PROVERBS

Proverbs provides God's detailed instructions for His people to deal successfully with the practical affairs of everyday life: how to relate to God, parents, children, neighbors, and government. Solomon, the principal author, uses a combination of poetry, parables, pithy questions, short stories, and wise maxims to give in strikingly memorable form the common sense and divine perspective necessary to handle life's challenges.

Because Solomon, the prototype of Israel's wise man, was the principle contributor, the Hebrew title of the book is *Mishle Shelomoh* ("Parables of Solomon"). The English title of the book is derived from the Latin *Liber Proverbiorum*, or "Book of Proverbs."

Author

Solomon's name appears at the beginning of the three sections he wrote: chapters 1–9; 10:1–22:16; chapters 25–29. According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, of which about 800 are included in Proverbs. It is likely that Solomon collected and edited proverbs other than his own (Eccl. 12:9).

Proverbs 22:17–24:34 consists of "the words of the wise" (22:17; 24:23). Some of these sayings are quite similar to those found in The Wisdom of Amenemope, a document of teachings on civil service by an Egyptian who probably lived between 1000 and 600 B.C. It is possible that Egyptian wisdom traditions borrowed certain aphorisms from Hebrew literature. In addition, Proverbs includes oracles by the unknown figures named Agur the son of Jakeh (30:1) and King Lemuel (31:1).

Date

Solomon's proverbs were written before 931 B.C., and his proverbs in chapters 25–29 were collected by Hezekiah about 230 years later. Thus portions of the book were completed no earlier than the time of the reign of Hezekiah and a reasonable date for completion is sometime in the fifth century B.C.

Such wisdom literature was not unique to Israel, and is found in other countries of the ancient Near East. In Egypt, written examples can be found as early as 2700 B.C. Although the style was similar to Israel's wisdom literature, the proverbs and sayings of these countries differed from those of Israel in content because they lacked the character of the righteous standards of the Lord.

Themes and Literary Structure

The book of Proverbs may be divided into six segments: the purpose of Proverbs (1:1–7), the proverbs to the youth (1:8–9:18), the proverbs of Solomon (10:1–24:34), the proverbs of Solomon copied by Hezekiah's men (25:1–29:27), the words of Agur (30:1–33), and the words of King Lemuel (31:1–31).

Proverbs is one of the few biblical books that clearly spells out its purpose: to impart moral discernment and discretion (1:3–5), and to develop mental clarity and perception (1:2, 6). The "wisdom" of which Proverbs speaks is literally "skill" in living. Wisdom is more than shrewdness or intelligence. Instead, it relates to practical righteousness and moral acumen. Proverbs deals with the most fundamental skill of all: practical righteousness before God in every area of life.

Typical of the proverbs in the ancient Near East, many proverbs seem to have arisen in the context of the home. The term "son" occurs in forty-four verses in the book, "father" in fifteen, and "mother" in eleven. Husband and wife are admonished to be united joyfully in a clearly monogamous union (despite the polygamy practiced at the time, especially by Solomon). Both parents are directed to share in the training of the children and nurturing them in faith. Sins which attack the order of the home are straightforwardly exposed.

Many proverbs present a contrast between wisdom and folly. Wisdom is to be preferred to folly because of its divine origin and rich benefits. There are different kinds of fools, ranging from those who are naive and uncommitted to scoffers who arrogantly despise the way of God. The fool is not mentally deficient, but appears self-sufficient and orders life as if there is no God.

In Proverbs chapter 8, wisdom is personified and seen in its perfection. It is divine (8:22–31), it is the source of biological and spiritual life (8:35, 36), it is righteous and moral (8:8, 9), and it is available to all

who will receive it (8:1–6, 32–35). This wisdom became incarnate in Christ "in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:30).

Wisdom is personified in the Proverbs and acts as God's dynamic Word. In the NT, Jesus becomes the Wisdom and Word of God.		
Origin of Wisdom	**Teaching of Wisdom**	**Value of Wisdom**
In God (v. 22) From everlasting (v. 23) Before all things (vv. 23-30)	Prudence (vv. 5, 12) Understanding (v. 5) Excellent things (v. 6) Truth (v. 7) Hatred of wickedness (v. 7) Righteousness (v. 8) Knowledge (v. 12) Discretion (v. 12) Fear of the Lord (v. 13)	Yields riches and honor (v. 18) Greater than gold and silver (v. 19) The wise are blessed (vv. 32, 34) The wise find life (v. 35) The foolish love death (v. 36)

Proverbs at a Glance[1]

FOCUS	**PURPOSE OF PROVERBS**	**PROVERBS TO YOUTH**	**PROVERBS OF SOLOMON**	**PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (HEZEKIAH)**	**WORDS OF AGUR**	**WORDS OF LEMUEL**
REFERENCE	**1:1** ———	**1:8** ———	**10:1** ———	**25:1** ———	**30:1** ———	**31:1**——— **—31:31**
DIVISION	**PURPOSE AND THEME**	**FATHER'S EXHORTATIONS**	**FIRST COLLECTION OF SOLOMON**	**SECOND COLLECTION OF SOLOMON**	**NUMERICAL PROVERBS**	**VIRTUOUS WIFE**
TOPIC	**PROLOGUE**	**PRINCIPLES OF WISDOM**			**EPILOGUE**	
	COMMENDATION OF WISDOM	**COUNSEL OF WISDOM**			**COMPARISONS OF WISDOM**	
LOCATION	**JUDAH**					
TIME	**c. 950–450 B.C.**					

[1]Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

OUTLINE OF PROVERBS

I. The Purpose of Proverbs 1:1–7

II. Proverbs to the Youth 1:8–9:18

- A. Obey Parents 1:8, 9
- B. Avoid Bad Company 1:10–19
- C. Seek Wisdom 1:20–2:22
- D. Benefits of Wisdom 3:1–26
- E. Be Kind to Others 3:27–35
- F. Father Says Get Wisdom 4:1–13
- G. Avoid the Wicked 4:14–22
- H. Keep Your Heart 4:23–27
- I. Do Not Commit Adultery 5:1–14
- J. Do Be Faithful to Your Spouse 5:15–23
- K. Avoid Surety 6:1–5
- L. Do Not Be Lazy 6:6–19
- M. Do Not Commit Adultery 6:20–7:27
- N. Praise of Wisdom 8:1–9:12
- O. Foolish Woman 9:13–18

III. Proverbs of Solomon 10:1–24:34

- A. Proverbs Contrasting the Godly and the Wicked 10:1–15:33
- B. Proverbs Encouraging Godly Lives 16:1–22:16
- C. Proverbs Concerning Various Situations 22:17–24:34

IV. Proverbs of Solomon Copied by Hezekiah's Men 25:1–29:27

- A. Proverbs Regulating Relationships with Others 25:1–26:28
- B. Proverbs Regulating Various Activities 27:1–29:27

V. The Words of Agur 30:1–33

VI. The Words of King Lemuel 31:1–31

- A. Wisdom for Leaders 31:1–9
- B. Wise Woman 31:10–31

Notable Teachers in Scripture

Moses	Renowned as the leader of Israel who first taught God's Law (Deut. 4:5).
Bezalel and Aholiab	Two master craftsmen who were gifted and called to teach others in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30–35).
Samuel	The last of Israel's judges before the monarchy, who taught the people "the good and the right way" (1 Sam. 12:23).
David	Prepared his son Solomon to build and staff the temple (1 Chr. 28:9–21).
Solomon	Known for his outstanding wisdom, which he used to teach numerous subjects, including literature, botany, and zoology (1 Kin. 4:29–34).
Ezra	A scribe and priest who was committed not only to keeping the Law himself, but to teaching it to others (Ezra 7:10).
Jesus	Called Rabbi ("teacher, " John 1:38; compare Matt. 9:11; 26:18; John 13:13), whose teaching revealed the good news of salvation (Eph. 4:20–21).
Barnabas	One of the teachers among the believers at Antioch (Acts 13:1), who had a lasting impact on Saul after his conversion to the faith (9:26–30).
Gamaliel	A renowned Jewish rabbi who was the teacher of Saul during his youth (Acts 22:3).
Paul	Perhaps the early church's most gifted teacher, known to have taught throughout the Roman world, notably at Antioch (Acts 13:1) and in the school of Tyrannus at Ephesus (19:9).
Priscilla and Aquila	Two believers who taught the way of God to a talented young orator named Apollos (Acts 18:26).
Apollos	A powerful teacher from Alexandria in Egypt, whose teaching paved the way for the gospel at Ephesus (Acts 18:24–26).
Timothy	Pastor-teacher of the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:2).
Titus	Pastor-teacher of a church on the island of Crete (Titus 2:1–15).

Matthew's Notes:

Literal does not always equal better – especially in the Proverbs!

When studying proverbs, remember the material we covered in Psalms. The Book of Proverbs leans heavily on literary devices like parallelism, personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and anthropomorphism.

Proverbs are designed to be memorable "truth capsules" – general statements of wisdom for life, not legal guarantees designed to apply to every imaginable circumstance. If you expect to interpret a proverb as a literal, legalistic guarantee (a formulaic approach to God), you will find the book to be filled with contradictions. If you understand the book as general guidelines that are inspired and true, you will be blessed with Solomon's wisdom.

What is wisdom? (Proverbs 1:7, etc.)

How many proverbs did Solomon write? (p 609) How many songs?

How did Solomon make in a year?

Fill in the Proverb:

I was _____ from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.

"Stolen water is _____; food eaten in secret is _____!" (CONTEXT!!!!!!!)

Above all else, guard your _____, for it is the _____ of _____.

The fear of the Lord is the ____ __ _____, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and _____ comes before _____.

There is a way that seems ____ to a man, but in the end it leads to _____.

_____ to the Lord whatever you do, and your ____ will _____.

The ____ of the Lord are _____, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

The Lord works out everything for ___ ___ ____--even the wicked for a ____ __ _____.

There is no _____, no _____, no ____ that can succeed against the Lord.

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but _____ rests with the Lord.

Better to meet a ____ _____ __ ___ ___ than a fool in his folly.

__ ____ _____ a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

____ _ ____ according to his ____, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

Better is _____ rebuke than ____ _____.