

# **Proverbs**

## **“Heavenly Wisdom for Earthly Living”**

### **I. Introduction to Proverbs**

- A. Proverbs is the twentieth book of the Old Testament Canon
- B. Proverbs consists of 15, 043 words organized into thirty-one chapters and 915 verses.
  - 1. These verses include hundreds of proverbial statements designed to instill heavenly wisdom into our lives.
- C. Proverbs is designed to do for our daily life what Psalms intends to do for our devotional life.
  - 1. Psalms focuses on our worship; Proverbs on our daily living.
    - a. “Extrapolating from the wisdom of Proverbs one would conclude that the divine plan calls for a society in which people work hard, observe each other’s rights, respect each other, and treat the less fortunate kindly. It is a society in which people are friendly, enjoy the pleasures of moderation, and love their families and homes. It is a society in which people are sincere, modest, self-controlled, temperate, reliable, chaste, willing to listen and learn. Those who live in this society are forgiving, considerate, discreet, kind to animals, sweet-tempered, liberal, yet prudent.” (*The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, James E. Smith)
  - 2. The purpose of Scripture goes beyond just leading unbelievers to faith in Christ. It has also been designed to provide truths that will transform our living.
    - a. Proverbs teaches us how to deal with life’s daily issues
      - i. It is inspired insight for daily practical, godly living.
      - ii. Some have called it “God’s How-to Manuel” and “Christian Living for Dummies”
    - b. Proverbs gives insight into every area of the Christian life; including
      - i. Family
      - ii. Finance
      - iii. Friendship
      - iv. Speech
      - v. Work
      - vi. Righteousness
      - vii. Diligence
      - viii. And the list goes on and on
- D. The purpose of Proverbs is to provide “Heavenly wisdom for Earthly Living”
  - 1. We are not born with wisdom.
    - a. Proverbs 22:15 “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”
    - b. Wisdom does not automatically come with age.
      - i. The source of wisdom is God, not age and experience.
        - 1. Colossians 2:3 “. . . in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
      - ii. God’s wisdom is given through His Word

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1. Deuteronomy 4:6 “Therefore be careful to observe them (God’s Word); for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”
- c. The purpose of Proverbs is to instruct us in the principles of Heavenly wisdom.
  - i. This wisdom will guide us in every aspect of life.
- E. Proverbs is based upon the assumption of a personal God who is active in the life of the believer.
  1. The key to derive any benefits from the wisdom of this book is found in Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
  2. The fear of the Lord is:
    - a. Reverence of God, especially His holiness
      - i. Investing our time, treasure and life to the Lord
    - b. A hatred of evil and embracing all that is holy and godly.
      - i. Hate the things God hates
      - ii. Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.”
- F. Proverbs is attributed to Solomon because he authored the majority of its contents.
  1. Other contributors include
    - a. The wise (Proverbs 22:17)
    - b. Hezekiah’s scribes (Proverbs 25:1), thought to be editors, not authors
    - c. Agur (Proverbs 30:1)
    - d. King Lemuel (Proverbs 31:1)
  2. Scripture tells us Solomon actually wrote more than 3000 Proverbs and 1005 songs, though only about 300 Proverbs and 1 song have survived.
    - a. Solomon is also credited with writing Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon
- G. Proverbs was written around 950 B.C. and compiled into its present form around 700 B.C.
  1. For almost 3000 years this book has been a guiding light of practical godliness for the believer.

## **II. Outline of Proverbs**

- A. Because of the nature of a proverbial statement, much of Proverbs does not lend itself to an organized outline.
- B. There are a few things that help divide the book into manageable sections
  1. **Section 1 Proverbs 1:1 – 6 Introduction to Proverbs**
    - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Purpose Title – Proverbs of Solomon
      - i. Proverbs – Masal (Hebrew) – comes from the root word meaning parallel
      - ii. Description by comparison, or lists
      - iii. Proverbs are short thought statements that use repetition, comparison or contrast to make a point.

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- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Purpose: To know wisdom and instruction
  - i. Wisdom –
    - 1. What God requires of man
    - 2. What man owes to God
    - 3. In short, how to live pleasing to God
  
  - ii. Instruction-
    - 1. Guidance
    - 2. Correction
    - 3. Chastisement
    - 4. We must be open to and even expect to be corrected on every level as we work through this book.
- c. 3<sup>rd</sup> Purpose: Who this book was written for.
  - i. The Simple, Young and Wise
    - 1. Simple - those prone to falling. If you have a history of stumbling in your walk with Christ, Proverbs was designed in Heaven to help in all areas of your life:
      - a. Relationships
      - b. Speech
      - c. Finance
      - d. Backsliding
      - e. And much more is addressed in its pages.
    - 2. Young – those without experience to guide them
      - a. This may suggest that Proverbs was used as a text book to prepare the next generation of leaders in Israel.
    - 3. Wise – Those who have walked life’s roads before
      - a. Proverbs will keep us from becoming self-confident or self-reliant.
  - d. How we get it: “The fear of God”
    - i. Proverbs is of little value for us if we do not want to live our lives to bring pleasure to God.

#### **2. Section 2 Proverbs 1:8 through 9:18 Extended Introduction**

- a. This serves as an extended introduction praising wisdom and warning against improper relationships.
- b. Wisdom is personified as a woman crying out for all to follow her.
  - i. Proverbs 1: 20-21
  - ii. Proverbs 2:6
  - iii. Proverbs 3:13-18
  - iv. Proverbs 4:5-9
  - v. Proverbs 7:1-3
- c. These first nine chapters seek to instill within us the great value of God’s wisdom.

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- d. We are also warned against ungodly relationships.
  - i. Proverbs 1:10-19     Avoid the “thug life”
  - ii. Proverbs 4:14-15     Avoid wicked influences
  - iii. Proverbs 6:24     Perhaps more than anything, we are warned against adultery and fornication.
    - 1. Proverbs 5:1-23
    - 2. Proverbs 6:20-29
    - 3. Proverbs 7:6-27
    - 4. Proverbs 9:13-18

### **3. Section 3                    Proverbs 10 through 29    Proverbial Sayings**

- a. This section consists of a long list of proverbial statements designed to teach practical wisdom. These are the heart of Proverbs.
- b. Authors of these chapters include:
  - i. Solomon and the “Wise Men” with contributions in editing by Hezekiah’s Scribes
- c. Subjects include, but are not limited to
  - i. Riches and poverty
  - ii. Righteousness and wickedness
  - iii. Wisdom and folly
  - iv. Diligence and slothfulness
  - v. Humility and pride
  - vi. Proper use of the tongue
- d. The following is a small sample highlighting some of the major themes.
  - i. Wisdom vs. Folly
    - 1. Wise, wisdom used 116 times
      - a. Wisdom is defined as living in the fear of the Lord or living to please God in every area of life.
      - b. Great benefits are promised to the wise Proverbs 3:13-18
    - 2. Fool, folly, foolishness used over 90 times.
      - a. Folly could be defined as saying no to God’s ways Psalm 14:1
      - b. Calamity is promised to the fools Proverbs 1:25-27
      - c. A few characteristics of the foolish:
        - i. Proverbs 10:18 The fool hides hatred  
Rather than hiding, we must forgive
        - ii. Proverbs 10:23 The fool plays with sin.  
Rather, we should follow the example of Joseph and run
        - iii. Proverbs 12:15 The fool does what is right in his own eyes,  
ignoring God’s Word  
Rather, we should consult the Word and live appropriately.
        - iv. Proverbs 15:5 The fool despises instruction  
Rather, we should allow the Word to correct us.

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- v. Proverbs 26:11 The fool returns to sin  
Rather, we should build walls so we don't go back
- d. A few characteristics of the foolish:
  - i. Proverbs 10:8 The wise receive godly counsel
    - 1. Proverbs 20:18 The wise seek godly counsel
    - 2. Proverbs 12:15 The wise heed godly counsel
    - 3. Proverbs 15:7 The wise give godly counsel
  - ii. Proverbs 11:30 The wise win others to Christ; pray, invite, bring. Come, but do your best not to come alone.
  - iii. Proverbs 13:20 The wise man surrounds himself with godly friend.
    - 1. Proverbs 18:1
  - iv. Proverbs 20:1 The wise avoid substances
- ii. Righteousness vs. Wickedness
  - 1. Proverbs 10:11, 10:32 Contrasts their speech
  - 2. Proverbs 10:25 Contrasts their end
  - 3. Proverbs 12:26 Contrasts their choice of companions
  - 4. Proverbs 24:16 Contrasts how they follow Christ.
- e. Finally, a Few Favorites
  - i. Proverbs 10:12 “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.”
  - ii. Proverbs 27:15 “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”
  - iii. Proverbs 11:4 “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.”

#### **4. Section 4 Proverbs 30 The Words of Agur**

- a. All we know about Agur is found here
  - i. Son of Jakeh
  - ii. May has been a descendent of **Ishmael**
- b. Agur loved to use lists to emphasize truths
  - i. Proverbs 30:15-17
  - ii. Proverbs 30:18-19
  - iii. Proverbs 30:20-23
  - iv. Proverbs 30:24-28
  - v. Proverbs 30:29-31

#### **5. Section 5 Proverbs 31 The Words of King Lemuel**

- a. We have no way of knowing who this man was.
  - i. He was a king, of what country we do not know
  - ii. His name means, “dedicated to God”
  - iii. He learned these lessons from a godly mother.
- b. Lessons include
  - i. Abstinence from alcohol

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- ii. How to choose a godly spouse

#### **III. Why Study Proverbs**

- A. We have clearly covered the purpose of this Book
  - 1. Proverbs 4:7 “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.”
  - 2. Proverbs will help us live out our Christianity in every walk of life.

#### **IV. Type of Christ**

- A. Jesus is the embodiment of wisdom
  - 1. Colossians 2:3 “. . . in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
  - 2. He is the answer to Agur’s question in Proverbs 30:4  
“Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists?  
Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?”
  - 3. Do you know Him?

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