

The Proverbs

Lesson 1

Proverbs 1

The Author

Proverbs 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:

Solomon, the son of David, had many brothers and First Chronicles 3:1-9 lists those siblings. Six half-brothers were born while David lived in Hebron, each with a different mother. They were Amnon, Daniel, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah and Ithream. After David moved to Jerusalem, nine more half-brothers were born: Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, and Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet. Of this list of fifteen half-brothers, some were the offspring of David's concubines. Solomon had four full-blood brothers; one died before Solomon's birth. Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan were his other siblings by his mother, Bathsheba. Solomon was the tenth son of David and the second son of Bathsheba. Only one half-sister, Tamar, is mentioned in Scripture.¹

Birth of David 1059 BC	David King Age 40 1019 BC	David Dies Age 80 979 BC
David Rules for 40 Years		
Hebron Capital for 7 Years	Jerusalem Capital for 33 1/2 Years	Solomon Anointed King before David's Death
6 sons 1 daughter Born in Hebron	9 sons besides 5 sons with Bathsheba Born in Jerusalem	
Birth of Solomon 1009 BC	Solomon King Age 30 979 BC	Solomon Dies Age 70 939 BC
Solomon Rules for 40 Years <i>Solomon is the 10th son of David</i>		

Solomon's half-brother, Absalom, had been on the run from David for several years after he killed his half-brother, Ammon, who had committed incest with Tamar, his half-sister.² David forgave Absalom and brought him back to Jerusalem. Shortly after, Absalom attempted to take control of the throne from his father. During the conflict, David left Jerusalem. Soon, men faithful to David killed Absalom and David returned to the city. The birth of Solomon occurred several years later in 1009 BC.

¹ 1 Chronicles 3:1 Now these were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the first-born was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelites; the second was Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelites; ² the third was Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth was Adonijah the son of Haggith; ³ the fifth was Shephatiah, by Abital; the sixth was Ithream, by his wife Eglah. ⁴ Six were born to him in Hebron, and there he reigned seven years and six months. And in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. ⁵ And these were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, four, by Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel; ⁶ and Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, ⁷ Nogah, Nepheg, and Japhia, ⁸ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. ⁹ All these were the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister.

² 2 Samuel 19 & 19

About 944 BC, while elderly and feeble David lay on his bed, half-bother Adonijah proclaimed himself as successor to his father and a ceremony was prepared. Because David had promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be the next king, she obtained permission from David to have Nathan anoint Solomon as king at once. Solomon co-reigned with his father as king until David's death.³

Solomon reigned as king on his own for forty years, dying about 939 BC at the age of 70.

The Scripture in 1st Kings 4:32 records that during his life "He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005." Many of those proverbs are included in this book of the Bible. Of all the songs in his repertoire, only the Song of Songs, (Song of Solomon) remains and is included in the Holy Scripture. Not all of the Book of Proverbs belongs to Solomon; chapter 30 was written by Agur and 31 by King Lemuel. We will discuss those authors and their content when we reach those lessons.

What is a proverb? In the Scripture, a proverb is a short statement of truth accurately usable in any similar situation or circumstance. Because the proverb is short and to the point, it will come to mind to give Godly guidance when a parallel event or experience occurs. All of Solomon's proverbs have a purpose and he includes that objective in the opening verses.

The Introduction

Even though the book is called *Proverbs*, the actual proverbs of Solomon do not begin until chapter 10 and continue through chapter 29. These chapters provide quick, one-verse sayings, one right after another, with little or no continuity between them; they are not meant to be long; rather, they are meant to be sharp and pointed sayings that will nudge a person to make a right heavenly choice. Solomon's proverbs express two contrasting views on the same subject.

EXAMPLE: WISE AND FOOLISH SON

Proverbs 10:1 ... a wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Chapters 1 – 9 contain Solomon's attempt to convince his son to embrace moral Godly insight into everything concerning life on earth. Think of it as the background information that Solomon must teach his son before the son can understand and embrace the many proverbs of his father. Within these nine chapters, Solomon presents to his son the blessing he will receive if he learns and follows his instructions as well as the trouble that will come if he does not. Solomon is concerned about his son just as Solomon's father was concerned about him. David once said about Solomon in 1st Chronicles 22:5, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands. *Therefore* now I will make preparation for it." Like David, Solomon evidently has concerns about his son and he wants to prepare him for the pitfalls that may come his way. However, we must ask the question, "How did Solomon know about the pitfalls?" Perhaps Solomon is speaking to his son from experience. Perhaps David's concern for Solomon's inexperience springs from a father's knowledge of Solomon's youthful folly. Youthful folly often leads to true Godly wisdom and trains the soul. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, Solomon is concerned about the life and path of his son and goes to great length to nudge him in the right moral Godly direction.

³ 1 Kings 1 & 2

The Purpose

Proverbs 1:2 To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,³ To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; ⁴ To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion,

Verses 2 – 4 lay the foundation and purpose for all the proverbs that will follow. How tragic it is to read these verses and not stop to analyze and fully grasp what Solomon says. The context of the three verses lend themselves to three categories; the recipient of the proverb, the action in the proverb and the result of the proverb. A chart of verses 2 – 4 looks like the following.

Recipients	Actions	Results
You (implied)	Know	Wisdom
You (implied)	Know	Instruction
You (implied)	Discern	Understanding
You (implied)	Receive	Wise Behavior
You (implied)	Receive	Righteousness
You (implied)	Receive	Justice
You (implied)	Receive	Equity
Naive	Give	Prudence
Youth	Give	Knowledge
Youth	Give	Discretion

In Solomon's introduction, he addresses three recipients: you and people like you, the naive and the youth; they all apply to Solomon's son. Solomon wants the reader "to know wisdom and instruction, ... discern the sayings of understanding, ... receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity and ... give prudence, ... knowledge and discretion." What do all these words mean?

Before we can properly grasp the purpose of each of Solomon's proverbs, we must fully comprehend Solomon's meaning for each word.

Know Wisdom and Instruction

We often think that wisdom is an intellectual quality but that is not the meaning of the word in the proverbs or in present day. Solomon uses the word wisdom as a moral quality. Moral means ethical, honest, good, right, decent and proper. The contrast of morality in Solomon's proverbs is foolishness; to be foolish in the proverbs is to be godless.⁴ Each proverb is a snippet of wisdom which comes as a gift from God Who desires His disciples to be moral.⁵

Here too, if we apply today's definition of the word instruction like the word wisdom, we miss Solomon's intent. He constructs each proverb to reprimand quickly and properly, to discipline and scold the disciple of the Lord for even considering an immoral thought before any physical action takes place. Do not think of Solomon's proverbs as an instruction manual to be pulled out and followed after all else fails; rather, the proverbs are to be learned so well that they are second nature in the mind of a disciple to keep him from slipping away from the LORD's divine will. These things you must know; however, what does know mean? For Solomon's proverbs, it means to recognize the difference between the moral and immoral and be aware of the pitfalls of breaking from the truth.

⁴ Psalm 14:1 compare with Judge 19:23 and 2 Samuel 13:13

⁵ Job 28:12-28; Prov 3:13-18; Rom 1:22; Rom 16:27; 1Co 1:17-21; 1Co 2:6-8; Jas 1:5

Discern Sayings of Understanding

To discern in Solomon's proverbs means to separate mentally or distinguish between his teaching and those of others. Solomon's sayings are not his own; they have come from the Lord. As the LORD's sayings, they contain perfect direction from the Divine in opposition to that of the ungodly world.

Receive Instruction in Wise Behavior, Righteousness, Justice and Equity

Once again, Solomon applies the moral right of wisdom but this time he attaches it to one's behavior in this life. Righteousness in Solomon's proverbs means doing that which is morally and legally correct. Justice for Solomon comes not from the earthly throne of a magistrate but from the seat of the LORD in heaven. It is a manner of law, a measure of order and an ordinance of action approved by the LORD. Equity to Solomon is an evenness of results, straight forward, in sweet equality ordained by the LORD for those who are His disciples. Those who study Solomon's proverbs will receive these four items.

Give Prudence to the Naive

The proverbs of Solomon are a gift to another group of people, the naive. Today we think of the naive as the unlearned, inexperienced, childlike and innocent people who do not know better. In contrast, Solomon uses the word naive to address those who are seducible. Many learned, experienced and knowledgeable adults find themselves seduced by the trickery and cunning of ungodly enemies of the LORD. To those, Solomon's proverbs give the gift of discretion, here called prudence.

Give Youth Knowledge and Discretion

A gift is also provided to the youth. For Solomon, a youth is anyone from the age of infancy through adolescence. These gifts provide young people with the awareness and wit to face the new things encountered in the growth process. They provide discretion to keep the youth away from mischievous, lewd and wicked thoughts.

The Premise

Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, **6** To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles.

The use of Solomon's proverbs will provide a wise/moral person with sayings needed to please the LORD in addition to that which he already knows is truth. In turn, the person who comprehends the importance of Solomon's proverbs will derive wise/moral counsel from them.

When Solomon says, "To understand a proverb and a figure," he is explaining that each saying in this book apply to many situations, events, decisions and conundrums. One proverb covers a multitude of topics. However, the proverbs are not riddles which are dark sayings filled with trickery and very often difficult satire by the so-called mentally superior intelligent minds of the world. The normal person, the naive and the youth who know the proverbs of Solomon will not be entrapped by the dark world of the evil sinner who seeks to rob, steal and kill.

The Instruction

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.⁶ **8** Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching; **9** Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head, and ornaments about your neck.⁷

Solomon identifies the place of “the beginning of knowledge” as the “fear of the LORD.” In Solomon’s day fear meant the same as worship today. Worship of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. When do we begin to learn to worship the LORD? Some, but not all, find the privilege of learning to worship from a father or a mother. Solomon learned it from both. Verse 7 is taken from his father, David, found in Psalms 111:10. It is interesting that Solomon continues the instruction by mentioning the importance of the father and mother in the process of learning. Solomon had learned to worship the LORD by watching and participating in the process with David and Bathsheba. His experience in his childhood with his parents continued into his adulthood and what he learned from them encircled his head and adorned his neck. Godly parents are important to the development of a godly child into adulthood and the process starts in childhood. Sadly, not all children have this opportunity today and neither did they in Solomon’s day. Those who have godly parents should cherish every day in their presence.

We do not want to skip over an important point Solomon makes at the beginning of this instruction. He says, “Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Here he indicts the rebellious youth who reject the godly instruction from a father and mother. It is not a new thought from Solomon either; his father makes the same point in Psalms 1:1 when he says, “... blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!” The wicked never give good moral counsel and direction but guide a person into unfruitful deeds of darkness.

In verse 8, Solomon makes his first plea to his son; he uses the words “my son” fifteen times in the first nine chapters, each time crying out for his son to listen, learn and treasure the words that will protect him from evil. In the rest of the book, Solomon addresses his son nine more times with specific warnings and exaltations. Solomon says in one place, “My son, if your heart is wise, My own heart also will be glad.”⁸

The Warning – Against Violence

Proverbs 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. **11** If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause; **12** Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, Even whole, as those who go down to the pit; **13** We shall find all kinds of precious wealth, We shall fill our houses with spoil; **14** Throw in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse," **15** My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, **16** for their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood. **17** Indeed, it is useless to spread the net in the eyes of any bird; **18** but they lie in wait for their own blood;

⁶ **Psalm 111:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*; His praise endures forever.

⁷ **Psalm 1:1** How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! **Ephesians 5:11** And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

⁸ **Proverbs 23:15**

they ambush their own lives.¹⁹ So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors.⁹

Solomon's warning to his son is about being tempted to engage in an evil act of violence to gain wealth. The very ones who commit such evil deeds seek to gain wealth through unrighteous acts and ultimately become the victims of their own acts of darkness. Solomon warns his son to stay away from such sinners and never consent to be part of those groups. Many who kill to gain something in this world will be killed by those who also want to gain something in this world. How will Solomon's son know when he is being enticed into such an evil opportunity? By the voice of wisdom!

The Voice of Wisdom

Proverbs 1:20 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square;²¹ At the head of the noisy *streets* she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings:

That which is morally right shouts above the evil chatter found in the streets. Ultimately, evil does not prevail, even though it may in the short run. Moral wisdom prevails in the end. Evil acts usually begin intentionally with the full knowledge that they are sinful deeds. One might argue, and rightly so, that the latter is more evil than the former.

Wisdom's Saying Number 1

Proverbs 1:22a "How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity?

For Solomon, the naive person represents the one easily seduced by someone with evil intentions. Here, he asks the question, "How long, ... will you love simplicity?" What does "simplicity" mean? In Solomon's day it means to be seduced. The English does not do justice to Solomon's intent. It should read, "How long, O seducible person, will you love to be seduced?" The words translated "naive" and "simplicity" are the same Hebrew word.

Solomon has recognized that many people who are easily seduced by evil love to be seduced. They have a love or affection for those things that are totally against the wishes of the LORD. They are enticed, burned, enticed and burned again. In many ways, they embrace the opportunity to sin against the LORD.

Wisdom's Saying Number 2

Proverbs 1: 22b And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing,

Here, the English translation is perfect when it says, "scoffers delight ... in scoffing." What does it mean to scoff? Today we would say, the ridiculers love to ridicule or the disdainers love to disdain. The noise of these scoffers fill the streets with evil words and the naive easily fall into their evil trap. Is it godly? No. Is it holy? No. Is it righteous? No. Why does the naive fall for the scoffers' trick? Because he befriends such talk!

⁹ Proverbs 15:27 He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

Wisdom's Saying Number 3

Proverbs 1: 22b And fools hate knowledge?

Solomon calls the naive and the scoffer fools in this line. It means that they are stupid. We can be nice and use the words unwise, senseless, thoughtless, imprudent or irresponsible, but those terms do not convey the meaning intended by Solomon in today's language. Simply put, Solomon means that the stupid hate and find odorous disdain for the knowledge of truth, strong words for a son to hear from his father, even if he is the king.

Wisdom's Saying Number 4

Proverbs 1:23 "Turn to my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.¹⁰

We can only wonder if Solomon is gathering all of these proverbs into a book because of the actions of his son. The Bible records only one son and two daughters for Solomon.¹¹ Is Solomon putting this book together intentionally for his son Rehoboam? Quite possibly! Rehoboam is a rebellious son and remain rebellious when he takes over the kingdom from Solomon. It is because of Rehoboam that Israel divides into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. "Turn to my reproof," Solomon says to his son. A reproof is a chastisement. Solomon has good, trustworthy reasons to implore Rehoboam to change his silly naive ways. If Rehoboam will do so, Solomon will emit the flowing words of truth from what he has learned and Rehoboam will have the distinct privilege of instructions direct from the LORD, delivered through his father. If Rehoboam listened and changed, the Scripture gives no indication. Many years later, the LORD will deliver the same idea to the Southern Kingdom in Isaiah 11:2 with the same results. The sons of the kingdom do not listen and, therefore fail to receive the outpouring of the spirit.

The Doom of Rejected Wisdom

Proverbs 1:24 "Because I called, and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention;¹² ²⁵ and you neglected all my counsel, and did not want my reproof; ²⁶ I will even laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, ²⁷ when your dread comes like a storm, and your calamity comes on like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come on you. ²⁸ "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek

¹⁰ *Isaiah 11:2* And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

¹¹ *1 Kings 11:43* and *1 Kings 4:11-14*

¹² *Isaiah 65:11* "But you who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who set a table for Fortune, And who fill *cups* with mixed wine for Destiny, ¹² I will destine you for the sword, And all of you shall bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight, And chose that in which I did not delight."

Isaiah 66:4 So I will choose their punishments, And I will bring on them what they dread. Because I called, but no one answered; I spoke, but they did not listen. And they did evil in My sight, And chose that in which I did not delight."

Jeremiah 7:13 "And now, because you have done all these things," declares the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, ¹⁴ therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.

Zechariah 7:11 "But they refused to pay attention, and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. ¹² And they made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. ¹³ "And it came about that just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts;

me diligently, but they shall not find me,¹³ ²⁹ because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD.¹⁴ ³⁰ "They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof.³¹ "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be satiated with their own devices.³² "For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them, and the complacency of fools shall destroy them.¹⁵

Solomon's son has obviously refused to listen and has rejected his father's counsel. Evidently, the son has chosen to be seduced by the scoffers in the streets, those intent on gaining wealth by waiting in the shadows to take that which does not belong to them. What does a father do? Can he rescue his son from foolish decisions? This passage actually circles back to the theme found in Proverbs 1:10-19. There Solomon warns his son to stay away from such sinners and never consent to be part of that group. Why? Many who kill to gain something in this world will be killed by those who also want to gain something in this world. Solomon cannot stop his son from doing what he is going to do. All Solomon can do is offer moral wisdom which is the choice to worship the LORD and do His will, treating people His way, doing business as His witness. Here, Solomon recognizes that a time will come when his son may call out to Solomon to rescue him. At that time, the king may not be available, the king may not be able to rescue him because he has waited too late to choose to follow the words of wisdom that flow from his father's lips. These same words will be repeated through Isaiah to the Southern and Northern Kingdoms many years later. The words are not Solomon's words; they have come to him because he worships the LORD Who is the author of all truth.

The Blessing of Accepted Wisdom

Proverbs 1:33 "But he who listens to me shall live securely, and shall be at ease from the dread of evil."

The proverbs of Solomon contain the moral wisdom of the LORD, His Word, about those things that He approves. Grasping those truths secures the feelings of trust, safety, assurance and confidence that evil will not entice you to do evil and disappoint the LORD, nor will you cease worshiping Him.

¹³ Job 27:9 "Will God hear his cry, When distress comes upon him?

¹⁴ Job 35:12 "There they cry out, but He does not answer Because of the pride of evil men. ¹³ "Surely God will not listen to an empty *cry*, Nor will the Almighty regard it.

¹⁵ Isaiah 1:15 "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. ¹⁶ " Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil,

¹⁶ Jeremiah 11:11 Therefore thus says the LORD, "Behold I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape; though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them.

¹⁷ Micah 3:4 Then they will cry out to the LORD, But He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, Because they have practiced evil deeds.

¹⁸ James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

¹⁹ Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate.

²⁰ Isaiah 32:6 For a fool speaks nonsense, And his heart inclines toward wickedness, To practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD, To keep the hungry person unsatisfied And to withhold drink from the thirsty.