

The Message of the Old Testament

A Book-by-Book Study

Proverbs

Proverbs: Background and Introduction

Proverbs is a book of wise sayings that comes to us from the days of Solomon to Hezekiah. The book mentions Solomon (reigned 971-931) in the very first verse but also proverbs of “the wise” (22:17-24:22 and 24:23-34), Agur (30:1-33), and Lemuel (31:1-9).

Along with Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and some Psalms, Proverbs constitutes the _____ literature in the Bible.

A key term in Proverbs is of course “wisdom.” The word (Hb. khokmah) can have the nuance of “skill” (as it does in Ex. 28:3), particularly the skill of choosing the right course of action for the desired result. In the covenantal framework of Proverbs, it denotes “skill in the art of godly living.” (ESV Study Bible, Introduction to Proverbs)

Proverbs bases its instruction on the fear of the Lord (1:7, using the special covenantal name of God), implying that its audience is the covenant people (cf. Deut. 6:2, 24; 10:12).

Nevertheless, Proverbs is not at all the same as the _____ or the _____. The difference is one of emphasis rather than basic orientation. The Law and the Prophets lay their stress on the covenant people as a whole, called to show the world what restored humanity can be; Proverbs focuses on what such restoration should look like in day-to-day _____ and in personal _____. (ESV Study Bible, Introduction to Proverbs)

Proverbs: Outline

- I. Title and Purpose (1:1-7)
- II. The Value of Wisdom (1:7-9)
- III. Collected Wise Sayings (10-31)

Proverbs: Title and Purpose

1:1-7

The purposes of the proverbs include the following:

- To gain _____ wisdom
- To learn how to deal wisely, fairly, justly, and _____ in the world
- To give prudence to the simple (naïve)
- To impart knowledge and discretion to the _____
- To increase the wisdom of the _____
- To provide guidance for those who understand
- To better understand wise sayings and questions (riddles)
- To get started at the right point of reference: to fear the Lord

Paul House summarizes this passage (1:1-7) as follows:

Readers are to gain certain skills from the book. They are to be informed about how to know wisdom, sound teachings and words that give insight (1:2). They will discover how to make sound decisions and how to be just and right and fair (1:3). Growth will occur at every level of reader, whether young and simple, or old and wise (1:5). Their teachers will be the wise of the past (1:6). These benefits can only accrue, however, when one begins by respecting the Lord, the one God who is the source of wisdom (1:7). Yahweh both defines and provides wisdom for the seeker. (Old Testament Theology, 442)

The Message of the Book of Proverbs: The Value of Wisdom

Two instructors appear in 1:8 – 9:18. One is a _____ who speaks to his son. The other is _____ personified, who cries out as a woman in the street for the inexperienced to pursue wisdom.

1:8-9 ---

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

The father goes on to warn his son of sinners who would entice him because of their greed. They are swift to do evil and the evil will come back upon them.

1:20-23 ---

1:29-33 ---

Wisdom warns of the consequences of remaining _____ and of scoffing at her. She is there but she is refused. All one needs to do is listen and receive. Those who receive what wisdom offers will experience _____ and security. They will not have to _____.

The father continues to urge his son in 2-7

3:1-4 ---

Wisdom lifts up her voice in 8-9

8:6-11---

8:18-21 ---

8:22-24 ---

8:27-31 ---

Wisdom grounds her statements upon the _____ of the Lord. She promises great benefits for pursuing truth. Wisdom was used by _____ to create the world and is thus commended to the sons of men to keep her ways and be blessed.

The Message of the Book of Proverbs: Collected Teachings of Wisdom

☛The Person of _____ is at the Heart of the Proverbs.

1. He is the _____ who employed wisdom in the work of creation.

3:19---The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew

2. He is the _____ of wisdom.

2:6-7a---For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;

3. He is _____ and judge (3:11-12; 5:21; 6:16-19)

4. He is worthy of _____ (3:5-6, 11-12; 16:3; 28:25)

5. He protects the _____ (14:31; 17:5; 19:17)

6. He redeems the faithful (3:25-26; 10:29; 18:10; 23:10-11)

7. He rules over _____ (16:1-9, 33)

So although this book is concerned with wisdom in the course of everyday life, it is inextricably linked to the person and work of God. Wisdom begins with fearing him and it is guided by him all along the way.

► Six areas in which Proverbs instructs us toward godly success and wisdom in everyday life.

THE FOOL

Mark Dever writes, "Part of learning what wisdom looks like is learning to recognize wisdom's _____. Probably foremost among the cast of contrasting characters is the fool." (511)

Characteristics of THE FOOL

1. Fools dislike _____ and despise correction.

Proverbs 3:11

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof,

5:8, 11-13

12:1

17:10

2. Fools expose their folly by their _____.

13:16

In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.

15:2

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

17:27-28

Whoever restrains his words has knowledge,
and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise;
when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

THE SLUGGARD

The sluggard loves to _____.

6:9-11 (cf. 24:33-34)

10:5

19:15

26:14

The Sluggard fails to _____ what he starts.

26:15 (cf. 19:24)

One _____ is as good as another for the sluggard.

22:13

THE FAMILY

The wise and godly life presented in Proverbs is expressed in the context of _____. The book is largely cast as a father teaching his son, is punctuated by warnings against adultery, and concludes with the image of a noble _____.

Wisdom for Husband and Wife

5:15-20

31:10-12

4

31:26-27

Wisdom for Parents

19:18

22:15

23:13-14

29:15

Wisdom for Children

4:1-4

13:1

15:5

FRIENDSHIP

Bad Friends

28:7

29:3

24:1-2

Good Friends

13:20

27:6

27:9

17:17

WORDS

10:11

10:13a

10:14

10:18-21

10:32

12:6

13:3

15:28

LIFE AND DEATH

14:12 (cf. 16:25)

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

10:2

Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.

11:4

Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

12:28

In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.

13:14

The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.

14:27

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.

14:32

The wicked is overthrown through his evil-doing, but the righteous finds refuge in his death.

Proverbs like Psalm 1 paints two _____. One is the way that leads to life and the other is the way that leads to death. Proverbs points to the reality of _____ (a day of wrath, 11:4) wherein what is needed for that day is righteousness. The righteous finds _____. Where does the wisdom come from that puts one on the path that leads to life? The fear of the _____ is the beginning of wisdom. The problem is no one can say, "I am clean and without _____" (20:9)

What shall we do? Proverbs teaches us that we must _____ our sins: "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (28:13). Does he who confesses find a reward? No, he finds mercy! But if God promises to repay every person according to what he has done (24:12), how can anyone find mercy? Well, Proverbs does not provide as full an answer to that question as the New Testament does, but it does provide the general outline of an answer: "Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for" (16:6). (Dever, 521-22)

The message of the book of Proverbs is that God offers wisdom for everyday living. And the life of every day living is also the life of _____ living. In other words, everyday living is not mundane; it is where the glory of God shines forth. The wisdom with which the wise faces the circumstances of every day is the same as that with which he faces the paramount questions of life and death. It begins with the fear of God. This wisdom acknowledges that we are sinners but rejects the way of foolishness and death and trusts God for atonement. It trusts the Lord and lives according to His wisdom.