

PROVERBS

“Walking in God’s Wisdom”

The book of **Proverbs** is the most practical book for us in all the Old Testament because it teaches us God’s wisdom – *i.e.* God’s instructions for living life skillfully. The wisdom we find in this book is the Heavenly wisdom we need for our everyday lives – and the value of that wisdom is clearly stated in ...

Proverbs 3:13-18 “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.”

No wonder then, James said in ...

James 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God ...”

The wisdom of God found in this book is presented in “*maxims*” – *i.e.* statements that express an observation/principle, that is generally accepted as wise or true. These are:

1. Practical – not theoretical.
2. Easily memorized.
3. Timeless truths, which touch every aspect of human relationships.

Some one has well said that, “*Reading a proverb takes only a few seconds; but applying a proverb can take a lifetime!*”

Now let’s begin our survey of this book of **Proverbs** by noting that it ...

1. Contains 31 chapters.
2. Contains 915 verses.

I. The introduction.

A. The name.

The Hebrew title is *Mishle Shelomoh* – which comes from ...

Proverbs 1:1 “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;”

However, because he did not believe that Solomon was the only writer of these proverbs, Jerome – in his Latin Vulgate (390-405 AD) – simply entitled it, “*Book of Proverbs*”.

That is the title that was adopted and brought into our English Bible.

B. The penman.

As we have said many times before, we know that God Himself is the Author of this book (*cf.* **2 Timothy 3:16**).

However, we are told in ...

1 Kings 4:32 “And he (*i.e.* Solomon) spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.”

Certainly no man was ever better qualified than King Solomon to write such a book of wisdom because – if you will remember, the LORD God had basically given Solomon a blank check in ...

1 Kings 3:5 “... Ask what I shall give thee.”

1. He had asked for wisdom. *cf.* **1 Kings 3:6-9**
2. God had granted him wisdom.

1 Kings 4:30-31 “... Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men ...”

3. People came to hear his wisdom. *cf.* **1 Kings 4:34**

However, not all of his proverbs are recorded in this book – in fact, there are only some 900 proverbs that are actually given in this book.

C. The date.

Solomon’s proverbs were written before his death in 931 BC. In fact, he probably wrote most of these proverbs in his early years as king – *i.e.* before his wicked wives turned his heart away from the LORD God.

However, some of the proverbs were written after Solomon’s backsliding to follow after the wisdom of the world – which is described in **Ecclesiastes** – and his return to following after the wisdom of the LORD God.

We are told that some additional proverbs of Solomon were found during the reign of King Hezekiah – *cf.* **Proverbs 25:1** – and that they were copied into the original book. So the book of **Proverbs**, as we have it today, was probably completed between 715-686 BC.

II. The purpose.

A. The historical purpose.

We find the phrase “*my son*” is used 46 times in the book – *i.e.* this was King Solomon’s book of wise instructions to his sons who would follow him on the throne of Israel.

Therefore, the purpose statement for this book is found in:

Proverbs 1:2-5 “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:”

1. This book was designed to help Solomon’s son to find wisdom through every stage of his mental development – *i.e.* to give ...
 - a. The simple man (*i.e.* childish/immature), subtilty (*i.e.* good sense).
 - b. The young man, knowledge and discretion.
 - c. The wise man, increased learning.
 - d. The understanding man, wise counsel.

When it comes to seeking advice in your life, this is the kind of person you need to look for!

2. The words “*wisdom and instruction*” complement each other:

- a. Wisdom means “*skill*”.
- b. Instruction means “*discipline*”.

No skill is perfected without discipline. And the book of **Proverbs** deals with the most fundamental skill of all – *i.e.* the skill to live a life that will honor and glorify God! To do that requires:

- a. Knowledge.
- b. Experience.
- c. Humility – *i.e.* a willingness to put God first.

- B. The theological purpose.

Deuteronomy 4:10 “... Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

And when we study the wisdom of God – and compare it to the natural wisdom that we see in the world – we will fear God. And that is a good thing because that is when are able to discover ...

1. True knowledge. *cf.* **Proverbs 1:7**
2. True wisdom. *cf.* **Proverbs 9:10**

III. The story.

The book of **Proverbs** may be divided into six parts:

- A. The prologue. **Proverbs 1:1-7**

Proverbs 1:1 “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;”

In this brief prologue, we find stated:

1. The identity of the author.
2. The statement of the theme.
3. The declaration of the purpose.

- B. The proverbs to the youth. **Proverbs 1:8-9:18**

There is a series of ten exhortations, each beginning with, “*My son*”. These messages introduce the concept of wisdom in the format of a father’s efforts to persuade his son to pursue the path of wisdom in order to achieve godly success in life.

1. First exhortation (*cf.* **Proverbs 1:8-19**).
 - a. To hear his father’s instruction and keep his mother’s teaching.
 - b. To resist the temptation to join the wicked in their wickedness.
 - c. To understand the tragic results of rejecting God’s wisdom.
2. Second exhortation – *i.e.* do not reject wisdom (*cf.* **Proverbs 1:20-33**).
3. Third exhortation – *i.e.* seek wisdom (*cf.* **Proverbs 2:1-22**).

A right attitude toward God's Word will result in discernment – *i.e.* the ability to:

- a. Discern the fear of the LORD.
- b. Discern that which is right and good.

And the result of this discernment will be:

- a. Deliverance from the wicked man.
- b. Deliverance from the wicked woman.

In other words, he will be able to walk in the way of the good.

- 4. Fourth exhortation – *i.e.* value wisdom (*cf.* **Proverbs 3:1-35**).
- 5. Fifth exhortation – *i.e.* acquire wisdom (*cf.* **Proverbs 4:1-27**).
 - a. Choose between the way of wisdom and the path of the wicked.
 - b. Guard your heart, tongue, and steps with all diligence.
- 6. Sixth exhortation – *i.e.* avoid the strange woman (*cf.* **Proverbs 5:1-23**).
 - a. The folly and destruction of the whoremonger.
 - b. The blessedness of the married man.
- 7. Seventh exhortation – *i.e.* avoid follies (*cf.* **Proverbs 6:1-35**).
 - a. Financial debt.
 - b. Laziness.
 - c. Contentions.
 - d. Evil women.
- 8. Eighth exhortation – *i.e.* the strange woman (*cf.* **Proverbs 7:1-21**).
 - a. Her way leads to death.
 - b. Her way leads to damnation.
- 9. Ninth exhortation – *i.e.* wisdom equals life (*cf.* **Proverbs 8:1-36**).
- 10. Tenth exhortation – *i.e.* chose wisdom (*cf.* **Proverbs 9:1-18**)!

C. The proverbs of Solomon. **Proverbs 10-24**

There is a minimal amount of topical arrangement found in these chapters. Even though there are some thematic clusters (*cf.* **Proverbs 26:1-12, 13-16, 20-22**), the usual units are one-verse maxims.

There are some 375 proverbs found in this section.

D. The compiled proverbs. **Proverbs 25-29**

These are the proverbs of Solomon, which were compiled and copied by King Hezekiah's men. These proverbs further develop the themes that find introduced in the earlier chapters.

E. The words of Agur. **Proverbs 30**

F. The words of King Lemuel. **Proverbs 31**

NOTE: According to Jewish tradition, Solomon had seven names by which he was known. Two of those seven names were Agur and Lemuel.

IV. The revelation.

Proverbs 30:4 “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?”

Certainly this is a reference to the LORD God and His “Son” – *i.e.* Jesus Christ. But in the entire book of **Proverbs**, the wisdom of God that is described for us, is most certainly seen realized in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:2-3 “... Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

1 Corinthians 1:30 “... of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”

Conclusion

The wisdom of the world is the way of sin and death – the wisdom of God is the way of holiness and life. That brings us back to the choice that was saw before in ...

Deuteronomy 30:19 “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”

So how will you choose?