

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY**

**PROVERBS**

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Many commentators like to make note of the similarity of the books of Proverbs to the wisdom writing of other parts of the ancient world. Note is also made of the fact that more than one author is identified as the source of some of the material in this book. The important thing to remember is that Proverbs is part of the inspired word of God. It is wisdom from God breathed into the author as recorded in this book of the Old Testament.

On my part, it is obvious that this collection of wisdom literature was compiled by a Father to instruct his son. Though the address is such, the principles stated in this book are just as applicable to daughters (though the wording would obviously be a bit different).

### **Proverbs 1:1 ¶ The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;**

It would seem that the primary author is Solomon, the son of David, the great shepherd king of Israel, though he was inspired to include the writings of a few others. I am reminded that when God asked Solomon what he would like God to gift him, he asked for an understanding heart, for wisdom. In fact, scripture declares that God gave him more wisdom than any man who had or would ever live on this earth.

*1 Kings 3:5–13 “In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee....Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, **I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.** And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.”*

### **Proverbs 1:2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;**

My paraphrase: To comprehend and discern how to best use what you know skillfully. Knowledge is readily available in the computer age. Sadly, this knowledge is more often than not put to use without wisdom. I believe true wisdom is only exercised when it is in accordance with the word of God, and the lack of knowledge of God's word is prevalent even throughout the professing Christian world. Even when men are

aware of the truth of God's word, multitudes choose to ignore it, resulting in harm to themselves and others.

**Proverbs 1:3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;**

The Hebrew for instruction includes "chastisement, correction, discipline, doctrine, and rebuke." In other words, one who would be wise must be willing to receive corrective criticism and teaching on how to exercise discipline and discernment in matters of moral judgment in accordance with God's divine law (judgment) in righteousness (equity).

**Proverbs 1:4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.**

Solomon's desire is to help those who are easily seduced or deceived to gain wisdom (subtilty). His primary target seems to be young men, because it is when men (and women) are young that they are more easily seduced by those lacking wisdom. It is a time of life in which peer pressure is a powerful influence. Everyone wants to belong; no one wants to be a social outcast.

**Proverbs 1:5 A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:**

**Proverbs 1:6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.**

To truly "hear" is to listen with the intent to obey. A wise man will be ready to hear and will have a desire to continue to learn. He will seek wise guidance, implying that he will seek to learn from those who know God's word and can explain the meaning of a proverb, a pithy statement of practical truth, or other sayings or riddles that are hard to understand, e.g. parables.

**Proverbs 1:7 ¶ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

This verse states a foundational truth. Fear or reverence of the LORD is of primary importance in establishing the foundation upon which one should seek to attain knowledge and gain understanding, the filter through which all knowledge should be understood. The Hebrew for "fools" states that it means one who is perverse. To be perverse is to willfully turn away from what is right, to choose to be wicked. In other

words, fools have chosen not to accept the LORD's authority over them. Such people have no respect for wisdom and instruction (reproof, chastening, correction).

Solomon gives his own definition of what it means to fear the LORD in a later chapter.

*Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...."*

Job ties the two verses together.

*Job 28:28 "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."*

Thought-provoking quote from Ironside: "The apostle classifies disobedience to parents among the evidences of the last-day apostasy (2Timothy 3:1-5). It is the crying sin of the present lawless times, and presages the awful hour of doom soon to strike. The Scriptural 'Children, obey your parents' has almost universally been superseded by 'Parents, obey your children.' It is a sowing of the wind and the whirlwind will yet be reaped. The human will disdains being bound in any way. The outcome will be terrible when, having cast off all parental authority, men will also throw aside every vestige of allegiance to divine authority."

And from Chuck Smith: "We live in a very tolerant age, and unfortunately, our tolerance level has become very high. We've become very tolerant of evil. What we are really lacking today is a real hatred of evil. We've been taught, you know, we're not to hate anything, and so hate has been put as one of those intolerant words and people who have hatred are put in a category, so we want to accept everybody. "**Live and let live,**" you know, and to develop a tolerance towards evil things. Evil is always seeking to be tolerated. It always is looking for you to compromise and to accept it."

**Proverbs 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:**

**Proverbs 1:9 For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.**

"My son" implies that Solomon is instructing his own son. He is urging his son to pay attention and heed the instruction (correction) of his father and not reject the training of his mother. If he will live accordingly, he will be adorned with grace, kindness and favor; in other words, he will be known for his good character.

Note that the parents are acknowledged as responsible for training their children. I don't think that responsibility should be left to the schools. Parents should maintain close oversight of what their children is taught so that they can provide correction as necessary in light of the word of God.

**Proverbs 1:10 ¶ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.**

The blunt warning—Don't yield to the deceit, persuasion or flattery of sinners, those who have chosen to rebel against the LORD. The purpose of their enticement will always be to get you to join in their rebellion through disobedience.

This alludes to another important truth—One should choose their friends carefully. Peer pressure is a powerful tool of the enemy. The prevalence of gangs in our culture today testify to this truth.

**Proverbs 1:11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:**

**Proverbs 1:12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:**

**Proverbs 1:13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:**

**Proverbs 1:14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:**

**Proverbs 1:15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:**

**Proverbs 1:16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.**

**Proverbs 1:17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.**

**Proverbs 1:18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood; they lurk privily for their *own* lives.**

**Proverbs 1:19 So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; *which* taketh away the life of the owners thereof.**

In the following verses, the father gives some examples of very obvious sins to illustrate what is teaching.

Suppose your friends try to involve you in a plot to kill someone for no other reason than to rob them and share the ill-gotten gains. They may think that their plan is foolproof and that they will never get caught. Don't be tempted by greed to take part in their evil and kill an innocent person. People who are willing to go to such lengths to feed their greed don't realize that they are basically falling into a trap that they have set for themselves that will end up in the destruction of their own lives.

Regarding verse 17-19: I misunderstood verse 17 at first reading. Gill offers this explanation: "...though the net is spread by the fowler even in the sight of the bird, yet it is in vain to the bird, though not to the fowler; it is so intent upon the corn that is spread about, that it takes no notice of the net, and so is caught in it; and thus it is with those men that are bent upon their sinful practices, upon theft and murder, though their ruin and destruction are before their eyes; and they daily see their companions in iniquity come to an untimely end; they know that they are liable to suffer death by the hand of the civil magistrate, and to be followed by the justice and vengeance of God, and suffer eternal punishment; yet take no warning hereby, but rush on to their own ruin...."

**Proverbs 1:20 ¶ Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:**

**Proverbs 1:21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,**

**Proverbs 1:22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?**

It is helpful to remember the culture in which Solomon lived. The temple was prominent and respected and the nation as a whole accepted God as LORD; His laws permeated the culture. Solomon personifies wisdom and pictures her calling out in all the public places, wondering how long those who rebel against her will persist in their refusal to embrace her. In truth, wisdom is the voice of God.

It was once true in America that the church was prominent and respected, and the nation as a whole embraced biblical morality. Wisdom could cry out to you in the public places. I am afraid we are quickly becoming a society of the simple, scorners and fools; and God's word is falling into the category of hate speech.

**Proverbs 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.**

**Proverbs 1:24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;**

**Proverbs 1:25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:**

**Proverbs 1:26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;**

**Proverbs 1:27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.**

Wisdom calls for the wicked to heed her rebuke and correction and repent of their sin. If they will heed her, she will give them right understanding and discernment. If,

however, they continue to reject her, she will laugh when they suffer the consequences for rejecting her—desolation, destruction, distress and anguish.

A good application from Ironside: “What can be worse for a lost soul than to have to remember, in the abyss of woe, the gospel messages once listened to indifferently and the Word of God once taken lightly? That soul will cry in despair, “Jesus died, yet I’m in Hell! He gave Himself for sinners. He provided a way of salvation for me, but I was foolish, and spurned His grace till grace was withdrawn. The door of mercy was closed, and now I am to be on the wrong side of that closed door forever!” Thus will Wisdom laugh at your calamity if you go out into eternity in your sin.”

**Proverbs 1:28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:**

**Proverbs 1:29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:**

**Proverbs 1:30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.**

**Proverbs 1:31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.**

When they find themselves suffering the consequences of rejected wisdom, they will seek to find her. They will not be able to find her because they chose to disregard knowledge and the fear of the LORD. They weren’t interested in learning wisdom and rejected all correction and chastening. As a result, they are left to suffer the consequences of their evil choices.

**Proverbs 1:32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.**

**Proverbs 1:33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.**

In summary—The rebellion of those that allow themselves to be seduced by the wicked to satisfy their greed will result in their destruction. Those, however, who heed the instruction of wisdom will have no consequences to fear in light of their choices.

This is basically a statement of reaping what you sow.

*Galatians 6:7–8 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”*