

Note

Proverbs – Part 1 of 1

Proverbs Written By Solomon About 1000 BC	Part 1 (Pro 1-9) Introduction	Begins with a father pleading with his son to listen to wisdom, with God's wisdom personified as a mother.
	Part 2 (Pro 10-29) Proverbs	Contains wisdom on handling different aspects of life, ranging from family to money and friendships.
	Part 3 (Pro 30-31) Closure	Depicts Agur, who though foolish, learnt wisdom from God; and King Lemuel who extols his mother as a role model of wisdom.

Summary

Proverbs - Part 1 of 13

Proverbs offers practical wisdom on how to live in God's will by following the wise rules of our Creator. We learn that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Made up of God's selection of mankind's accumulated sayings on wisdom, Proverbs comprises general truths rather than God's promises.

Although Solomon was known as the wisest king, he was led astray from God by his many wives. Proverbs was probably written by him in his middle age, when Solomon saw his children growing wayward.

Proverbs consists of three parts. It begins with a father pleading with his son to listen to wisdom, with God's wisdom personified as a mother. Meanwhile, the second component contains wisdom on handling different aspects of life, ranging from family to money and friendships. The last segment depicts Agur, who though foolish, learnt wisdom from God; and King Lemuel who extols his mother as a role model of wisdom.

We learn from Proverbs that:

- just as we can look to God for wisdom, we can also look to our parents for wisdom; and that God is a wise God who has a stamp of wisdom in everything He created.

Transcript

Proverbs – Part 1 of 1

Let's look today at the beauty of the book of Proverbs.

Let's have a quick review of the previous book, Psalms. Psalms is the center of the Bible. It's also a book of worship, songs of worship to God - that is the center of every Christian's life. Out of a heart that has been loved, and now loves this God, a heart that is in love will sing praises to God. Psalms are just praises to God. The most wonderful thing any human can ever experience is to be loved by someone wonderful and to love someone wonderful-there's nothing greater. That is Psalms, that's why it's the center of the Bible.

Today we come to the next book, which is Proverbs, and Proverbs is not so much about here (refers to heart), but about our life, our expression of our life to those around us. The book of Proverbs is one of the few books in the Bible that actually states its purpose. In the second verse, Proverbs states the purpose is that we may know wisdom. Proverbs is a really popular book. Maybe after Psalms, all of us have read Proverbs and go back to it and go back to it. It's easy to read, it crosses all cultures, and just about any age can read it. It's about daily life, it's not about worship in the temple, the tabernacle. It's just about life at home, life in the office, life on the street, just daily life.

So you feel very comfortable with this book. There are no characters like prophets or priests or king, nothing of that sort, just ordinary people. In fact there are a lot of people in Proverbs you can recognize- a nagging wife, aimless youth; you can recognize all these characters around you. That is why Proverbs is so popular, just like Psalms. It's very day to day, so-called mundane things. It's a guide to know how to live well in God's world in God's way. Now, the word proverb comes from two words "pro" is 'for' like "I am pro you", not anti you. "Verb" means 'word'. It simply means there is a word for something. That is all it means in English, the word "proverb." We have a lot of catchy phrases that can teach us a lot of things for different situations. That's all it means-words for different situations. The purpose is we may have wisdom. I want you to have clear understanding of the word wisdom in the Bible. The word wisdom in Hebrew is chokmah (you don't need to learn how to spell it). Chokmah means practical wisdom or what

you and I would call life skills - how to be a good husband, how to be a good wife, a good mom, how to be a good friend, how to be good colleague in the office - those are life skills, practical life skills. That's what basically wisdom is. It's not this intellectual thing in the wise guy, the thinker, the philosopher. The idea of a wise guy is a guy who sits in a room and does his PhD research. That is absolutely opposite of a Christian who must have life skills to live a life pleasing to God and to others. Except these life skills are more than just what we call life skills, but this is life skills within God's perspective as God sees us. He has a slightly different perspective. The source of this wisdom is found in Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom - the source of wisdom. How do we get this wisdom? By fearing the Lord. What do you mean by fear? Is it tremble or terror? No, it means reverence, awe of God. How do we get this fear of God? How do you get this wisdom? It is to have reverence. We need to realize that God is the Creator. He is our maker. If He is our maker, He is wise and He has the right to make rules for our lives. The kind of wisdom we want is that which comes from fearing God. You realize that you don't make the rules yourself-this was found in Genesis chapter two. There were two trees in the garden of Eden, one of which was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What does that mean? It's explained earlier. It's a tree to teach us, Don't touch that tree, don't you ever decide what is good or evil. Let God decide. You don't touch that tree, you don't eat from that tree - that belongs to God.

It is the same thing when we realize, if God made us He has the right to tell us what is good and what is evil, but men don't like that. Man likes to make his own rules. If there is a machine and there is a maker, and the maker/manufacturer gives instructions, you better follow them. If you don't follow the manufacturer's instructions, the machine will break down, but if you follow the instructions, the machine will work properly. It's the same with us-we follow the maker's instructions of what is right and wrong, and how to behave, then we will live well in this world. I hope you understand that. Basically, wisdom is learning how to live in God's world following God's wise rules.

The book of Proverbs is not like other books where it's given directly by God-"Thus saith the LORD" or you build this tabernacle or it says "you do this, you don't do that." or God gives a prophet the word, and the prophet gets the word out. Proverbs is basically the accumulated wisdom of mankind through the ages put together; sometimes by the thinking of men like Solomon. Then God selects what is from this collection of wisdom. God

decides this-I want to put it in my book. It is not directly from God, it is God giving men wisdom, men comes up with these sayings, and then God picks out those and puts them in the book. That's how Proverbs is different from other books which have direct revelation from God. This is like, God gives humans wisdom, it goes through the human process and God selects what to put in.

In a very strict sense, Proverbs must be treated differently from promises of the Bible. A proverb is a general truth. You cannot take it as a promise. Let me give you an example, Proverbs 16 verse three says, "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and your plans shall be established." You commit your project to God, and your plan shall be established. I don't find that true all the time. Often I commit to God a new project and I'm confused. I don't know what plan to make. Sometimes my plans are wrong.

This proverb, this general statement has exceptions. It's not a promise. A promise is very different, like "Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Whoever believes shall not perish but not everybody who commits his work to the Lord his plans will be established.

Let's take another one, "The fear of the law prolongeth life, but the years of the wicked are shorter." Generally that is true, if you fear God, you don't get into bad habits, you don't get into a lot of stress or quarrel with your wife. You will probably live longer but that's not true all the time. Some good people die very young, some awful and wicked people live long.

Remember, we cannot take Proverbs as a promise of God, but they are general truths with many exceptions, as you realize Job was the classic case we just studied two lessons ago. Job was a good man. He suffered a lot. He was an exception. Even then the next book Ecclesiastes where Solomon writes later, you see though he was a wise man he was miserable as an adult and had such an empty life. The world is not as simple as we learn in Job, you cannot make simplistic rules in the complex world with different people in different interactions. You cannot just make simple rules. If you can make simple rules for a country for example, then you can get a child to rule the country, right? No, ruling a country is very complicated. Sometimes you need a judge and pay millions of dollars to be able to make the right decision and it's not straightforward, it is not black and white, or one and one equals two; each case varies.

Remember our Proverbs are probabilities, not promises. Who wrote this? Mostly it is Solomon, mostly, not all, and Solomon of course was the wisest

man in the Bible. God says he's the wisest. When he was a young man he was going to be made king, he prayed not for long life, not for riches, not for power, but he prayed for wisdom from God, and God said, "Wow, you pray for wisdom, I will give you wisdom", and he was a really wise man.

The Bible tells us he wrote 3000 proverbs, 1000 songs, knew all about plants and animals and all kinds. He was a source of knowledge and wisdom but in his later life, when he didn't use his wisdom, he lost it completely. If you marry 700 wives, you definitely to me are like a moron. Having 300 concubines-it's like you telling me, I eat 10 pigs a day-is that a good life? I say you're a moron. Something is wrong with you. Too much of anything is crazy. He obviously lost his wisdom. But nonetheless, at this point, he still had quite a bit when he collected all this. In fact, Solomon has three writings in the Bible. (1) Song of Solomon was probably written when he was very young, falling in love with women all the time, like a young guy. (2) Proverbs probably was written in middle age and (3) Ecclesiastes written at the end of his life when he looks back at his life and he says "Oh my, what have I done with my life?" Three different stages of his life, with Proverbs probably written when he was an adult with kids and was seeing his kids all messed up. Nobody knows how many sons he had. He doesn't even know how many sons he had. He probably saw his kids all messed up and he decided I better collect all the Proverbs for my kids, but it was too late anyway. That's the author of this book.

The style is parallelism. It's not by rhyme, but it is by parallels. Let me read to you Proverbs. You can see the parallelism. Maybe you couldn't see so clearly in Psalms but you would see very clearly in Proverbs, like Proverbs 14 verse 12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." You see the contrast first phrase and the second phrase parallel ideas. (verse 13) "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." There are two sentences, and parallel ideas could be synonymous, it could be anti-ideas, but they're all about the same thought. (verse 14) "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself" - synonymous.

(verse 15) "The simple believes every word; but the prudent man looks wise to his going." I hope you can see the parallelism. Hebrew poetry is always about parallelism. That's why you must read Proverbs aloud and better still, listen to a good reader reading Proverbs, then you see the parallelism. I did it this morning in less than two hours. I finished listening to the entire 31 chapters of Proverbs. It is very nice to hear the parallelism.

The purpose of these Proverbs is when people keep listening they learn how to repeat Proverbs so automatically that it's easy to remember a proverb. If you then have the right thoughts, chances are when a situation comes, you have a right response and right behaviour - that's the purpose of Proverbs.

Let's just look at the structure of the book of Proverbs. There are three parts. The first part we call the introduction, it is from chapter 1-9. The second part from chapter 10 -29 is the actual proverbs of Solomon. A lot of his parallelism seems to be there and then the closure is chapter 30-31. When you say Proverbs, it is only chapter 10 to 29 that is what you and I would call Proverbs, (that has) parallelism, catchy phrases.

The introduction, chapters 1-9 is actually not proverbs. They were 10 speeches from a father to a son, probably Solomon to a son of his. Ten speeches of a father literally pleading with a son to listen, pleading with the son not to do something foolish in his youth, pleading with the son over and over again, you see the word-my son, my son, my son-it's like a father begging his son (I think 17 times in these few verses).

Then the last part of the introduction is very interesting. It's not speeches; it's poems - four poems about wisdom. In chapter eight and nine, in English it doesn't sound like poetry but it is. It actually is about wisdom being personified as if wisdom was a wise mother or wise lady. It's called wisdom personified as a woman.

So wisdom is not an abstract thing, it's like a mother saying I did this. I was there. When the world was made, I was there. When the seas were made, I was there. When all these things were made, I was there. Who is this? It's God's wisdom, but personified as a person. The idea for us in this personification is to see that it's like a mother making a house. She planned everything nicely. Everything she did, she did it with wisdom. God was thinking of a woman structuring things you can see-your mother making the house nice, preparing good food for you, everything's working beautifully in your house, the kids are behaving well. It's a picture of the time when everything was made it was wisely made by this person, who is God. God made everything with wisdom. That's so true because when you look at the universe, everything in the universe seems to be made with so much wisdom. As a doctor, when I look at a cell it's so amazing. One tiny cell is so beautifully, intricately made, every part of itself supports the other part, protects it. There is ecology in a cell. There is ecology in an organ like

a heart or a kidney. That's ecology in the whole circulatory system. Everything is so perfect. Who could have made this one human being? Actually who could create one cell for that matter, let alone the world, or the universe. Wisdom was in everything you see -in the ecology of the sea, in the mountains, in the way clouds form, in everything. Just as you see the mother's stamp on a well-run house, in the world you see God's stamp of wisdom in everything. The introduction is about a father, teaching, begging his son to listen to wisdom, and it's like a mother demonstrating this wisdom.

Then we come to the bulk of it from chapter 10 to 29 - the real proverbs so to speak, and it covers every topic of life - it could be family, marriage, community, friendships, sex, money(how you use it, how you borrow money, how you lend money), how you forgive, how you control your temper, how you control your tongue, how you drink alcohol, everything in life. Literally every aspect of life is covered with the wisdom on how to handle these different things of life.

Then the last part, the conclusion, is very interesting. There are two people, one is called Agur, probably not an Israelite because it's not an Israelite name, and the other is a guy called King Lemuel. Chapter 30 and 31 ends in not typical Proverbs. Agur says in chapter 30, verses 2-3, I'm a fool, like an animal- stupid, but I learned wisdom from God's word-Chapter 30, verse five. In Agur we see a model student. With the son, the father had to plead with him to listen. In Agur we see a model student. He was born not very smart, not very wise, but he learned from God's Word to be wise.

Then Lemuel is a king, and he talks about how to rule, but the last part of Lemuel's speech is about a woman. I think it's his mother. He is saying "my mother was such a role model." Actually, Lemuel's speech is written in a way that we call an acrostic poem. The acrostic poem is when the first line of the poem starts with an A in the Hebrew alphabet, second line starts with B, and it goes on and that's how they could memorize the poem easily. Here we end up with a model woman-everything about her-how she takes care of the house, she wakes up early, she prepares things well, and she works well. It's like Lemuel saying, I am the king and I learned to rule but you know my mother was my role model. Then it ends there. Now my point is this, why is this funny thing starting with Solomon pleading with his son, a father pleading with a son ending with a king saying, this woman, wow, this woman.

I think God is telling us a lot of our wisdom we can learn from our parents. There's so much to learn from our parents. In most cultures it tells us your parents are wiser, that they have eaten more salt than they've eaten rice, basically to tell you they have so much more wisdom. They may not be as educated as education keeps going upwards. Young people now have degrees that parents never even had, but for wisdom you've got to look at your parents. They've gone through life. We can look to God for wisdom. We can look to our parents for wisdom, and parents are given to us. I think that's what this sound ending with a mom, starting with a father teaching a son. I think this is really what the purpose is.

Now what did we learn from this book of Proverbs about God which is always our goal. In Proverbs we realize a wise God has a stamp of wisdom in everything He created.

Psalms 19 says The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth His handiwork. The whole of Psalm 19 is about the amazing creation that God has made. There's a stamp of wisdom on it. What we are learning in Proverbs about God - so wise, so amazingly wise. People think Proverbs is a book to make me wise. Proverbs is to make us realize I must be wise like my super wise God. We have so many aspects of God and then people still question "why God you do this?" Could any engineer or scientist make all this? Can any machinery last for thousands and thousands of years as the universe has? Only a wise God can. I hope that when we read the book of Proverbs, it's about wisdom, wisdom of whom? God first and foremost, and we, made in His image, should reflect that wisdom of God.

We have worship in Psalms-heart full of love for the one who loves me, and I am in love so I sing, as a man in love sings praises, sings love songs. Then Proverbs tell us don't just love, love, love, be wise – use head and heart as a Christian. I hope you will see this beautiful book, this perfect place in God's book. And may you, everyday as you look around nature say, Wow, what wisdom, what a wise God, thank you God! God bless you.