

## **Which Way Do I Go?**

### Proverbs Overview

(preached Pine Grove 7/5/15; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

When I was out of school in the summer, I stayed with my grandmother all day...

And our schedule was usually very predictable each day.

I would get there early each morning.

One of my friends would arrive about 30 minutes after I got there...

And we would eat biscuits for breakfast and then we would play for the rest of the morning until 11:00 when we would watch Price is Right...

Then we would eat lunch, read a book, and then get ready to take a nap around 1 PM each day..

Before we took a nap, my grandma would give us each a drink of water and she would cut an apple in to for us to share before laying down...

And I can remember getting that apple one day and my grandma saying...

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”

And I remember as a kid thinking I am going to eat apples every day.

I didn't like going to the doctor at all, and if one apple a day could keep me out of the doctor's office, I was glad to eat one a day..

As a little kid, whatever grandma said was 100% true, and I began to look forward to that apple every day....

Now, I tell that story to illustrate the point that life is full of little sayings like that.....

For instance, complete the following phrases....

When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

Two wrongs don't make a right.

Birds of a feather flock together.

What do we call these?

These are common sayings or everyday proverbs.

And these saying are all around us everyday.

We even use them in our speech regularly.

Benjamin Franklin who wrote Poor Richard's Almanac had a number proverbs attributed to him...

Early to bed. Early to rise, Makes a man healthy  
wealthy and wise..

A penny saved is a penny earned.

Tonight, we are going to look at the book of  
Proverbs...

And these sayings are not the thoughts of man but  
rather the thoughts of God...

God inspired every word in the book of Proverbs...

So what we have there is the wisdom of God...

Now interestingly enough, people have often  
confused human proverbs with God's proverbs...

For instance, "Cleanliness is next to godliness" is  
not a proverb in the Bible...

Spare the rod, spoil the child is not in the Bible...

The actual biblical proverb is spare the rod, hate the  
child.

You will hear people say, "The Bible says, God  
helps those that help themselves."

But guess what?

The Bible never says that either.

In fact, God even helps those who don't help themselves.

With all that said, let's spend some time learning about the book of Proverbs tonight.

Now, let's begin with what proverbs are...

And that is...there are short sayings on wise living...

Now, they differ a little bit from the rest of the Bible in this way.

Let's say that you tell a lie..

First of all, you have broken God's law and deserve judgment...

But beyond that, lying is also bad in that it leads to destruction in your own life...

Proverbs point on the real problems with sin that go beyond breaking the law of God..

So in that regard, proverbs help us navigate through this world in a wise way...

IF you walk into a book store, you can be overwhelmed by the number of "how to..." books located on the shelves...

How to build a deck.

How to paint a car.

How to crochet.

How to sew.

Proverbs is the book of how to live wisely in the world...

And it is not just written by someone passing through life.

Proverbs is written by the Creator of life.

You aren't getting an opinion in the book of Proverbs, you are getting God's truth.

As with any book in the Bible, God breathed out his Word through a human author...

And most of the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon, who the Bible calls the wisest man other than Jesus who ever lived upon the earth.

Here is what 1 Kings 4:29 says about Solomon...

***<sup>29</sup> Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of<sup>[r]</sup> mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. <sup>30</sup> Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and <sup>[s]</sup>Darda, the sons of Mahol;***

***and his <sup>[u]</sup>fame was known in all the surrounding nations.<sup>32</sup> He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.<sup>33</sup> He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.<sup>34</sup> <sup>[u]</sup>Mencame from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.***

And Solomon was given this wisdom because that is what he asked God for in 1 Kings 3...

If you remember, Solomon was David's son who ruled over a united Israel around 1000 BC...

If you look on our time chart of the OT, you will find Solomon around this time...

And God came to him in a dream and asked him what he would like...

So, Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave him wisdom along with riches and honor...

We are going to be learning more about Solomon in the next few weeks...

Because the books that follow Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon were also written by him...

Now, we are also going to see that not all the sayings in the book of Proverbs belong to Solomon.

Some of the proverbs are going to come from men who lived after Solomon, but most are from King Solomon.

There is also another truth that we need to understand as we look at the book of Proverbs...

Proverbs served another function as well..

In that these sayings served to pass on wisdom to the next generation.

We are familiar with that today, as fathers will sit down their children and offer advice.

Much of the setting of proverbs is the picture of a father passing on instructions to his son...

That is not to say that this book will only benefit men...

Because there is much instruction for both men and women.

And in fact, much of the final chapter of Proverbs is instruction and description of the virtuous woman/wife.

However, I would say this...

Proverbs are very helpful instructions to young people even today.

They are great devotionals to be shared with your children...

Pick a few proverbs and read them to your children and grandchildren.

That will often lead to more discussion just by reading a few lines from the proverbs..

But Proverbs is not just for the young...

There is much value in reading the book of Proverbs...

Look at Proverbs 1:1-7...

<sup>2</sup> *To know wisdom and instruction,*

*To discern the sayings of understanding,*

<sup>3</sup> *To receive instruction in wise behavior,*

*Righteousness, justice and equity;*

<sup>4</sup> *To give prudence to the <sup>[a]</sup>naive,*

*To the youth knowledge and discretion,*

<sup>5</sup> *A wise man will hear and increase in learning,*

*And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,*

<sup>6</sup> *To understand a proverb and a figure,*

*The words of the wise and their riddles.*

<sup>7</sup> *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;*

*Fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

The value of Proverbs....

- 1) To gain wisdom
- 2) To have understanding
- 3) To behave wisely
- 4) To act justly
- 5) To make you smarter
- 6) To avoid being a fool

Why should you study the book of Proverbs?

1. It is God's Word.
2. Only fools despise wisdom.

Let me do a little preaching on verse 7 of chapter 1 for just a second here..

For the 1<sup>st</sup> 10 years after I was saved, I was content to let someone else tell me what the Bible said.

And in some ways, that is fine.

In fact, I think we need a constant source of biblical instruction in our lives as long we seek to follow the Lord.

In fact as a pastor, I need to be sure to expose myself to preaching as often as possible.

That is a very important piece of our growth as believers...

So please don't understand what I am about to say...

But as I look around at people who call themselves Christians, I find a lot of people who are content to be spoon fed the Bible.

They have no interest in studying the Scriptures to determine what the Bible actually teaches.

They have no interest in digging into the Bible to find the meaning of words or phrases.

They are simply content to sit and soak in the pew for their entire existence as a Christian.

They are simply happy to offer the excuse that the Bible is too hard to understand..

That they are too busy or too distracted to study God's Word...

Do you know what verse 7 says about folks like that?

They are fools...

If you don't want the wisdom and instruction contained in these proverbs and even contained in the other books of the Bible, you are foolish.

The value of reading the proverbs is that you won't look like a fool...

Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

But not the wise...

And though you do get instruction from listening to Biblical teaching and preaching....

There is so much more wisdom and instruction available to you in the book of Proverbs and in the rest of the Bible as well...

So, now we know the author of Proverbs.

And the purpose of Proverbs.

And the value of Proverbs.

Let take a look at what is in the book of Proverbs...

This is where it gets a little tricky because it is quite difficult to have a perfect outline of the book of Proverbs...

Often times, the proverbs jump from one subject to the next...

And that makes an outline impossible...

There are a number of ways that have been suggested to outline the book of Proverbs...

I have simply chosen the one that seems to make the most sense to me...

You can see it on the screen...

So, now let's open the book of Proverbs and try to get a sense of what is contained within it...

## **I. The Worth of Wisdom (1-9)**

The first outline point on the worth of wisdom is best understood if we go to the end of this section...

So turn with me to Proverbs 9...

Verse 1...

Read with me down to verse 6..

***9 Wisdom has built her house,  
She has hewn out her seven pillars;  
2 She has <sup>[a]</sup>prepared her food, she has mixed her wine;  
She has also set her table;  
3 She has sent out her maidens, she calls  
From the tops of the heights of the city:  
4 "Whoever is <sup>[b]</sup>naive, let him turn in here!"  
To him who lacks <sup>[c]</sup>understanding she says,  
5 "Come, eat of my food  
And drink of the wine I have mixed.  
6 <sup>[d]</sup>Forsake your folly and live,  
And proceed in the way of understanding."***

Now skip down to verse 13...

***13 The <sup>[f]</sup>woman of folly is boisterous,  
She is <sup>[g]</sup>naive and knows nothing.  
14 She sits at the doorway of her house,  
On a seat by the high places of the city,  
15 Calling to those who pass by,  
Who are making their paths straight:***

<sup>16</sup> *“Whoever is <sup>[h]</sup>naive, let him turn in here,”*  
*And to him who lacks <sup>[i]</sup>understanding she says,*  
<sup>17</sup> *“Stolen water is sweet;*  
*And bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”*  
<sup>18</sup> *But he does not know that the <sup>[i]</sup>dead are there,*  
*That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

Now, what we just read in these two sections is really a summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> nine chapters of Proverbs...

The picture that is being painted in those first 6 verses is of a woman named wisdom who has built a house on firm foundation...

And she stands outside her house calling to everyone who wants instruction and understanding...

Then in verse 11, you meet another woman named folly who also lives in a house as well...

She also calls out to people passing by,...

And notice this, she also offers understanding and knowledge to those who pass by...

So, we have two women, two houses, and they both claim to offer the same product to whoever wants it...

Now that is so interesting in the day and age in which we live...

Because we live in a day and age where everyone claims to have the truth...

For instance, if someone were to ask me what I think about how this world was created...

I would tell them... "sit down with me and I will show you how everything came into existence..."

And I would take them to Genesis and talk about how God created it all out of nothing....

IF they were to ask an unbelieving scientist, he would tell them to sit down and he would take them to the Big Bang theory...

And so the question is....

Who is right?

And that is really the point of the book of Proverbs, but it is especially the point of the first nine chapters...

Because these opening chapters revolve around two choices in life...

The path of wisdom or the path of foolishness...

And the part to remember is that both paths are going to try and look the same...

What I mean is that people who don't believe in the wisdom of the Bible or the God of the Bible are not going to be holding a sign that says I'm a fool..

No, they are going to look the same and offer what to anyone who will listen that they are the ones holding the truth....

And that leads to a great point from the book of Proverbs that needs to be said....

Someone is wrong and someone is right.

You can't have it both ways...

And that is one great blessing of the current debate about homosexual marriage...

You can't claim to know Christ and to say that you want marriage equality...

The same way that you can't claim to know Christ and support abortion...

And if anything good is coming out of the Supreme Court decision, it is the fact that a line is being drawn in the sand....

And you are either going to join the wisdom what God says that marriage is....

Or you are going with the folly of what man says that marriage is...

And that is really the dividing line that the book of Proverbs makes...

Be wise or be a folly, but be sure of this, you can't be both...

And that is really the point of this opening section of Proverbs...

Choose your way in life.

Now, some of the more well known verses of this opening section talking about the worth of wisdom are...

Proverbs 3:5-6..

***<sup>5</sup> Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.***

That is certainly a key to choosing wisdom, because true God-given wisdom begins when you reject human thinking...

And the first human you need to reject is yourself...

Then in chapter 6, we find another well know passages in this opening section....

Flip with me to Proverbs 6:12....

In this section, we see a description of the fool or the man who rejects wisdom...

Who has chosen the road of foolishness...

Verse 12..

<sup>12</sup> *A worthless person, a wicked man,  
Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth,*  
<sup>13</sup> *Who winks with his eyes, who <sup>[i]</sup>signals with his  
feet,  
Who <sup>[a]</sup>points with his fingers;*  
<sup>14</sup> *Who with perversity in his heart  
continually devises evil,  
Who <sup>[h]</sup>spreads strife.*  
<sup>15</sup> *Therefore his calamity will come suddenly;  
Instantly he will be broken and there will be no  
healing.*

And so in the context of a father teaching his son,  
we find the next set of well known verses....

Verse 16...

<sup>16</sup> *There are six things which the Lord hates,  
Yes, seven which are an abomination <sup>[i]</sup>to Him:*  
<sup>17</sup> *Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
And hands that shed innocent blood,*  
<sup>18</sup> *A heart that devises wicked plans,  
Feet that run rapidly to evil,*  
<sup>19</sup> *A false witness who utters lies,  
And one who <sup>[i]</sup>spreads strife among brothers.*

And then this in verse 20...

<sup>20</sup> ***My son, observe the commandment of your father***

***And do not forsake the <sup>[k]</sup>teaching of your mother;***

<sup>21</sup> ***Bind them continually on your heart;***

***Tie them around your neck.***

<sup>22</sup> ***When you walk about, <sup>[l]</sup>they will guide you;***

***When you sleep, <sup>[m]</sup>they will watch over you;***

***And when you awake, <sup>[n]</sup>they will talk to you.***

Can't you picture this scene of a father teaching his children like this today...

They are watching the news about a criminal who goes to jail...

And the dad says, "look at that worthless cheating man" like we see in verses 12-15...

Then he says to his son, "the LORD is pleased with that kind of sin" like we see in 16-19..

And then he finishes up with, "that's why you need to listen to what me and mom teach you from the Bible.." like we see in 20-22...

That is the model that we should use as we try to show people the worth of wisdom...

But now we need to move into section 2, which are...

## **II.. The Words of Wisdom by Solomon (10-29)**

This section begins in chapter 10 as we are introduced to a random collection of proverbs of Solomon...

Proverbs 10:1 simply says this....

***10 The proverbs of Solomon.  
A wise son makes a father glad,  
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.***

And then really for 19 chapters we are treated to the wisdom of Solomon is no particular order....

He covers a wide range of topics from finances to the value of work and the importance of your language, and wealth and poverty, giving and planning for the future...

For the next 19 chapters, wisdom is offered to the reader...

Now, there are a couple things to remember when you are reading proverbs..

First, the meaning may not always be easy to find...

Second, know that the true meaning of a proverb will never contradict another truth of the Scripture...

Third, understand that proverbs are principles, not a guarantee.

For instance, look at Proverbs 10:27 since we are already in chapter 10...

**<sup>27</sup> *The fear of the Lord prolongs <sup>U</sup>life,  
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.***

Needless to say that is a principle, not a promise.

Sometimes, the righteous meet a premature death, and sometimes the wicked lives a long life...

With that said, let's look at just a few of Solomon's more well-known proverbs...

Let's stay here in chapter 10 and look at a few proverbs on speech...

Verses 18-20...

**<sup>18</sup> *He who conceals hatred has lying lips,  
And he who spreads slander is a fool.***

**<sup>19</sup> *When there are many words, transgression is  
unavoidable,***

***But he who restrains his lips is wise.***

**<sup>20</sup> *The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver,  
The heart of the wicked is worth little.***

These are but a few of the many proverbs about a person's speech...

And we live in a day where everybody's voice is heard...

So, this proverb has application in our day for sure..

From just these 3 verses, here is a short list of applications to our lives..

- Spreading slander is the way of the fool...
- It is better to say less than to say too much.
- You need to have control over what you say.
- IF it comes into your head, it does not mean that it needs to come out of your mouth...
- The value of having your speech under control is priceless...

And that is the way that this section of proverbs works...

Sometimes you may have a group of verses about speech and then a verse about money...

And often times, the proverbs jump back and forth...

When you are reading through proverbs...

If you read 2 or 3 verses about a single topic, it is best to just stop there and think about that and try to apply those principles before reading more...

Let's flip to Proverbs 22 real quick...

Proverbs 22:6 says this..

***<sup>6</sup> Train up a child <sup>[d]</sup>in the way he should go,  
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.***

There is plenty of instruction in Proverbs on raising children, but here is one of the more common verses...

And it is interesting...

If you look at the verse before and the verse after 6, they are not talking about raising children...

But in verse 6, Solomon offers a proverb on raising children...

And it is a simple proverb that offers this wisdom...

Train up a child in the way he should go, which is simply train up a child in the way of the Lord...

Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life...

So, train up a child in the wisdom of God found in the Bible...

And when he is old, he will not depart from it...

Again, this is not a promise because we all know of wayward children who reject the Lord....

Yet the principle is very clear....

Generally speaking, feed your child the word of God, and he will bear the fruit of your labor...

That is not advice from your pastor, that is wisdom from God..

There is one more section of the book of Proverbs and that is found in chapters 30-31, where we see...

#### **IV. The Words of Wisdom by Others (30-31)**

The “others” of these two chapters are Agur and Lemuel...

In chapter 30, Agur offers some proverbs of his own.

Most likely, Agur was a student of wisdom, and maybe even a student of Solomon.

He offer some proverbs in chapter 30...

And the we see two wisdom poems of Lemuel in chapter 31...

The first is a poem about the Excellent King...

And the second is a poem about the Excellent Wife...

Many of you may have heard sermons from the Excellent Wife section on Mother’s Day before...

It is one of the book of Proverbs most well-known sections....

I would encourage all you ladies to read it for sure...

## **Conclusion**

That is a real bird's eye view of the book of Proverbs...

I totally didn't do it justice because we failed to look at much of the wisdom contained in it...

I would certainly suggest that you make Proverbs a part of your daily devotions..

Proverbs is unique in that it has 31 chapters, so you can read a chapter a day and read the whole book in a month...

But Proverbs is also unique in that you don't have to read a large section to get an application to your life...

You can read one verse and have enough wisdom to think about for one day alone...

So, use the book of Proverbs in your life to help you live more wisely...

But I want to end with a verse and a thought before we leave tonight...

<sup>30</sup> But <sup>[u]</sup>by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, <sup>[v]</sup>and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,<sup>31</sup> so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

So many people read Proverbs looking for wisdom to live in this world...

And it is possible to read the book of Proverbs, yet miss the point of the book....

In fact, it is possible to read Proverbs and miss the point of the entire Bible...

Because you can live a wise life and still go to hell in the final judgment...

God is not going to judge how wisely you lived and then decide if you have a place in heaven or not...

God is going to judge your relationship with Jesus as a basis for your entrance into heaven....

The point of Proverbs is to offer wisdom, but the point of life is to embrace true wisdom that comes from repenting and trusting in Jesus Christ...

True wisdom truly begins when you are right with Christ.

Let us pray.