

Who couldn't use a greater skill set when it comes to living life? If you want to learn how to navigate through life utilizing wisdom (& reaping the benefits thereof) as you make your way there's no better place to look than to the book of proverbs.

## Proverbs 1

The book of proverbs was written primarily by Solomon, the son of David. When Solomon inherited the kingdom of Israel it was really at its apex concerning its position of world power. It was basically the superpower of the nations in that day, at that time. David had pretty much conquered his enemies all around & God had given Israel rest on every side. Solomon would reign in peace; but there was a problem, he was a young man w/virtually no experience of ruling on any level. He hadn't wielded authority on the battle field or in the boardroom, he was a lover, not a fighter (as we know by his 700 wives and 300 concubines) 😊.

Now I wouldn't say he was inadequate or insufficient on a human level (God had strengthened him, established him & exalted him) but certainly he could sense the pressure of needing to rule the kingdom well. So one night he was talking to the captains of his armies, the leaders of Israel, the judges and the various people in authority & he had the ark of the covenant brought up to Jerusalem from Kirjath Jearim. When it arrived he offered 1,000 burnt offerings on the bronze altar before the tabernacle to the Lord & that night the Lord appeared to him & said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

Can you imagine that? God just gives you a blank check & says, "Fill in the amount, I'll give you anything you want." Solomon said, "You have shown great mercy to my father David, & You've made me king in his place & now I rule over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Now give me wisdom & knowledge, that I may go out & come in before this people; for who can just this great people of Yours?" (2 Chron 1)

God said to him, "Because you didn't ask for riches, or long life, you didn't ask for honor or the life of your enemies—but you asked for wisdom and knowledge to judge My people...you got it. & As a bonus I'm going to give you the riches, wealth & honor unlike any king before you or that will ever come after you." So the fame of Solomon spread throughout the earth & people would come literally from all over the planet to glean from his wisdom, to gain insight on life.

Of the 3,000 proverbs that Solomon wrote, God has granted us that we might glean & grow from some of them as well. The book of proverbs contains many of the proverbs that Solomon uttered (though not all of the proverbs written in this book were uttered by him).

What is a proverb? Simply put a proverb is an ethical, moral truth that teaches us wise/insightful practical life application. If you want to know what a godly life looks like in real time; proverbs will model it for you.

We find the 1<sup>st</sup> 7 Vs serving as an introduction to the entire book. Vs 1 Tells us what the book is, Vs 2-6 tell us why the book was written & Vs 7 hands us the key Vs that really unlocks the emphasis of the book. Notice.

### Vs 1-7

So there you have the point of the book and the key Vs found *in* the book. The intent of this book is to equip the reader with moral skill (for leading a holy life) and mental discernment.

The 2-fold purpose of the proverbs is found in Vs 2, then amplified in Vs 3-6. “To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding.”

Now we should probably take a minute here to discuss exactly what “wisdom” is. The essence of wisdom is skill; the ability to do a job. Proverbs want to give us *skill* for living, understand that wisdom is not merely intellectual or academic; it’s primarily moral. It’s demonstrated through the way I live my life, the paths that I take & the decisions that I make, that’s what will demonstrate whether I’m wise or a fool.

If you study and apply the proverbs you will learn to live skillfully in virtually every arena of your life. In your family, in your finances, in your friendships, what you say & how you work, it’s all here.

“To know wisdom & *instruction*.” The word instruction speaks of discipline; as when a parent corrects his/her child so as to build their character in the appropriate way. So we want to know the necessary skills to navigate through life in a godly manner & receive the chastening of God so that our character might reflect that of Christ’s.

When he speaks of *understanding* it’s w/the idea of grasping a truth w/insight & discernment.

### Vs 3-4

I want you to notice that the instruction of wisdom is something that has to be *received*. You & I weren’t born w/wisdom, nor do we automatically become wise as we *grow older*. The source of all wisdom is found in the Lord & we gain it (as we will see) through a disciplined pursuit... To understand that another way, by nature we’re foolish & lazy & we reject the hardship of learning by discipline (fools despise wisdom & instruction 7b).

What we are by nature is wayward children (at best) who need to be brought under the rule of our heavenly Father (even if it is painful) for the sake of our own good. (Father knows best, right?) *We need to learn to deny our natural desires (to crucify the flesh, the things we wanna do) and do what we need to do. It's not about what we want it's about what we need. What we want is to destroy ourselves through sin, what we need is to be trained up in wisdom and righteousness through godly discipline.*

One commentator said this, "Often we hear of people who had great talent, for example in sports or music, but fell far short of their potential because they did not have the discipline to fully develop their God-given abilities. Our author tells us from the beginning that if you want to be wise and successful in life you will have to work hard.

The nature of the training offered by God is not merely academic but is also highly practical. It is like the physician who perfects his craft, not merely through classroom learning, but also by practicing medicine as a hospital intern. We apply the wisdom of Proverbs in the laboratory of life.<sup>1</sup>

#### Vs 5-6

*That word translated "wise counsel" was used of ropes that would pull or steer a ship in the appropriate direction. The idea being that wise counsel is guidance that moves one's life in the right direction.*

There are all kinds of people and places from which we can receive guidance; people trust their personal feelings (which is generally foolish); they seek guidance from the world or some sort of mystical type encounter; astrology or divination; then they wonder why their lives are in shambles... The proverbs warn against foolish counsel, worldly counsel, & following our own feelings, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."*<sup>2</sup> *We need to acquire counsel that is grounded in truth & in righteousness; that doesn't happen through just being supernaturally "zapped" by God (though God can certainly do that for us). Most generally He employs the way of having us establish a disciplined pattern of studying His Word; that's where we receive the guidance that will steer our lives in the appropriate direction.*

#### Vs 7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. That word beginning is interesting. Because it can mean "beginning" like we think.

<sup>1</sup> Newheiser, J. (2008). *Opening up Proverbs* (21). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Pr 14:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But it's also translated in other places as the "sum" or "total"; so really there's a fuller meaning than simply "the start". It's true that you can't gain a knowledge of spiritual things unless you begin in the right place; if you refuse to fear the Lord (to revere Him, honor Him, worship, serve & obey Him) you will never acquire spiritual knowledge or mature in it. To *refuse* to revere, honor, worship, serve & obey Him is to set up camp in the category of fools who despise (belittle, ridicule or hold in contempt) wisdom & instruction.

The essence of true knowledge is found in the fear of the Lord, apart from the Lord you fulfilling Rom 1:21-22 *"although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,"*<sup>3</sup> Or Eph 4, *"having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness"*<sup>4</sup>

So understand that the fear of the Lord isn't simply a starting place as in a beginning that we move on from. It's a starting place like the footing or foundation of a home upon which everything else is built and established. The sum total of knowledge (spiritual insight & understanding) is founded upon the *fear of the Lord*.

#### Vs 8-9

Let me break this down; pay attention to godly parents, it'll save you tons of grief. The 1<sup>st</sup> thing that Solomon wants his son to realize is much the same as we try to teach our children; *"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'" 1 Corinthians 15:33* We read in *Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."* We can learn in the sanctuary or we can learn on the streets, we can learn in class or we can learn through the courts. We can learn through the expositing of God's word, or life's experience. Solomon is trying to save his son a lot of grief, notice.

#### Vs 10-14

We have here a principle and a practical illustration. The principle is found in Vs 10; we might call it peer pressure; "If sinners entice you, do not consent." "Just say 'No'". Now Solomon is applying this to his son but don't think that peer pressure is limited to the young. It's what got J.B. beheaded; it's what kept many followers of Jesus in the closet.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Ro 1:21-22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Eph 4:18-19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We allow ourselves to be persuaded by what others are doing, what others are thinking; what we need to do to be accepted by others. That's why politicians watch the polls, because they know society moves w/a "herd" mentality; it's easiest to follow the flow of popular opinion as opposed to actually thinking for myself. "Everybody sees it the same, so it must be right, right?"

Solomon says, "Listen, if sinners entice you, don't consent." They've got a "get rich quick" scheme, "money for nothing & your chicks for free" type plan. The point here is not to be foolish so as to buy into a plan that involves you getting rich quick to the demise, downfall or even death of another.

In reality it could be anything, be it enticement to party, to steal, to rip someone off; deal drugs, it doesn't matter. They bait you w/only a portion of the story, "You can benefit greatly w/little to no effort." They appeal to your flesh.

Vs 15

Or as we read in 2 Corinthians 6:17, "*Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord.*" Get rid of the crooked crowd. Why? Because that path is a slippery slope that sets in motion an almost irreversible course of action that can easily destroy your life; notice.

Vs 16-19

Or as we might say today, "Crime doesn't pay". A bird brain is smart enough to avoid a net in plain sight yet these thugs think they're really being sly; that they'll escape all the while they're setting the trap for themselves. They think they're going to entrap others but ultimately they themselves are the ones who get busted, if not in this life then in the one to come.

In the NT we read it like this, "*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*"<sup>5</sup>

Vs 20-23

Now I want you to notice the difference here; the sinful seek to do their thing *secretly*. Did you catch that? It's in Vs 11, "Let us lurk secretly for the innocent." However wisdom makes her proposition *openly... publicly*, there's nothing to hide it's an open invitation.

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Ti 6:9-10), Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

She, “Calls aloud outside,” “Raises her voice in the open squares”, “cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city.”

And she makes her appeal to the simple, the scorers & fools. The invitation (Vs 23) is unto repentance, wisdom longs to make one wise; there’s no reason to remain simple, scornful or foolish.

What’s the difference in those 3? One who is “simple” isn’t necessarily one who is some kind of imbecile, or an idiot w/out a clue & can’t comprehend. The “simple” one is one who is naïve, inexperienced due to limited exposure to life, because of that there’s no real wisdom there, they’re naïve. **The scorner is one who is arrogant, always belittling others or somehow verbally or nonverbally seeking to make them feel small; but they’re really someone, or if they’re not they’re connected to those who are. The fool is exactly that; simply stupid, nothing more I can really add to that 😊.**

But none of these people need to remain as they are, there is an open invitation unto wisdom. However sadly many will prefer to stay as they are; it’s not w/out its consequences, notice.

#### Vs 24-33

When we read that, initially it sounds harsh. Sort of a, “too bad so sad for you, you had your chance” kind of a mentality.

**The fact of the matter is that what’s being said is that when you sow, you will reap. Too often it’s when the consequences of our own ways are upon us that we realize our error & cry out for deliverance. But by then it’s too little too late.**

Once we set a chain of events in motion & then the ramifications are upon us... at that point we have to endure the harvest. If we sow to the wind (the bible is clear) we will reap the whirlwind. I’ve said it a thousand times, everyone loves sowing the seeds of the flesh, the problem is that none of us like the harvest.

**However sowing to the Spirit takes discipline, denying self & crucifying the flesh, however when that harvest is upon us we’re loving life.**

**The point Solomon is making here is that we think beyond the present moment & consider the end of our ways, “but what will you do in the end” the bible says. Our culture is built upon the sands of “Enjoy it for now, deal w/the consequences later”.**

“The waywardness of the simple will slay them (it’s suicide to take that path) & the complacency (or the satisfaction) of fools will destroy them.

It doesn't have to be that way; to listen to wisdom is to dwell safely; to hear God's word is to be secure. Safety, security, freedom from the fear of evil;... or destruction & the path of slow (or sometimes sudden) suicide through following the path of fools.

It's up to you. My encouragement is to choose wisdom, choose the pathway of the word of God; it's the pathway to a good/godly life in this age & a sure reward in the age to come...

#### Prayer Points:

God we need wisdom; may we be diligent to pursue it, willing to seek for it as silver & search for it as hidden treasures. Help us to turn at wisdom's rebuke; pour out Your Spirit upon us, make us wise in the age in which You've called us. Both to avoid the snares & the pitfalls of life, & to know how to reach the lost; to make a difference in our city; make us salt & light; revive us & renew us by the power of Your Holy Spirit, continue to encourage us in the coming weeks as we drink in the wisdom of Your word as poured out in the Proverbs.