

Welcome to

Journey through the Bible



Book by book
Bible study

Proverbs



Living Wisely in
a Foolish World

What is a “proverb?”

“A generalization on life marked by brevity, memorability and transferability”

“a short, pregnant sentence or phrase whose meaning is applicable in many situations, with imagery or striking verbal form to assist the memory.”

“It has been well described as having shortness, sense, and salt.”

R. B. Y. Scott, The Way of Wisdom

Nature & Value of a Proverb

pro “instead of,” verba “many words”

- ☆ Brief: A proverb excels in brevity.
- ☆ Shrewd: terse, striking, distilled wisdom
- ☆ Concrete: It is vivid, real, specific, yet-
- ☆ Universal: true to life generalizations, but
- ☆ Principles: not laws or promises,
- ☆ Timeless yet timely: proverbs transcend generational and time barriers.

“Wisdom” in Proverbs

★ **Comes by divine revelation:**

For the LORD gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. (2:6)

★ **Is supreme, the primary thing:**

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. (4:7)

“Wisdom” in Proverbs

★ **Is moral in its character:**

For acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; (1:3)

I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, (8:20)

★ **Is available to all who want it:**

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out it's seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding. (9:1-6)

★ **Is acquired by strenuous search:**

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. (2:1-5)

☆ **Enables one to cope with life:**

Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.... Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of righteousness. (2:12-15, 20)

People we meet in Proverbs

- The wise, knows God, manages life well
- The fool- despises wisdom, is uneducable
- The simple or naïve- gullible but teachable
- The sluggard- lazy, useless, restless
- The scoffer- a fool, deliberate troublemaker
- The gossip- betrays confidences and friends
- The friend- neighbor, constant, faithful
- Wisdom, the woman- lives & walks with God
- The seductress- devious, opposite of wisdom

Ideas we encounter in Proverbs

- Honesty and integrity vs. lies and deception
- Choices: the good, the better, the best
- Wealth and poverty: rich and poor
- Life and death: safe paths vs. dead-end streets
- Taming the tongue: helpful vs. hurtful words
- Healthy homes vs. hurting homes
- Heart health for living wisely
- Sexual purity in a sensual society
- The godly woman: worth her weight in gold

A Proverb is not a law or a promise

- ☆ Proverb—a statement of general truth,
- ☆ A law and a promise— are statements of fixed truth. The difference-
 - Fixed truth is true at all times and applicable in all circumstances.
 - General truth is true at all times, but applicable in certain circumstances.

Proverbs are guides not guarantees

☆“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.” Proverbs 14:23

Experience proves this is generally true but this proverb does not guarantee success. Farmers in North Dakota work hard but, floods, or early snow, may still destroy their crops and threaten their livelihood.

Hard work does not secure one from times of economic depression, job loss, drought, etc.

Proverbs are “general truth,”

☆Consider for a moment the two proverbs in Proverbs 26:4-5

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

☆If proverbs are absolutely true, then there is an apparent contradiction here.

Proverbs are “general truth,” that is,

They are confirmed by observation (generally validated by experience)

They are statements of a principle not explanations of how or why it works.

They look at the outcome, or end of all things, rather than at the process.

They see things from the vantage point of eternity, (wisdom is immortal)

Purpose Statement, 1:1-6

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David:

To know wisdom and instruction,

To discern the sayings of understanding,

To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity;

To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion, (A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,)

To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. (NASB)

Purpose restated:

1. To know wisdom and instruction, **that is:**
To attain wisdom, the kind of wisdom that produces a disciplined life
2. To discern the sayings of understanding:
To gain insight that provides discernment for the issues of life.
3. To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity;
To add high moral standards and actions to the disciplined life.

Purpose restated:

4. To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion, a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,

To give shrewdness and sensibleness to the untaught (the simple, the young).

Keeping the experienced (old) learning and giving them guidance for life.

Purpose restated:

5. To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

To enable the wise to understand the hard issues of life and find answers.

Foundation and source of wisdom:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

The foundation & source of Wisdom:

The fear of the LORD,
... is the beginning of knowledge; (1:7)
... is the beginning of wisdom; (9:10)

The fear of the LORD-
“What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, numerals to mathematics, the fear of the LORD is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book.”

Bruce Waltke, *Proverbs*, I:181

The starting point of Wisdom:

The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of knowledge;

“**Beginning**” may be

- (1) temporal: the first thing, as in origin or source,
- (2) qualitative, the chief thing, as in excellence or
- (3) philosophical, principal thing as in importance.
(Bruce Waltke, Proverbs I:180-181)

“Wisdom” in Proverbs:

“Wisdom” is skill, expertise, masterful understanding, the ability to cope with life.

“Wisdom” occurs 45 times in Proverbs

“The book of Proverbs opens by breaking up the plain daylight of wisdom into its rainbow of constituent colors.”

Derek Kidner, Proverbs, p. 36

What is Wisdom?

Wisdom is a thoughtful and intimate relationship with God that places all of life under His control and enables one to manage all of life.

Wisdom always leads one to God because it comes from God. It is acquired by a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The better we know God, the wiser we become!

Everything begins and ends with a personal relationship with the LORD

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer. (9:10-12)

Heart health in Proverbs

“Heart” is the command center of life:

Above all else, guard your heart
for everything you do flows from it. (4:23)

A heart at peace gives life to the body (14:30)
as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. (23:7)

a man’s heart reveals the man. (27:19)

apply your heart to discipline (23:12)

Our heart is the spiritual center of life, the center of our relationship with God:

Wisdom will enter your heart, (2:20)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart (3:5)

Write my word on the tablet of your heart. (7:3)

Wisdom rests in the heart (14:33)

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace
for gold, but the LORD tests the hearts. (17:3)

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (4:23)

“Above all else” sets the standard by which
guarding the heart is measured; it must be
considered as more important than anything
and everything else.

“Guard” refers to standing guard, that may be
either standing guard over something within
(guarding a prisoner), but primarily, it is
protecting what is within (the heart) against
an enemy attacking it from outside.

Above all else, guard your heart, everything you do flows from it. (4:23)

The heart is who and what we really are, it is
the ultimate source of all behavior and must
never be left unguarded. The best way to
guard the heart is to control what enters it and
what occupies it, both in time and in activity.

That means controlling what our eyes read
and watch, what our ears listen to, what fills
our mind, where we go, what we do, and also
what comes out of our mouth.

What station is your dial set on? 1

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching

My son, if sinful men entice you,
do not give in to them.

Wisdom calls aloud in the street,
she raises her voice in the public squares;
at the head of noisy streets she cries out,
in the city she makes her speech.

Whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.

Certainties, the "if-then's" of life, 2

If you accept my words
and store up my commands within you
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God
then you will understand what is right
and just and fair—every good path
For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
Discretion will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.

What is our best investment? 3

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He will make your path's straight. ...
Blessed is the man who finds **wisdom**,
the man who gains understanding,
For she is more profitable than silver,
and yields better returns than gold.
She is more precious than rubies;
nothing can compare with her.
She is a tree of life to those who embrace her;
those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

Who (and what) can you trust? 4

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom,
though it cost all you have, get understanding;
I guide you in the way of wisdom
and lead you along straight paths.
When you walk, your steps will not be hampered
when you run, you will not stumble.
Do not set foot on the path of the wicked
or walk in the way of evil men.
Avoid it, do not travel on it;
turn from it and go on your way.
Path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn
shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

Sex, cisterns, and fresh springs! 5, 7

Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well. ...
May your fountain be blessed, and
may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. ...

For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD,
and He examines all his paths.
A man who commits adultery lacks judgment;
whoever does so, destroys himself.

Contracts and work ethics! 6

If you have put up security for your neighbor,
if you have shaken hands in a pledge,
then, do this, my son, to free yourself,
Go and humble yourself;
press your plea with your neighbor! ...
Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hunter.

How long will you lie there, you sluggard?
A little sleep, a little slumber, ...
and poverty will come on you like a bandit
and scarcity like an armed man.

Who, what, is the love of your life? 8

Does not wisdom call out?
I wisdom dwell together with prudence;
I possess knowledge and discretion
Counsel and sound judgement are mine
I have understanding and power.
I love those who love me,
and those who seek me find me.
with me are riches and honor,
enduring wealth and power.
Whoever finds me finds life
and receives favor from the LORD.

We are invited to a house warming! 9

Wisdom has built her house;
she has set her table.
She calls from the highest point of the city,
"Let all who are simple come in here!
Come, eat my food...
Leave your simple ways and you will live;
walk in the way of understanding.
The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of wisdom.
For through me your days will be many,
and years will be added to your life.

See you next week!

Pearls from Proverbs
(Selections from 10-31)


