

Preview of Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is a part of the poetical section of the Old Testament. Proverbs and the Psalms are two of the best known and most widely quoted books of the Bible. As the Psalms inspire the saints in their worship, the Proverbs instruct them in their walk.

This book of wisdom focuses on the very principles of knowledge and existence. Much of the book is a series of brief, punchy statements that provide instruction or present observations on practical themes. Numerous discourses of greater length treat such themes as wisdom, justice, temperance, industry, and purity.

The opening verse of chapter 1 identifies Solomon as the main author. Only the last two chapters specify different authorship. At the earliest, the present form of the book dates to the time of Hezekiah (Proverbs 25:1).

After introducing the statement of purpose in Proverbs 1:1-6, the first nine chapters present discourses on wisdom, often from the vantage point of parental counsel. Children, especially youth, urgently need the wise counsel of godly parents and other older people. Wisdom is clearly shown to originate in God and to be of chief importance. Frequent attention is focused upon moral purity as an expression of wisdom, in contrast to the folly of following the enticements of the impure.

Chapters 10-29, the bulk of the book, comprise the actual collection of proverbs. Many of these concise instructions are presented as contrasts, making it easy to comprehend their full impact. Good and evil are tied to reward and punishment. The proverbs are extremely practical because they address the details of almost every issue of human life.

Chapters 30 and 31, with different authors specifically named, may be considered an appendix to the book. In chapter 30, the outstanding feature is the series of numerical proverbs. Chapter 31 is well-known for its beautiful and beloved poem, praising the qualities of a virtuous woman.

Lesson 1 2 November, 2014

Wisdom, the Principal Thing

Lesson Scope: Proverbs chapters 1 to 4, 8, 9

Lesson Focus

Most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon, an authority on wisdom, through divine inspiration. God granted Solomon's request for an understanding heart, and He promised that no mere man before or after Solomon would equal him in wisdom (1 Kings 3:12). Wisdom, like God, is infinite. God possessed wisdom in eternity past (8:22), displayed it in the majesty of Creation, and manifests it through the wonder of redemption. Just as "God is love," God is wisdom.

Solomon also foreshadowed a far greater King, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). He used this wisdom to impart knowledge and instruction to mankind so that those who hear His teachings can also become wise. Mankind has ever sought wisdom, looking in books, inquiring of wise men, and discerning phenomena in nature. Unfortunately, their search is fruitless, since they seek worldly knowledge of men instead of heavenly wisdom from God. Access to the treasures of wisdom is one of the privileges of the New Testament believer (James 1:5).

If we have no desire for wisdom, we are fools. If we are driven by a carnal hunger to be happy, healthy, prosperous, comfortable, and self-satisfied, we will never be wise. If our feelings determine what we believe, we cannot be wise. If we subjugate our minds to some earthly philosophy and blindly believe what we are told, we undermine wisdom. Unless we are willing to examine all things carefully, we cannot hope to avoid shipwreck of faith.

The desire for wisdom is born out of a humility that acknowledges our own potential for self-deception (Jeremiah 17:9). It is a humility that distrusts personal feelings and renounces self-sufficiency (2 Corinthians 12:5). It is a humility that turns to the Word of God as the final arbiter of all things (Acts 17:11). The desire for wisdom therefore entails a high view of Scripture linked with an enthusiasm for understanding it correctly. God requires that very attitude (2 Timothy 2:15). The

heart that truly loves Him will naturally burn with a passion for wisdom.

Christians, as humans, desire to pursue wisdom. The same pitfalls can ensnare the believer as the unbeliever if God is left out of the search. God is the source of true wisdom. His children can acquire this wisdom as they diligently search for it.

Lesson Aim: To understand how to acquire and apply godly wisdom.

Theme Verse: [Psalm 111:10](#). The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Lesson Text:

"If Thou Seekest Her"

[Proverbs 1:7-9](#) ⁷ The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction. ⁸ My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: ⁹ For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

[Proverbs 2:1-9](#) ¹ My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; ² So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding; ³ Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; ⁴ If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures; ⁵ Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly. ⁸ He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. ⁹ Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path.

"She Is More Precious Than Rubies"

[Proverbs 3:13-18](#) ¹³ Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding. ¹⁴ For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. ¹⁵ She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. ¹⁶ Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour. ¹⁷ Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all

her paths *are* peace. ¹⁸ She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is every one* that retaineth her.

"She Shall Bring Thee to Honour"

Proverbs 4:5-13 ⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. ⁷ Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. ⁸ Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. ⁹ She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. ¹⁰ Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. ¹¹ I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. ¹² When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. ¹³ Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: keep her; for she *is* thy life.

Proverbs 8:19-21 ¹⁹ My fruit *is* better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. ²⁰ I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: ²¹ That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

Proverbs 8:33-36 ³³ Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. ³⁴ Blessed *is* the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. ³⁵ For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. ³⁶ But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

Questions for Study

"If Thou Seekest Her"

1. Where should one expect to find wisdom?
2. What attitudes are essential in seeking wisdom?

"She Is More Precious Than Rubies"

3. What gives wisdom its value?
4. How does wisdom contribute to "length of days" (Proverbs 3:16)?
5. What blessings are implied in Proverbs 3:17?

"She Shall Bring Thee to Honour"

6. What are the writer's concerns for his son?
7. Give some examples of forsaking wisdom.
8. In what ways might we give practical expression to wisdom?

Analyzing the Passage

"The fear of the LORD" (Proverbs 1:7) is an attitude of reverence that motivates obedience. That it is "the beginning of knowledge" shows how foundational this attitude is for obtaining not only knowledge but also wisdom. Wisdom begins in the youngest years of childhood with the father's instruction and the mother's law, which, if heeded, create a mantle of dignity, honor, and authority about the fully grown adult.

The gains a man receives by heeding instruction, finding knowledge and understanding, and applying wisdom cannot be measured. Wisdom exceeds the value of rubies, silver, gold, and anything else. When wisdom regulates one's life, abundant blessings follow.

Chapters 8 and 9 personify wisdom and communicate from a first person perspective. Because all wisdom comes from God, these chapters can be read as though God Himself is speaking. Since all Scripture is the Word of God, He is speaking.

Principles and Applications

"If Thou Seekest Her"

1. Wisdom is founded on a right relationship with God (Proverbs 1:7). God is the source of wisdom. Man must connect with God if he is to obtain and maintain wisdom. The fear of the Lord cannot be overemphasized in Christian teaching and daily living. As one's relationship with God grows and deepens, wisdom also increases and expands. Without godly fear, we open ourselves to desolation and the polluted philosophies of men. Indeed, every thought in our minds must be brought into subjection to God. If we seek to be like Him, we must conform our will to His.

2. Wisdom is available through the teaching and discipline of godly parents (Proverbs 1: 8). This explains the need for the fifth commandment. The parents' experiences in life provide lessons for their children and grandchildren, so that they do not need to repeat mistakes. Likewise, beneficial methods and decisions can be strengthened and repeated for a fulfilling life. Parents reinforce their teaching when they honor and respect the teachings of their own parents. If we received godly instruction when we were children, we must not forsake that way when we are grown.

3. Understanding comes only to those who seek it with the whole heart

(Proverbs 2:1-9). The pursuit of wisdom requires a full commitment, involving a strong desire and an active pursuit. The person who keenly desires to know and do God's will learns how to behave righteously, act fairly, and conduct his affairs honestly. A passive approach will fail by hindering the pursuit and spoiling the maintenance of wisdom already gained. It is not enough to hold the truth; we must be held by the truth.

4. God desires to impart wisdom (Proverbs 2:6-7). He possesses wisdom beyond measure. He desires to give gifts to His children freely but not carelessly. This includes the imparting of wisdom (James 1:5), which is to be used for the furtherance of His kingdom. He imparts wisdom through His revealed Word and through faithful men who have diligently and earnestly applied it in life. Such wisdom provides satisfaction, contentment, and protection from evils that would separate us from God.

"She Is More Precious Than Rubies"

5. The value of wisdom cannot be measured by earthly standards (Proverbs 3:14-15). Men go to great lengths to obtain precious metals and stones, even putting their lives in peril. Wisdom's value exceeds everything we could desire on this earth; we cannot measure its true value. How much more should men therefore seek it! If we are entrusted with something so precious, we dare not squander it. It is likened to merchandise, implying that we trade for it. We expend time and energy to gain godly wisdom because it is precious.

6. Wisdom conveys a quality of life that truly satisfies (Proverbs 3:16-18).

Whereas the usual pursuits of material things and earthly knowledge create frustration and disappointment, wisdom produces a fulfilling and satisfying life. Wisdom, properly applied in a believer's life, produces a different standard of living, a different lifestyle, and a different outlook. Walking in wisdom produces a life that is lengthened by strength and influence, leading others to seek it as well.

"She Shall Bring Thee to Honour"

7. Applied wisdom has a preserving influence (Proverbs 4:6, 8-10). Though wisdom does not guarantee long life, it does bring a high quality of life for a longer proportion of life. Wisdom motivates choices based on long term consequences rather than on selfish impulses. Wisdom warns against unhealthy choices, spiritual threats, and physical

danger. Wisdom draws on the experiences of elders to avoid repeating mistakes. It imparts knowledge and understanding to rising generations, extending the memory of those who are wise.

8. He who applies true wisdom can live confidently (Proverbs 4:12-13). Because wisdom comes from God, it enables us to understand truth. We then have confidence in our decisions, thoughts, and activities that allows us to move forward and to move God's kingdom forward. We need not second-guess our decisions, worry about secondary consequences, or care about the mockery of the world. Living in the embrace of wisdom gives one poise and confidence.

9. Wisdom leads to spiritual riches (Proverbs 8:19-21). Because wisdom exceeds the value of anything we can imagine it leads to spiritual riches that are of similar value. By partaking of and using this precious gift from God, we invest some of that value in our lives, laying up treasure in heaven for dividends in eternity. These spiritual riches can be passed to others for their blessing.

10. Applied wisdom brings divine favor and life everlasting (Proverbs 8:33, 35). God favors those who use His gifts wisely. Proper use of His gifts brings an increase in value and blessing for the user. Seeking wisdom wholeheartedly brings eternal life, since such a pursuit also requires a close relationship with God. Our walk with God becomes closer as we continue to seek Him and the wisdom He imparts.

Important Teachings

1. Wisdom is founded on a right relationship with God (Proverbs 1:7).
2. Wisdom is available through the teaching and discipline of godly parents (Proverbs 1:8).
3. Understanding comes only to those who seek it with the whole heart (Proverbs 2:1-9).
4. God desires to impart wisdom (Proverbs 2:6-7).
5. The value of wisdom cannot be measured by earthly standards (Proverbs 3:14-15).
6. Wisdom conveys a quality of life that truly satisfies (Proverbs 3:16-18).
7. Applied wisdom has a preserving influence (Proverbs 4:6, 8-10).
8. He who applies true wisdom can live confidently (Proverbs 4:12-13).
9. Wisdom leads to spiritual riches (Proverbs 8:19-21).

10. Applied wisdom brings divine favor and life everlasting (Proverbs 8:33, 35).

Answers to Questions

1. Where should one expect to find wisdom?

Our omniscient God is the ultimate source of wisdom. Creation reveals and demonstrates His wisdom. His Word is a revelation of divine wisdom. Godly parents desire to impart their faith and knowledge to their children, exemplifying a walk in the fear of the Lord.

2. What attitudes are essential in seeking wisdom?

The fear of the Lord is basic in that it guides and refines our search for knowledge and our application of what we have learned. We should seek wisdom eagerly and persistently, as a speculator would seek silver, gold, or precious stones. We want to apply it actively and constantly in daily living.

3. What gives wisdom its value?

The value of wisdom cannot be measured. It is a free gift from God Himself; therefore it is priceless. God grants wisdom to His children as they are able to handle it so that they may walk in His paths and be drawn to Him. Finally, this culminates in eternal life with Him.

4. How does wisdom contribute to "length of days" (Proverbs 3:16)?

As godly parents impart their life lessons to us, we are able to avoid their mistakes and experience preservation. Wisdom also helps us identify issues that we do well to avoid; our church discipline gives practical help on this. Practicing wisdom and imparting it to the coming generations causes a bit of us to live on even after we die.

5. What blessings are implied in Proverbs 3:17?

This verse does not imply a life of ease but the joy of the Lord and the rest that comes when walking in His ways. The wise man can live confidently because his will is aligned with God's will and he has learned to walk circumspectly.

6. What are the writer's concerns for his son?

Solomon was concerned that his son hear his words and make them part of his thinking (Proverbs 4:10). He longed for his son to avoid the pitfalls of life (Proverbs 4:12), to realize God's favor (Proverbs 8:35), and to enjoy all the other blessings that wisdom offers.

7. Give some examples of forsaking wisdom.

We forsake wisdom when we make choices outside of God's will for us. We forsake wisdom when we allow self to govern our relationship with others. Wisdom is forsaken when we fail to exercise righteousness, discernment, fairness, and honesty. We forsake wisdom when we allow anything to cloud good judgment when making decisions.

8. In what ways might we give practical expression to wisdom?

Diligent study of God's Word, disciplined living, faithful witnessing, and loyalty to God and His church express wisdom. Wisdom places a high value on safety, both physical and spiritual. Wisdom will lead us to seek forgiveness and restoration when we fall. We express wisdom by seeking God's will when making decisions and by seeking a close walk with Him.

Summarizing the Lesson

The Hebrew word translated wisdom can be interpreted as "the skill of living" throughout Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. This is a practical word indicating an understanding of how the world works. A wise person knows how to live in a productive, prosperous, responsible way. God imparts wisdom freely. Will we seek it and use it for His glory?

Research Guide

1. Study 1 Corinthians 3, with particular focus on the final four verses.
2. Read Job 28.