

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell



Proverbs Part 1

—by Peter Hammond

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 1:7

Why was Proverbs written?

To lead us to wisdom. The very first step to becoming wise is to fear God. When you understand the holiness of God, our eternal Judge, and how nothing escapes His attention and how much He hates evil, then we will learn true wisdom by fearing God.

The Proverbs are short, profound sayings that are perceptive, practical, pointed and positive. *"like apples of gold in settings of silver"* Proverbs 25:11.

The Proverbs can be divided into three sections:

- Counsel for young men (1-10).
- Counsel for all men (11-20).
- Counsel for kings and rulers (21-31).

Counsel for the young

The counsel for young men can be summarised as: **Wise up! walk straight! watch your step!**

The young are warned against bad companions, immorality and drunkenness in Proverbs 4:23-26:

The book of Proverbs was written to lead us to wisdom in our daily walk with Christ.

"Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it springs the issues of life."

"Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put perverse lips far from you."

"Let your eyes look straight ahead and your eyelids look right before you."

"Ponder the path of your feet and let all your ways be established."

The Proverb goes from our heart, to our mouth, to our eyes, to our feet. Many of the Proverbs have found their way into everyday speech:



Psalms and Proverbs

In Psalms we find the Christian on his knees, in Proverbs we find the Christian on his feet. The Psalms are for daily devotions, the Proverbs are for daily work and walk.

The Psalms are for our quiet times and the place of worship, the Proverbs are for the market place, the work place, the school room and the home. Proverbs shows that Godliness is practical. The Proverbs deal with our duty to God and to our neighbours, the duty of parents and children, husbands and wives, employers and employees, citizens and rulers. *"The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death."* Proverbs 14:27.



- "spare the rod and spoil the child."
- "Hope deferred makes the heart sick."
- "Pride goes before a fall."
- "Iron sharpens iron."

Recognisable characters

The characters described 3 000 years ago in the Book of Proverbs can easily be recognised today:

The person who talks too much, the wife who is always nagging, the aimless youth hanging around on street corners, the neighbour who is always dropping in and staying too long, the friend who is unbearably loud first thing in the morning.

Proverbs shows us the contrasts in choices and the consequences

There are over 900 Proverbs and they cover most of life's important issues. These are often presented as contrasts:

- Wisdom and folly
- Pride and humility
- Love and lust
- Wealth and poverty
- Work and laziness
- Masters and servants
- Husbands and wives
- Friends and relatives
- Life and death

Source of all wisdom

God is the all wise God, the source of all wisdom. It is His wisdom that created the universe and all good things in it. God has chosen to pass on His wisdom, especially through Scripture, and also through parents, grandparents, and others more experienced than us.

Wisdom of Solomon

When King Solomon acceded to the throne,

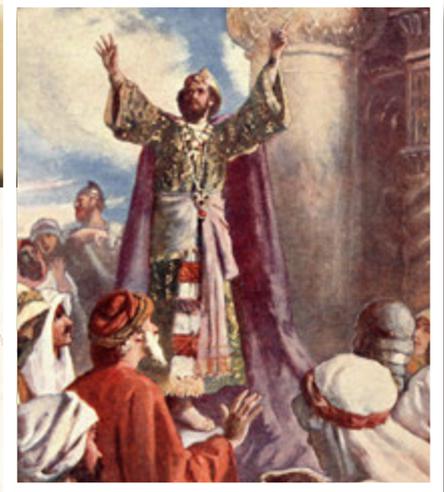
God has chosen to pass on His wisdom through Scripture and also through people.

God offered him anything he asked for. Solomon asked for wisdom and God not only gave him wisdom, but He also gave him fame, power and wealth. The wisdom of Solomon was legendary, it even attracted the Queen of Sheba to travel a long distance to hear his wisdom for herself.

Of course, it would appear that Solomon was wiser in his proverbs than he was in his life. Solomon reminds us that we can be wise in our minds without being wise in our hearts and actions. There was an important condition attached to God's gift of wisdom. As He told

Solomon: *"I will give you a wise and discerning heart... if you walk in My ways and obey My statutes and commands."* Proverbs 10:11.

Solomon wrote **Song of Songs** in his youth, **Proverbs** in his middle age and **Ecclesiastes** in his old age. Solomon was not only a king and a philosopher, he was also the architect of the Temple that was one of the wonders of the world. Although Solomon wrote, or gathered, most of the Proverbs, he was not the only author. Other Proverbs come from



Hezekiah, Augur, and Lemuel. God is referred to ninety times in Proverbs as Yahweh. The wisdom in Proverbs is from God.

A word for a situation

The English word 'Proverb' comes from the Latin 'Proverba'. 'Pro' means 'for' and 'verba' »

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Proverbs and Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ emphasised these same choices in the Sermon on the Mount:

- The broad road vs. the narrow way,
- The wide gate vs. the narrow gate,
- The foolish man vs. the wise man,
- Building on sand vs. building on the rock,
- The bad tree vs. the good tree,
- Bad fruit vs. good fruit,
- Hell vs. Heaven.

Our Lord Jesus emphasised: "You are either with Me, or against Me. You are either gathering, or scattering."

Proverbs emphasises how we can make the most of life and warns us against the many ways of wasting or ruining ones life. The emphasis is on integrity and work ethic. The call of Proverbs is: Do not waste your life!

means 'word'. Literally a Proverb is an appropriate word to fit the situation. Wise men store up knowledge.

Acrostics

Proverbs makes use of acrostics, such as chapter 31, where each line begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Parallelism

The poetry in Proverbs often consists in parallelism. Some would be **synonymous parallelism**, for example: "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Far more common is **antithetical parallelism**, where the second line contrasts with the first: "He who has a slack hand becomes

Solomon wrote Song of Songs in his youth, Proverbs in his middle age and Ecclesiastes in his old age. Solomon is not the only author of Proverbs; the wisdom in Proverbs is from God.

Numerics

On other occasions the structure is numerical, for example:

"There are six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord amongst brethren." Prov 6:16-19.

These forms are to enable the reader to more easily remember the Proverb.

poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." Prov 10:4.

"Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid." Prov 12:1

In **synthetic parallelism**, the thought in the first line is advanced by the second:

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life." Prov 4:23.

The key words 'and', 'but' and 'for' indicate what type of parallelism is being used. ■

To be continued...

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