the queen of Sheba (10:1-10).²

> **Date:** Solomon’s proverbs were written by 931 B.C., and his proverbs chapters 25—29 were collected by Hezekiah about 230 years later (Hezekiah reigned from 715 to 686 B.C.).

> **Key Word:** Wisdom

> **Key Verses: Proverbs 1:5-7-** *A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 3:5-6-* *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

> **Key Chapter:** You decide!

> **Christ in Proverbs:** The wisdom of Proverbs puts God at the center of man’s life. This wisdom, expressed by Solomon of the Old Testament, was to find its fuller revelation in Jesus Christ in the day of the new covenant. Said Jesus, *“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here”* (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31). Paul spoke of Christ as *“the wisdom of God”* (1Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3). Kidner says that wisdom in the Book of Proverbs *“is God-centered, and even when it is most down-to-earth it consists in the shrewd and sound handling of one’s affairs in God’s world, in submission to His will.”* Wisdom is finding God’s grace and living daily in harmony with His redemptive purposes for us.³

In chapter 8, wisdom is personified and seen in its perfection. It is divine (8:22-31), it is the source of biological and spiritual life (3:18; 8:35-36), it is righteous and moral (8:8-9), and it is available to all who will receive it (8:1-6, 32-35). **This wisdom became incarnate in Christ** *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Col. 2:3). *“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”* (1Cor 1:30; cf. 1Cor. 1:22-24).

> **Proverbs in the New Testament:** Proverbs is quoted in the NT nine times (Rom 3:15 [1:16]; 12:16 [3:7], 20 [25:21-22]; Heb 12:5-6 [3:11-12]; James 4:6 [3:34], 13 [27:1]; 1Peter 2:17 [24:21]; 4:8 [10:12], 18 [11:31]; 2Peter 2:22 [26:11]).

> **Food for Thought:** The Proverbs do not contradict themselves, while man’s proverbs are often in opposition to each other. For example: “Look before you leap” contrasted with “He who hesitates is lost.” “A man gets no more than he pays for” contrasted with “The best things in life are free.” “Leave well enough alone” has over against it, “Progress never stands still.” “A rolling stone gathers no moss” versus “A setting hen does not get fat.” The proverbs of man contradict each other, because men’s ideas differ. But there is no contradiction in the Book of Proverbs because it is inspired by God. Psalms emphasizes a walk before God and the devotional life, but Proverbs concentrates on a walk before men and the daily life.

¹ J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary, pg. 1

² Beacon Bible Commentary, pg. 455-456

³ Ibid, pg. 459

PROVERBS 1

“THE HIDDEN TREASURES OF WISDOM!”

I) The Purpose of Proverbs (v1-6)

- (v2) **To know wisdom** - The ability to understand what is right, true, or enduring; good judgment; knowledge.
To know instruction - To receive knowledge, be taught a lesson, to set in order, to have direction.
To perceive the words of understanding - To comprehend; to realize; to know the feelings and thoughts of.
- (v3) **To receive the instruction of wisdom,**
- **Justice** - The principle of moral or ideal rightness; conformity to the law; the abstract principle by which right and wrong are defined.
 - **Judgment** - The ability to make a wise decision or form an opinion.
 - **Equity** - Fairness or impartiality; justice based on the concepts of fairness and ethics.
- (v4) **To the simple: Prudence** - Skill, good judgment, and common sense.
To the young man: Knowledge - To perceive directly as fact or truth.
Discretion - The ability to make responsible choices.
- (v5-6) **A wise man will hear and increase learning!**
A man of understanding will attain wise counsel!
For what purpose: *To understand a proverb* - To attain the ability to live life skillfully.
To understand an enigma - Anything that is baffling or puzzling
To understand the wise and their riddles - A puzzling problem or question which requires a clever solution.

II) The Foundation of Wisdom (v7)

- **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge”**- This fear is not the slavish fear of torment but rather the fear of reverence and awe. It is a *“reverent & worshipful fear.”* Rylaarsdam says: “To fear God is not to be afraid of him but to stand in awe of him, because the meaning of everything and the destiny of every person are determined by what God is and does.”
- **“Fools despise wisdom & instruction”** - Listen to Jesus in **Matthew 7:24-29**

III) Parental Advice to be Honored (v8-19)

- (v8-9) **“hear” means obey** - the instruction (training & discipline, like a loving teacher) of your father (Deut. 6:6-7); **“the law”- the teachings of your mother; the rewards** - As the child obeys the parents he or she will be adorned with the decorations of a king!
- (v10-19) **Counsel to not hang around bad company!** - They will lead you to violence, robbery, murder, greed, prison, death and destruction. **(Matthew 16:24-17:1-** *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”*)

IV) Wise Warnings! (v20-33)

- (v20-27) **Wisdom cries out—but the fool will not listen, and when they need help God will not be there.** **(Galatians 6:7-9-** *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.)*
- (v28-32) **God’s reason for not helping.**
- (v33) **“But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil.”** **Jesus said in John 14:27-** *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*