

## *From the Garden to Glory*

# Proverbs

**Author:** Solomon

**Timeline:** c. 970 - 931 B.C.

**Location:** Judah

**Category:** Poetical

**Theme:** Wisdom

### **Overview:**

The purpose of Proverbs is given in chapter 1:2-4, 6, "*for attaining wisdom and discipline*", "*for understanding words of insight*", "*for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life*", "*for giving prudence to the simple*", "*for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise*". Proverbs focuses on human character and conduct and covers a wide range of subjects—from spanking a child to ruling a kingdom. It gives practical wisdom for the daily-ness of life.

### **Introduction:**

Before beginning your study of the book of Proverbs, consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. Look up the words *wisdom* and *knowledge* in a dictionary and write the definitions. In what ways are these words similar? How do they differ? Explain how one might possess one of these qualities but not the other. Make a note of examples in our culture of people who are knowledgeable but not wise and vice versa.

2. In which of the following ways do you seek to attain godly wisdom: reading the Bible, listening to godly teaching, prayer, fellowship, participating in Bible studies, other? Is there one of these areas to which you need to devote more time and focus? If so, which one? Make a specific plan to do so.
  
3. Other than God's Word, what are other places where people can look for wisdom? Why is the wisdom offered from these sources inferior to godly wisdom?
  
4. Read Jeremiah 33:3. The word "mighty" in this verse can be translated "inaccessible". Make a list of the things the Lord has taught you that would have been inaccessible to you without His direct intervention in your life.

## **The Purpose of Proverbs**

Read Proverbs 1 and 2, concentrating on 1:1-7

1. Warren Wiersbe said, "We are seeking to learn from Proverbs the divine principles that can make us skillful not in making a living but in making a life."
  - What components are involved in making a "successful life"?
  - What specific "life skills" do you need to fulfill the call which the Lord has on your life?
  - In what area of your life do you most need God's wisdom? See James 1:5.
  
2. Think about a person who you consider "spiritually wise." What qualities or characteristics do you see in that person's life?

3. The Hebrew word for *simple* in 1:4 comes from the root word for an open door and refers to those who do not know what to allow in and out of their mind. What do you need to do to assure that the "door" to your life is not left ajar? What things do you need to keep out? What do you need to be sure to keep in?
  
4. Look at 1:7. John MacArthur said, "The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one's own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds and goals are exchanged for God's." What does the fear of the Lord "look like" in your life? Why is the fear of the Lord "the beginning of knowledge"? Look at Proverbs 3:7. From what "evil" do you need to depart?

### **Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart**

Read Proverbs 3 and 4, concentrating on 3:5-8 and 4:23-27

1. The word *trust* in 3:5 means "to lie helpless, face down." According to Warren Wiersbe, the word "pictures a servant waiting for the master's command in readiness to obey." It is a picture of dependency and vulnerability.
  - In what area of your life are you "lying face down" waiting for your Master's command?
  - In what area(s) of your life do you tend to "lean on your own understanding"? What can you do this week to begin trusting in the Lord in this/these areas?
  
2. Look at 3:6. How do you "acknowledge" the Lord in all your ways? Be specific. How could you grow in this area?
  
3. Look at 3:8. How has trusting in the Lord brought you mental, physical, emotional and/or spiritual health?

4. Look at 4:23-27. The word *keep* in 4:23 means "guard, watch over"; *diligence* means "a place of confinement, a prison." You are to watch over your heart as though you were a prison guard, not letting anything in or out without the utmost scrutiny. How do you "keep" you heart with all diligence? Be specific. What are the "issues of life" that spring from your heart?

### **These Six Things the Lord Hates; Yes, Seven are an Abomination to Him**

Read Proverbs 5 and 6, concentrating on 6:16-19

As you answer the following questions, look at the seven behaviors mentioned in 6:16-19 which are an abomination to the Lord.

1. Consider each of these things which the Lord hates (pride, lying, shedding innocent blood, devising wicked plans, running toward evil, a false witness, and one who sows discord). How has each of these become "socially acceptable" in our world? How has each been "renamed" to make it acceptable? For example, abortion, the shedding of innocent blood, is now called being "pro choice."
2. Pride is considered "the father of all sin." Why do you think this is so? How does pride "sire" all other sin? How do you avoid pride in your life?
3. What does it mean to "sow discord"? What are some things that could cause discord in the body of Christ? Why is discord so dangerous? How do *you* avoid sowing discord?
4. Although God is a God of love, He *hates* certain behaviors. How do you accurately represent the Lord, "hating the sin, but at the same time, loving the sinner"? Be specific.

## **Death and Life are in the Power of the Tongue**

Read Proverbs 17 and 18

1. Look at 18:21. New Believer's Bible translates it this way, "Those who love to talk will experience the consequences, for the tongue can kill or nourish life." How can words "kill" or "nourish life"? List five examples of each type of speech.
2. Look at the following verses and note everything you learn about wise speech: Proverbs 15:1-2a, 15:23, 16:21, 16:23-24 and 21:23.
3. Look at the following verses and note everything you learn about foolish speech: Proverbs 10:18-19a, 17:20b, 18:6-8, 24:1-2, and 26:28.
4. Read Psalm 19:14 and Psalm 141:3. Consider these words from Amy Carmichael, "If a sudden jar can cause me to speak an impatient, unloving word then I know nothing of Calvary love, for a cup full of sweet water cannot spill even one drop of bitter water, however suddenly jolted." Ask the Lord to search your heart and reveal any changes He wants you to make in your speech.

## **The Plans of the Diligent Lead Surely to Plenty**

Read Proverbs 20 and 21, concentrating on 20:13 and 21:5, 17

1. Look up the words *diligent* and *sluggard* in a dictionary and write the definitions. Look at the following verses from Proverbs and note what you learn the diligent man or woman versus the sluggard: Proverbs 10:4-5, 12:11, 12:24, 12:27, 13:4, 20:13, 21:5, and 27:23.
2. Read Proverbs 6:6-11. The example of the ant is used as a model of hard work for the sluggard. What do *you* learn about diligence as you "consider the ways of the ant"? According to John Phillips, "The ant colony is highly structured, ruthlessly efficient and tightly controlled.

It's built on the twin principles of discipline and work...Regardless of weather or wind, the ants go about their business undeterred by circumstances." Evaluate the "twin principles" of discipline and work in your own life. How are you efficient and effective in these areas? How could you grow in these areas?

3. Look at 6:9-10. The word *little* is used three times in verse 10. It is often the *little* distractions--the *little* phone conversations, the *little* shopping sprees, the *little* TV watching, etc.--which mount up and keep us from being diligent. Ask the Lord to point out any "little things" that need to be eliminated from your life. Make a note of them and begin today.
  
4. Look at Ephesians 5:15-17. How can you be diligent without being "driven" or becoming a perfectionist? How do you determine what is "good enough"?

### **Do Not Forsake Your Own Friend**

Read Proverbs 27, concentrating on verses 6, 10 and 17

1. Define friendship. What are the qualities you value in a friend? Why are these qualities important to you? How would you rate yourself as a friend? How can you grow in this area?
  
2. Look at 27:6. Share a time when a friend loved you enough to "wound" you. What was the outcome?
  
3. Look at 27:17. Think of a friend who "sharpens" you. How have you been sharpened by this friend? Be specific.
  
4. As a busy woman, how do you maintain friendships? List one thing you can do this week to reach out to a friend.

## **Who Can Find a Virtuous Wife?**

Read Proverbs 31, concentrating on verses 10-31

- 1.** Look at verse 10. The word virtuous means "able, capable, mighty, strong, valiant, powerful, efficient." List the five qualities *you* believe are those which are the most important to the Lord for a godly woman to possess. On a scale of 1-10, rate yourself on each of these qualities. Ask the Lord to help you grow in any areas that are weak.
  
- 2.** Look at verse 11. The virtuous woman is trustworthy. Describe someone who is trustworthy. What character traits does that person possess? In what ways are you a trustworthy woman? How can you grow in this area? What specific thing(s) can you do this week to cause those around you to rely on you with confidence?
  
- 3.** Look at verse 17. New International Version translates this verse as, "She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks." In what ways do you need to be physically strong for the tasks to which the Lord has called you? How are you strengthening your body? What is the greatest deterrent you face in staying physically fit? What is one thing you can do this week to strengthen your body?
  
- 4.** Look at verse 27. How do you "watch over the ways of your household"? What does this mean in practical terms? Be specific. One of the greatest challenges for busy women is time management. How do you plan your time? Do you have specific tasks that you do on specific days? When do you clean, do laundry, gardening, ironing, grocery shopping, errands, etc.? Be ready to share your schedule with your group.

## **Summary**

As you conclude your study of the book of Proverbs consider the following questions and write your answers:

- 1.** What is the most important lesson you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?
- 2.** What "new insights" did you learn about the Lord and yourself from your study?
- 3.** List one way in which your study caused you to do each of the following:

Praise and worship the Lord:

Confess an area of sin to the Lord:

Thank the Lord:

Ask for something from the Lord: