

Outline of
Proverbs



Introduction

Writer

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)

Source: Dr. John Vernon McGee (1904 – 1988), THRU THE BIBLE RADIO NETWORK

OUTLINE OF PROVERBS

[PROLOGUE 1¹⁻⁷]

ADVICE TO YOUTH (1⁸⁻⁹¹⁸)
FROM A FATHER ABOUT BAD WOMEN

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (10¹⁻²²¹⁶)
COLLECTED BY HIMSELF

WORDS OF THE WISE (22¹⁷⁻²³¹⁴)
THIRTY SAYINGS

ADVICE TO YOUTH (23¹⁵⁻²⁴²²)

WORDS OF THE WISE (24²³⁻³⁴)
SIX SAYINGS

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (25¹⁻²⁹²⁷)
COPIED BY HEZEKIAH

[AGUR 30¹⁻³³]

ADVICE TO YOUTH (31¹⁻³¹)
FROM A MOTHER ABOUT GOOD WOMEN

ADVICE TO YOUTH (1⁸⁻⁹¹⁸)
FROM A FATHER ABOUT BAD WOMEN

1. DO: obey your parents (1⁸⁻⁹)
seek & get wisdom (1²⁰⁻³²⁶; 4¹⁻¹³; 8¹⁻⁹¹²)
be kind to others (3²⁷⁻³⁵)
keep your heart (4²³⁻²⁷)
be faithful to your spouse (5¹⁵⁻²³)
2. DON'T: get into bad company (1¹⁰⁻¹⁹; 4¹⁴⁻²²)
commit adultery (5¹⁻¹⁴; 6²⁰⁻⁷²⁷)
take out loans (6¹⁻⁵)
be lazy (6⁶⁻¹⁹)
befriend foolish women (9¹³⁻¹⁸)

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (10¹⁻²²¹⁶)
COLLECTED BY HIMSELF

1. CONTRAST-godly & wicked lives (10¹⁻¹⁵³³)
2. CONTENT-godly life (16¹⁻²²¹⁶)

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (25¹⁻²⁹²⁷)
COPIED BY HEZEKIAH

1. RELATIONSHIPS with kings (25¹⁻⁷)
neighbours (25⁸⁻²⁰)
enemies (25²¹⁻²⁴)
yourself (25²⁵⁻²⁸)
fools (26¹⁻¹²)
 sluggards (26¹³⁻¹⁶)
gossips (26¹⁷⁻²⁸)
2. RIGHTEOUSNESS (27¹⁻²⁹²⁷)

ADVICE TO YOUTH (31¹⁻³¹)
FROM A MOTHER ABOUT GOOD WOMEN

1. King of a nation (31¹⁻⁹)
2. Queen of a home (31¹⁰⁻³¹)

I. Wisdom and folly contrasted

Chapters 1 – 9

Chapter 1 — The boy in the home starting out in life.

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

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).

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.

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 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.

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



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.

From this chapter through the 24th are sundry observations of moral virtues, and their contrary vices.

III. Proverbs of Solomom, 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.

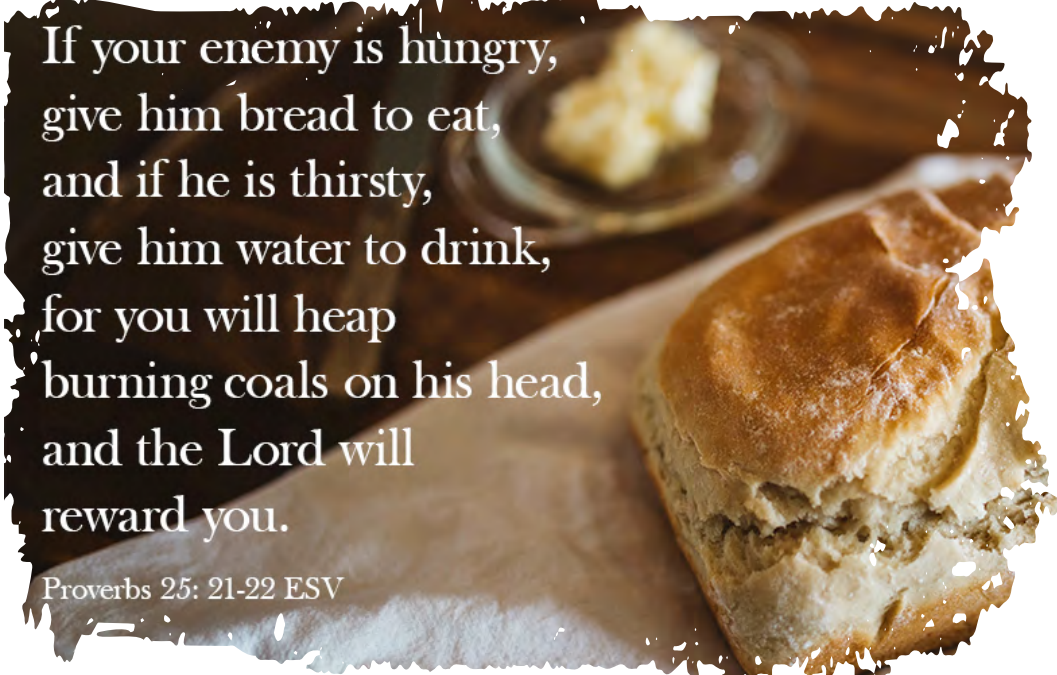
Chapter 28 – General observations of impiety and religious integrity.

Chapter 29

v. 1 – Sudden death.

v. 2 – For whom did you vote?

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



If your enemy is hungry,
give him bread to eat,
and if he is thirsty,
give him water to drink,
for you will heap
burning coals on his head,
and the Lord will
reward you.

Proverbs 25: 21-22 ESV

IV. Oracle of Agur, unknown sage

Chapter 30

Chapter 25

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).

IV. 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.

A woman who
honors the Lord
deserves to
be praised.

Proverbs 31:30



Quiz on Proverbs

1. According to the book of Proverbs, we are to trust the Lord and 'lean not on' what?

2. Why should one not boast of tomorrow?

3. Who is identified as the writer of Proverbs?

4. What is the beginning of wisdom?

5. Who shall be cut off from the earth?

6. 'The issues of life' come from what?

7. A son that sleeps in harvest causes what?

8. What enables kings to reign and princes to declare justice?

9. What shall deliver the upright?

10. What does Solomon say is the 'apple of thine eye'?

GENEVA
BIBLE SCHOOL

