

With All Your Heart, Get Wisdom Proverbs 1

We are reading chronologically through the Bible together and this week we began the book of Proverbs. What's it all about?

Proverbs compiles numerous concise, pithy instructions for daily life.

The Bible is made up of different genres - poetry, narrative, wisdom literature and apocalyptic literature. Each type of literature is inspired by God, but because the genre is different, they function differently, and we must approach them differently to learn what God is seeking to say to us. Other books contain deep theology, lengthy narratives or prophecy, Proverbs is Proverbs compiles numerous concise, pithy instructions for daily life and is concerned with daily wisdom.

It is one of three books in the Bible called, 'wisdom literature:' Job, Proverbs & Ecclesiastes

Its theme is stated right at the front of the book – *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”* (1:7).

There are two important things to note:

- 1 - To benefit from this book, a reader must:
 - a) Acknowledge wisdom exists beyond your own
 - b) Practice humility

The two stumbling blocks to wisdom are atheism and pride.

- 2 – Proverbs are not promising but principles about life in general

One proverb teaches that the morally live a good life. Another proverb teaches the morally upright will suffer. This is just a description of how life works.

Proverbs 16:7 - *When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.* – This was not true of Jesus or Paul.

Proverbs 22:6 - *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* – Thinking this is a promise has heartbroken many parents

In chapter 12 we are told that the path toward disaster can seem to be the right one to a fool, but in chapter 16, that the disastrous road can appear to be right to *anyone*. In other words, sometimes, even if you have done due diligence, your choices may still go wrong, because it is a broken world. The wise know that sometimes “all paths may run ill.” Proverbs teaches us that

there *is* an order God put into things when he created the world and by which we must abide. But on the other hand, this is a fallen world, distorted by sin, and the wise know that the created order does not always work, nor is it always easy to discern.

3 – The proverbs are not meant to provide a single answer for every situation in life but rather, to generate wisdom that can be applied to different situations in life

Proverbs 26:4-5 - *Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.*
⁵ *Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.*

Well, it's both; depending on the situation and the fool

4 – The Proverbs are not simple steps to a happy life for quick consumption.

5. – The Proverbs use all sorts of grammatical word plays

a) Parallelism – Proverbs 13:6 - *Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked.*

He says the same thing twice; once positively and once negatively.

b) Pictures – Proverbs 11:22 - *Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.*

First: The Purpose of Proverbs. 1-6

Solomon (see FYI), explained the books purpose in the first six verses of the book.

a) Stated in the first six verses

1 – To know wisdom and instruction. 2a

2 – To gain insight. 2b

2 – To receive instruction in wise dealing. 3a

3 – to give prudence to the simple. 4a

4 – Knowledge and discretion to the young 4b

5 – Increase in learning for the wise. 5a

6 – Guidance for those who understand. 5b

6. – To understand a proverb and its saying. 6

“understand” = to build. The Proverbs provide the tools for building a life.

b) The book is designed to teach us

1 – True wisdom (vs false wisdom)

ILL = “If you eat pasta and antipasta, is your stomach back to where you started?”

2 – To learn how to:

- a) To live wisely – 3a
- b) To act righteously, justly and fairly. 3b
- c) To give the ignorant common sense. 4a
- d) To give the young sound advice. 4b
- e) To make the wise even more so. 5a

Second: The Definition of Wisdom

The difference between knowledge and wisdom is understanding that leads to application. It is demonstrated in this saying, “*A man heard that most accidents occur within 10 miles of home... so he moved.*”

Wisdom = chokmah = to separate (See CG leader notes)

- a) seeing life from God’s perspective.
- b) the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action
- c) God’s character in the many practical affairs of life
- d) The right use of knowledge

Wisdom appears in this book as a woman who travels the world and is available to anyone for help (Prov 1:20-21). The first 9 chapters describe wisdom and chapters 10-31 present her sayings.

Third: The Value of Wisdom

Wisdom comes from two sources:

- a) Trial and error – personal experience

The difficulty with this is that –

- One’s experiences are prejudiced

ILL – Don’t eat onion. I ate onions once and it ruined the pizza

- Much of life can be wasted learning through trial and error

- We have to live with the consequences of our errors

b) Counsel from others

In God's grace, Proverbs offers divine counsel

c) The first nine chapters of the book are intended to demonstrate the value of wisdom

1. - It produces a prosperous life. 3:13-18
2. - It guards us against pitfalls. 3:21-26

Some common pitfalls are:

- Evil companionship. 1:10-19
- Immoral women. 5:1-14
- Laziness. 6:6-11

Finally: The Proverbs Point us to Jesus Who is Wisdom

Proverbs will give up its fullest and richest meaning only when it is read in the light of the person and work of Jesus. Jesus dazzled his listeners with his wisdom (Luke 2:40,47; Mark 6:2).

Jesus claimed to be the new Solomon with the ultimate wisdom (Luke 11:31).

The personified Wisdom that created the world (Prov. 8:22–31) is finally revealed to be Jesus, the Word of God, with whom God created the world (John 1: 1–4.) Paul calls Jesus the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24, 30), the one in whom all God's wisdom is hidden (Col. 2:3).

If "the fear of the LORD" (Prov. 1:7, 9:10) is the beginning of wisdom then knowing and loving Jesus is the first and greatest principle of wisdom we can apply to life.

Community Group Leader:

1 – How are you doing?

2 – Where are you prospering?

3 – Where are you hurting?

4 – How can we pray for one another?

5 – What do you already know about the book of Proverbs?

6 – Why is humility essential to benefiting from this book?

7 – What are the proverbs?

8 – Why are they not promises?

9 – What is the purpose for these proverbs?

10 – How should we live as a result of this book?

11 – What is wisdom?

12 – Why should we seek it?

13 – Why aren't life experiences sufficient to teach us wisdom?

14 – How is Jesus perfect wisdom?

FYI:




CG Leaders: Before you lead your class, watch this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzmYV8GNAlM>

Proverbs, like Psalms, names multiple individuals as the authors of its various sections. Solomon was uniquely qualified to serve as the principal author for this book of wise sayings. First Kings 3:5–9 recounts Solomon asking God for wisdom in his reign over Israel, a request God eventually granted (1 Kings 4:29–31). In fact, Solomon identified himself as the source of most of the book. His name appears at the beginning of three distinct sections—Proverbs 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1—covering almost all of the first twenty-nine chapters of the book.

A short section consisting of Proverbs 22:17–24:34 expresses “the words of the wise” (Proverbs 22:17), which Solomon may have compiled from various sources. Evidence that Solomon drew on multiple sources appears in Proverbs 24:23, where Solomon used the plural noun for “wise” (also translated sages) to describe the authors of this section. Also, due to the book’s similarities with Mesopotamian and Egyptian collections of proverbs such as “The Instruction of Amenemope,” it’s possible that God inspired Solomon to record this section based on wise sayings he had been exposed to throughout his life.

The parent root חָמ (hham), meaning “heat,” is the root of the word חָכָם (hhakham) which means “wisdom.”

The word hham appears as  in its original pictographic script. The letter  is a picture of a wall which “separates” one side from another. And the letter  is a picture of “water.”

Combined, these two letters literally mean “separate water.” When “heat” (*hham*) is applied to water, we have evaporation, or a “separating of water.”

The following Hebrew words are all derived from the parent root חם (*hham*).

חמת
ת *hhey met* skin-bag

חמה
ה *hhey ma* cheese
h

חמה
ה *hham ma* sun
h

חמס
ס *hham as* to shake

חמד
ד *hham ad* to crave/
desire

חמצ
ץ *hham ats* to sour

While we can plainly see the root חם (*hham*) at the beginning of each of these words, what may not be as plainly seen is how the meanings of each of these words are related.

Soured (חמצ) milk was placed in a skin-bag (חמת) that was set out in the heat (חם) of the sun (חמה) and shaken (חמס). The natural enzymes in the skin-bag causes the “water to separate” (חם) from the milk forming the delicacy (חמד) cheese (חמה).

So, what does all of this have to do with wisdom? חכם (*hhakham*) is related to the idea of “separating,” as this word means “one who is able to separate between what is good and bad.” This one word can be translated as either “skill” when applied to a craftsman, or as “wise” when applied to a leader or counselor.