

# PROVERBS

## INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – Most of the proverbs are credited to Solomon. See 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1. Solomon wrote over 3,000 proverbs. See 1 Kings 4:32. Others are by Agur (30:1) and by Lemuel (31:1). Solomon lived around 950 BC but the collection of them may not have been made for many years.
2. A PROVERB – is a short saying which is parallel or similar. New Testament parables are long proverbs. i.e. "the kingdom of heaven is like..."
3. THEME – The proverbs are not merely short sayings but are a series of instructions in life's wisdom and morals to lead a happy life, and be assured of a reward in the life to come.
4. THREE KINDS OF PARALLELS IN PROVERBS
  - A. Similar parallels – where the second line restates what is said in the first line. See Proverbs 19:9
  - B. Contrasting parallels – where the second line gives the opposite of what is said in the first line making it stronger. See Proverbs 17:24
  - C. Completing parallels – where the second line completes the thought of the first line. See Proverbs 19:17

## OUTLINE

The outline is quite unimportant in Proverbs and is merely a grouping of the sayings as explained within the book itself.

1. Proverbs of Solomon on wisdom. Ch 1:1-9:18
2. Proverbs of Solomon on different subjects. Ch 10:1-22:16
3. Sayings of the wise. Ch 22:17-24:22. More sayings of the wise. 24:23-34
4. More of Solomon's proverbs as compiled by Hezekiah's men. Ch 25:1-29:27
5. Sayings of Agur son of Jakeh. Ch 30
6. Sayings of King Lemuel (Unknown). Ch 31:1-9
7. The Perfect Wife. Ch 31:10-31 (is an Acrostic on the Hebrew Alphabet)

## IMPORTANCE OF PROVERBS

1. Proverbs is a very practical book in contrast to the Psalms that are very devotional. Proverbs are filled with guidelines on almost every area of life. One chapter a day makes a great month of reading. One suggested reading method is: Choose a subject that you feel you especially need help in and mark everything on that subject in a colored pencil. Use a different color for each subject.
2. Proverbs tells us the secret of godly wisdom (1:7),  
Seven Things God hates (6:16-19),  
A Picture of Christ (8:22-31), and  
A Picture of the perfect wife (31:10-31).
3. There are three kinds of godly wisdom in Proverbs based on three different Hebrew words. These are not translated consistently in English translations.
  - A. Wisdom – the ability to use what we know in what we do. See 29:15.
  - B. Understanding – the ability to tell right from wrong and true from false. See 23:4
  - C. Sound Wisdom – the ability to receive revelation from God and apply it to life. See 2:7, 3:21, 8:14
4. A "fool" in Proverbs is not one who is intellectually ignorant but one who defies God morally.

## PROVERBS

Proverbs are not the same as promises. They are statements that are easy to remember and are generally true that make wise advice.

1 – The theme of Proverbs can be found in V7. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” That means that if you do not begin with God, you are a fool. The issue is more moral than intellectual in Scripture. V24-26 “Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you.”

2 – The chapter offers wisdom and advice to anyone who will search for it. V4-6 “If you look for it (wisdom) like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” And those who seek God will gain this wisdom and knowledge as a byproduct. V7 “He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity.” One of the strongest warnings of the wisdom of Proverbs is against the “adulteress.” This is a way that leads to destruction.

3 – Solomon the author received wisdom from the Lord when he made that his choice of all the requests he could have made of the Lord. In this chapter he lists some of the benefits of that decision. V18 “She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.” Note how many times and ways that the Lord is connected with this kind of wisdom and knowledge. V19 “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.” Make sure to always connect the calls for wisdom in this book to the source of that wisdom, God. It is by seeking God that we obtain wisdom. The gain of wisdom is the byproduct of seeking God. We cannot seek wisdom directly.

4 – This chapter is full of advice to give guidance in life. It is given in the context of father speaking to son. It sounds like some of the sayings of Stephen Covey except that this is the word of God. They are proverbs though, not unconditional promises. V5-6 “Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.”

5 – This is an appeal to avoid the way of the adulteress. There are many reasons given. V3-4 “For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.” But the instruction is not simply what to avoid. The alternative is also given. Instead be satisfied with your own wife. V18 “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.” There is one clinching argument and that is that God knows and sees all we do. That is reason to avoid adultery. V21 “For a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord and he examines all his paths.” This needs to be taught to our children and to the men of our church.

6 – This chapter consists of various instructions with longer sections of three to four verses for each topic. This ends with another warning against adultery. V28-29 “Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.” V32 “He who commits adultery lacks judgment; he who does it destroys himself.”

7 – The process of seduction by an adulteress is described in detail. A warning from father to son to avoid this trap prefaces the account. He advises to seek wisdom as the alternative. V24-25 “And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths.” The warning concludes with V27, “Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.”

8 – This chapter outlines the blessings of wisdom. Wisdom is before all of creation and is the basis of it. Wisdom is to be found alone in God and his way. The chapter concludes with V35-36 “For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.”

9 – This chapter contains the opposing invitations to a person from wisdom and folly. Both invite to a good time but only wisdom offers good. V4 and 16 are identical as part of the call. “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” It seems like wisdom is ultimately a choice that one can and should make. To choose wisdom is to choose against folly. Folly is represented by adultery, and wisdom is represented by faithfulness. Ultimately the difference is also between death and life, Sheol and Heaven.

10 – For the next several chapters, there are one-verse sayings with no seeming organization. Pay attention to some of the themes such as friendship or money. There is much wise advice in these passages. The key word in this chapter seems to be “righteous.” Many of the verses apply the benefits of being one who is righteous. V17 “Whoever

heeds instruction is on the path to life but he who rejects reproof leads others astray." V23 "Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding." V30 "The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land."

11 – Righteousness continues to be a main topic. Note how many times the words, righteous, righteousness, upright, and blameless occur. The contrast is with the fool. The issue is not academics. The wise person is wise in moral matters, fearing God and doing what is right. The fool lives life apart from God and therefore is wicked. V4 "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." V28 "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf." It is interesting what V21 says. "Be assured an evil person will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered." Part of the truth here is that our actions go beyond our own lives to impact the lives of others.

12 – This continues the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. V21 "No ill befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble." V26 "One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." The emphasis in this chapter on the difference between the righteous and the wicked has to do with the tongue. Positively V25 says, "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." Negatively, V23 "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight." V18 "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

13 – There are several references to wealth and poverty in this chapter. These are tied into righteousness and wickedness. V22 "A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous." V9 "The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, but a poor man hears no threat." When you have no possessions, no one is going to try to hold you up or hold you for ransom.

14 – V30 "A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot." V31 "Whoever oppresses the poor insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him." There are two strong statements about the fear of the Lord in verses 26-27. "In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death."

15 – There are several verses that contain thoughts about the impact of words. V4 "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." There are other thoughts about what pleases and displeases the Lord. Another key thought is the value of correction. V10 "he who hates correction will die." A good general proverb is V29. "The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous."

16 – V6 "By the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil." V21 "The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." V23 "The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips." V31 "Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by a righteous life." V33 "The lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord."

17 – V10 "A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool." V16 "Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?" It seems that no amount of money is enough without wisdom. V6 "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers."

18 – V20-21 "From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." V32 "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord."

19 – V3 "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." V8 "Whoever gets sense loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will discover good." V14 "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." Proverbs has several references to the blessing and goodness of a good wife or spouse. Have we appreciated the spouse that we have and recognized him or her as a gift from the Lord specially chosen to accomplish his purposes in our lives? V21 "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand."

20 – V8 "A king who sits on the throne of judgment winnows all evil with his eyes." V28 "Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by his steadfast love his throne is upheld." V29 "The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair."

21 – One theme is that no matter what we do as humans, the ultimate result is up to the Lord. V1 "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." V30 "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord." V31 "The horse is made ready for the day of battle but the victory belongs to the Lord." V21 "Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness and honor."

22 – V12 “The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor.” V14 “The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit; he with whom the Lord is angry will fall into it.” This chapter also contains a truth about parenting in V15. “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.”

23 – The pattern changes in this chapter. These are proverbs that are more developed taking 2-4 verses instead of one. They have to do with the effects of too much desire for food, sex, and drink. V17-18 “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” V10-11 “Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.” V23 “Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.”

24 – There is a chorus that repeats here from chapter 23:18. See 24:13-14 “My son, eat honey, for it is good; and the drippings from the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” V3-4 outline the basis for a successful home. “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” V12 is a powerful witness to the character of God. “If you say, ‘Behold we did not know this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his works?”

25 – The longer proverbs continue. V2 “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” How much like that is Solomon with these proverbs and his other writings! V13 “Like the coolness of snow at harvest time is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the spirit of his masters.” There are interesting statements made about honey. If you find it eat it and enjoy it. But do not eat too much of it or it will cause you to vomit. See also V26. “Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.”

26 – This chapter warns against those who play the fool. Here the fool is more of a moral than an intellectual trait. The proverbs continue with other warnings about the dangers of words that are not true. V2 “Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight.” V24 “Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips, and harbors deceit in his heart.”

27 – V2 “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” V3 “A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool’s provocation is heavier than both.” V21 “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise.” V19 “As in water face reflects face, so the heart of a man reflects the man.”

28 – V4 “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them.” V9 “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” There are some verses that refer to the impact that righteousness or wickedness have on those surrounding. V28 “When the wicked rise, people hide themselves, but when they perish, the righteous increase.” Other verses speak of the dangers of hoarding or stinginess and the blessing even financially of generosity. V5 “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.” V27 “Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.”

29 – The themes continue of wealth versus poverty and of righteousness versus wickedness. V13 “The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.” V20 “Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” V23 “One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.”

30 – The new author is Agur and the proverbs change to longer comparisons. It seems that when there is a set of three or four statements that the last is always the point at which the author is aiming. V5-6. “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” There is a noble prayer in V7-9. “Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die; Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.”

31 – The words of King Lemuel are recorded here in this chapter. It includes the tribute to a noble wife. V10-11 “An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain.” V28 “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” V30 “Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” V31 “Give her the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.”