

Notes & Outlines

PROVERBS

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PROVERBS

WRITER: Solomon

Solomon is the writer of the next 3 books of the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Proverbs is the book on wisdom; Ecclesiastes is the book on folly; Song of Solomon is the book on love. Love is the happy medium between wisdom and folly. Solomon is an authority on all 3 subjects (1 Kings 4:32-34).

KEY VERSE:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

DEFINITIONS:

“A proverb is a saying that conveys a specific truth in a pointed, pithy way.” “Proverbs are short sentences, drawn from long experience.” A truth couched in a form that is easy to remember, a philosophy based on experience, and a rule for conduct. A proverb is a sententious sentence, a maxim, an old saying, an old saw, a bromide, and an epigram.

FEATURES:

The Orient and ancient East are the home of proverbs. Evidently Solomon gathered together many from other sources. He was the editor of all and the author of some. Dr. Thirtle and other scholars noted that there is a change of pronoun in the book from the second person to the third person. Their conclusions are that the proverbs in the second person were taught to Solomon by his teachers, and the proverbs in the third person were composed by Solomon.

There is a difference between the Book of Proverbs and proverbs in other writings (the Greeks were great at making proverbs, especially the gnostic poets):

1. Proverbs bear no unscientific statement or inaccurate observation; e.g., “Out of the heart proceed the issues of life” (see Proverbs 4:23); about 2700 years later, William Harvey found that the blood circulates. In contrast, in the Epistle of Barnabas (an apocryphal book) mention is made of the mythical phoenix, a bird that consumes itself by fire and then rises in resurrection. A fable such as this does not appear in the Book of Proverbs, nor anywhere else in the Bible.

2. The Proverbs are on a high moral plane. The immoral sayings that occur in other writings are not present. Justin Martyr said that Socrates was a Christian before Christ. Although, according to his admirers, Socrates portrays a high conception of morals, he also gives instructions to harlots on how to conduct themselves. The best that can be said of him is that he was unmoral.

3. The Proverbs do not contradict, while man's proverbs are often in opposition to each other. For example: "Look before you leap" vs. "He who hesitates is lost." "A man gets no more than he pays for" vs. "The best things in life are free." "Leave well enough alone" vs. "Progress never stands still." "A rolling stone gathers no moss" vs. "A setting hen does not get fat."

Although the Book of Proverbs seems to be a collection of sayings without any particular regard for orderly arrangement, the contrary is true. It is not a hodgepodge of unrelated statements, nor is it a discourse of cabbages and kings (Ecclesiastes 12:9). The book tells a story. It is a picture of a young man starting out in life. His first lesson is given in 1:7. Two schools bid for him and both send their literature. One is the school of Wisdom, the other is the school for fools. *Wisdom is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ* (see 1 Corinthians 1:30). In chapter 8, the young man goes to the academy of Wisdom where he is taught in proverbs. From chapters 10 through 24, the young man is in the classroom of Wisdom. This book is especially helpful to young men. (A very prominent jeweler in Dallas, Texas, had the Book of Proverbs bound attractively and copies given by the hundreds to young men.) The advice herein transcends all dispensations.

In a brief examination of the book, we can highlight only certain proverbs — not necessarily the most important or the most popular.

There is a proverb that is a *thumbnail sketch of every character in the Bible* (we can suggest only a few). Likewise, there is a proverb that will fit *all your friends and acquaintances*, which adds interest to the reading of the book (but may not increase your popularity if you identify them publicly).

Solomon wrote 3000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32); we have fewer than 1000 of them in this book.

STRUCTURE OF PROVERBS, by A. C. Gaebelein:

The literary form of these proverbs is mostly in the form of couplets. The two clauses of the couplet are generally related to each other by what has been termed parallelism, according to Hebrew poetry. Three kinds of parallelism have been pointed out:

1. *Synonymous Parallelism*. Here the second clause restates what is given in the first clause.

Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and stripes for the back of fools. (Proverbs 19:29)

2. *Antithetic (Contrast) Parallelism*. Here a truth is stated in the first clause and made stronger in the second clause by contrast with an opposite truth.

The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out. (Proverbs 13:9)

3. *Synthetic Parallelism*. The second clause develops the thought of the first.

The fear of a king is like the roaring of a lion; whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul. (Proverbs 20:2)

OUTLINE:

- I. **Wisdom and folly contrasted**, Chapters 1 — 9
- II. **Proverbs of Solomon, written and set in order by himself**, Chapters 10 — 24
- III. **Proverbs of Solomon, set in order by men of Hezekiah**, Chapters 25 — 29
- IV. **Oracle of Agur, unknown sage**, Chapter 30
- V. **Proverbs of a mother to Lemuel**, Chapter 31

COMMENT:

- I. **Wisdom and folly contrasted**, Chapters 1 — 9
Chapter 1 — *The boy in the home starting out in life.*

v. 5 — The challenge.

v. 7 — This is repeated for every age and period in a person's life: childhood, teens, school age, adulthood, and the estate of senior citizen.

v. 8 — The responsibility of parenthood — the little boy in the home is to be taught by his parents.

v. 10 — This reminds us of Joseph (Genesis 39).

v. 22 — *Simplicity* is “stupidity.”

v. 32 — *Prosperity of fools* is a picture of our affluent society.

Chapter 2 — *The boy begins to grow up and moves beyond the circle of the home.*

v. 2 — Source of true wisdom.

v. 16 — *Strange woman* was a harlot. God's law forbade His people from being harlots.

Chapter 3 — *The boy is now to listen to God's law, as he was advised as a child in the home to turn to his father and mother (Proverbs 1:8).*

vv. 5-7 — This is a popular portion, but v. 7 is usually omitted — it should be included.

v. 9 — Material blessings always have a spiritual significance.

vv. 11, 12 — A Christian should learn this early in life (Hebrews 12:5-11).

vv. 33-35 — These verses are gems. The first part of v. 33 applies to Ahab and Jezebel.

Chapter 4 — *Although the child is now a boy who has entered the big, bad and mad world, he is still counseled to remember the instruction of his father.*

v. 7 — This thought runs like a stuck record through the entire book as the total objective of life. Wisdom, for the Christian, is Christ.

v. 23 — The heart is the seat of the total personality. For its importance, get a concordance and look up all the references to the heart.

Chapters 5 and 6 — *Read these chapters carefully and you will find that the young man is counseled to live a pure life for the sake of his*

home. This is the kind of sex education that God gives.

Chapter 5

v. 21 — The private life of the individual is always open before the Lord.

Chapter 6

v. 1 — Beware of signing a friend's note, and never become a partner with a stranger.

vv. 6-9 — Don't be lazy. Have a plan. Be organized. Let the lowly ant teach you.

vv. 16-19 — God loves, but God also hates. Here are 7 things on His hate parade. They are an ugly brood. Pride is number 1. Pride is a tumor of the brain. Through pride, Satan fell (Isaiah 14:12-17). Contrast these 7 things with the 7 beatitudes.

vv. 27-29, 32 — The young man is being given a full sex education. A clean life is the only thing that meets God's standard. It is in conflict with, and actually opposite to, the "new morality."

Chapter 7 — *Beware of the woman of easy morals.*

Chapter 8 — *The young man is ready to go to college. The school of Wisdom and the school of fools bid for his application.*

vv. 1-4 — Wisdom calls urgently to the young man.

v. 13 — This is the major in the college of Wisdom.

v. 17 — The only scholarship offered is a passionate desire to learn.

v. 23 — *Set up* is "anointed."

Chapter 9 — *The young man matriculates in the school of Wisdom.*

v. 10 — This is the freshman course. It is the great lesson from the cradle through college.

Classes are ready to begin.

II. Proverbs of Solomon, written and set in order by himself,
Chapters 10 — 24

Chapter 10 — *The school bell rings. Notice the guidelines for the young student: vv. 1, 5, 7, 14, 16, 18, 23, 26, 30.*

Chapter 11

v. 1 — Principle for business.

v. 10 — Think of David and Saul in connection with this verse.

v. 15 — Don't sign the note.

v. 16 — This reminds us of Ruth and Boaz.

v. 22 — Beauty is only skin deep.

v. 26 — This also reminds us of Joseph's experience in Egypt.

v. 30 — The young man is to witness.

Chapter 12

v. 4 — Choosing a wife is more important than choosing a course.

v. 15 — Rehoboam illustrates this proverb (1 Kings 12).

v. 22 — Tell the truth.

Chapter 13

v. 3 — Shut up!

v. 5 — When you talk, tell the truth.

v. 24 — This is child psychology.

Chapter 14

v. 3 — This reminds us of the giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17).

v. 5 — Don't believe all you hear.

v. 9 — This is applicable to Jezebel.

v. 12 — This is God's answer to the man who says that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.

v. 16 — The prodigal son did not return to the far country. Jonah never bought a second ticket to Tarshish.

v. 34 — This is the plank that has been left out of the platform of all political parties. It is a prophecy that is coming true in the United States.

Chapter 15

v. 1 — See the story of Nabal and Abigail — “Beauty and the Beast” (1 Samuel 25:2-38).

v. 3 — Big Brother may not be watching you, but God is.

vv. 8, 26 — The wicked cannot do good nor think right.

vv. 16, 17 — Read Daniel 1.

v. 20 — The father brags about his son who does well — forgets the other.

v. 23 — It is not only what you say, but when you say it.

v. 29 — Does God answer prayer?

v. 30 — The young man gets his first-quarter grades.

Chapter 16

v. 2 — This is the way we rationalize our conduct.

v. 5 — God has not changed His mind.

v. 7 — This is a barometer for conduct.

v. 11 — This is a word for the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker.

v. 12 — This is the lesson Hitler (and others like him) did not learn.

v. 18 — The lull before the storm.

v. 24 — Say it with words now and not with flowers later.

v. 25 — Men are all striving for the same place, but it is not the place they think. Notice God’s way (John 14:6).

v. 31 — A motto for the senior citizen.

v. 33 — Applicable to the Book of Esther.

Chapter 17

v. 3 — This reminds us of Job’s sufferings.

v. 5 — God is interested in the poverty program.

v. 9 — You can’t believe half of what you hear, but you can repeat it!

v. 16 — Someone has rhymed it this way:

You can lead a horse to water,
But you cannot make him drink.
You can send a boy to college,
But you cannot make him think.

v. 17 — It is wonderful to have friends.

v. 21 — This is when the parents receive the first-semester grades.

v. 22 — “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).
“Rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 4:4).

v. 23 — Don’t be bribed.

v. 28 — It pays to keep your mouth shut.

Chapter 18

v. 10 — “Safe in the arms of Jesus” — yes, but rather “Safe *as* an arm of Jesus.”

v. 14 — The will to fight and live.

v. 16 — This fits David, but also each one of us.

v. 21 — Have you told that loved one or friend that Jesus died for him or her? You have the keys to the kingdom of heaven — use them!

v. 22 — Let God help you choose a wife.

v. 24 — Are you a friend to your friends? “There is no friend like the lowly Jesus.”

Chapter 19

v. 4 — Ask the prodigal son about fair-weather friends (Luke 15).

vv. 5, 9 — You can cut your throat with the tongue.

v. 13 — Delinquent children and a nagging wife do not make a happy home.

v. 21 — Man can make a computer; only God can put sense into it.

v. 23 — Fear of the Lord is still basic truth.

v. 24 — Boy, is he lazy!

v. 29 — God is not soft on the guilty.

Chapter 20

v. 1 — This was true at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2). Christ did not make intoxicating drink.

v. 2 — See Romans 13:1-5.

v. 3 — Keep your nose out of your neighbor's business.

v. 4 — Obstacles can be either stumbling blocks or stepping-stones.

v. 9 — Guilty or not guilty? The Great Physician says, "The heart is...desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

v. 12 — God not only made the bird to sing, but the ear to hear the song. God not only made the sunset, but the eye to see it.

v. 14 — "Look at the bargain I got!" He told the salesman that the price was too high.

v. 20 — "Honor thy father and mother" (Ephesians 6:1, 2) is still sound advice.

v. 23 — Honesty is the best policy.

Chapter 21

v. 1 — God has to give the green light.

v. 2 — Man rationalizes; God scrutinizes.

v. 3 — "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

v. 4 — Attitudes and motives are the yardstick of sin.

v. 9 — This is the man who did not know what true happiness was until he got married — and then it was too late.

v. 13 — "God must love the poor, for He made so many of them" is ascribed to Lincoln.

v. 30 — The power of positive preaching (2 Corinthians 13:8).

Chapter 22

v. 1 — A Dunn and Bradstreet rating.

v. 2 — It is all level ground at the cross.

v. 6 — "Train up a child in the [God's] way he should go and,

when he is old, he will not depart from it.” God has a way for a child, and it is up to parents to find that way. The parents should train a child in God’s way, not the parents’ way.

Chapter 23

vv. 1-3 — Don’t make a pig of yourself.

v. 4 — Riches and education are excess baggage.

v. 5 — Did you ever invest in a wildcat oil well?

v. 9 — You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear. The Pygmalion and Galatea of the Bible.

vv. 13, 14 — This is applying the board of education to the seat of knowledge.

v. 23 — A bargain at any price.

Chapter 24

v. 10 — It takes a man to do a man’s job.

v. 16 — Peter and Judas illustrate this.

vv. 19, 20 — God will take care of all cases of injustice.

III. Proverbs of Solomon, set in order by men of Hezekiah, Chapters 25 — 29

Chapter 25

v. 2 — Search the Scriptures. God never puts diamonds on top of the ground.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

v. 17 — “I wish that old gossip would stay home.”

v. 19 — Judas was a bad toothache.

vv. 21, 22 — See Romans 12:19, 20.

v. 24 — Is this grounds for divorce?

v. 25 — Have you heard from home lately?

Chapter 26

vv. 4, 5 — This is not a contradiction, but two actions with two results. You are in trouble if you answer a fool (v. 4). The fool is in trouble if you don't answer him — he will think he is smart (v. 5).

Chapter 27 — *This chapter deals with the subject of friendship.*

v. 6 — Paul rebuked Peter (Galatians 2:11-14), but they were still friends. Judas kissed Jesus, but he betrayed Him.

v. 9 — A talk with a friend is sweeter than a bottle of Chanel #5.

v. 10 — This is the California proverb — many folk left their friends in the Midwest, and the nearest relative is 2000 miles away.

v. 12 — Buy insurance.

v. 15 — Here is that battle-ax of a wife again.

v. 17 — A sharp friend will keep you sharp.

v. 19 — A friend is one who knows you and still loves you.

v. 20 — No man was ever satisfied with a million.

v. 24 — “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...” (Matthew 6:19).

Chapter 28

v. 1 — The wicked is afraid of his own shadow.

v. 9 — If you want God to listen to you, then you listen to Him.

v. 13 — See 1 John 1:9.

v. 14 — Fear God and you will have no man to fear.

v. 24 — Parents should not ignore acts of theft in the home.

v. 26 — “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart...” (Proverbs 3:5).

Chapter 29

v. 1 — Sudden death.

v. 2 — For whom did you vote?

v. 5 — Beware of the man who flatters you.

IV. Oracle of Agur, unknown sage, Chapter 30

v. 4 — Ask Job this question (Job 38).

vv. 8, 9 — Follow the middle of the road. Don't be an extremist.

v. 12 — Is he talking about us?

vv. 15, 16 — The horse constantly pulls on the rein. Abel began a march to the grave that has not ended. The woman who cannot have a child always wants to have children. We have too little rain in California and too much fire.

v. 20 — “Illicit sex is not sin,” the sinner says. The “new morality” is not new.

vv. 21-23 — For these four little troublemakers, a very crude bromide, which was popular when I was a boy, fits: “He is too big for his breeches.”

v. 22 — A thumbnail sketch of Jeroboam (1 Kings 12-14).

V. Proverbs of a mother to Lemuel, Chapter 31

A popular title would be “Advice on How to Choose a Wife.”

v. 1 — “King Lemuel” was evidently the pet name used by Bathsheba for her son, Solomon. Solomon does not seem to have followed her advice.

v. 2 — “How shall I begin?” It is a delicate subject, and a man does not want his mother to speak to him on this matter of wine, women, and song.

v. 3 — The subject here is women.

vv. 4-7 — The subject here is wine. The Bible teaches temperance in all things. Rulers are advised (vv. 4, 5) to practice total abstinence because of their position. (Several years ago it was reported that there were 128 cocktail parties a week in Washington, D. C.) Strong drink (v. 6) is to be used as a medicine (1 Timothy 5:23).

vv. 8, 9 — The ruler is to defend the helpless, the weak, and the poor. The ruler is to be just and righteous. The ruler represents God.

vv. 10-31 — Choosing a wife.

v. 10 — If a good man is hard to find, a good woman is harder to find. Scarcity makes her valuable — law of supply and demand.

v. 11 — She must essentially be a woman whom her husband can trust.

v. 12 — She is a help, not a millstone around his neck.

vv. 13, 14 — She is a good worker and a bargain-hunter.

v. 15 — A woman's work is never done.

v. 16 — She is a good administrator.

v. 17 — She doesn't mind physical work — she mops the floor.

v. 18 — She is on the swing shift, but she is not a swinger!

v. 19 — She may not be able to play the piano, but she can sew.

v. 20 — She has a compassionate heart.

v. 21 — She keeps her children in warm clothing.

v. 22 — She does fancy work.

v. 23 — Her husband is known as Mrs. So-and-So's husband.

v. 24 — She sells handmade garments on the side for pin money.

v. 25 — She has a good reputation.

v. 26 — She is not a dumb blonde, brunette, or redhead.

v. 27 — She is not lazy, but looks after her family.

v. 28 — Her children celebrate Mother's Day with joy and reality.

v. 29 — She never won the Miss America Pageant, but she is the winner at home.

v. 30 — Not only should a son learn to fear the Lord, but the daughter should learn also.

v. 31 — Her life is a book of praise.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Arnot, William. *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*. London, England: T. Nelson and Sons, 1864.
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- Sauer, Erich. *The Dawn of World Redemption*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951.
(An excellent Old Testament survey.)
- Scroggie, W. Graham. *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.
(An excellent survey and outline of the Old Testament.)
- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Handbook*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966. (Very valuable.)
- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 1*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1981. (Very helpful.)

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.



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