

Wisdom Literature – Lesson 3

The Ministry of the Word (Prov. Pt. 1)

July 13, 2025

As Pastor Keith and the preaching team lead us through the Wisdom Literature of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, we'll be studying the core books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

No matter what list is used, the Book of Proverbs will always be included by its very definition.

Proverbs 9:4-6

4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"

To him who lacks sense she says,

*5 "Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.*

*6 Leave your simple ways, and live,
and walk in the way of insight."*

How many of you have experienced:

- A sermon series on the book of Proverbs?*
- A class or group study on the book of Proverbs?*
- Inclusion of Proverbs in your regular Bible reading and study?*

*Proverbs is one of the most neglected books in the Bible, yet it is a key piece of Scripture. It is a book about wisdom — the ability to take biblical truth and apply it to life's realities. It contrasts the person who does this with the fool, the person who refuses to live by God's standards. According to Proverbs, you become wise when you apply God's principles to your practical decision-making. And when you do, you can live life the way God meant it to be lived. — **Tony Evans, The Tony Evans Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 581***

Definitions

What are proverbs?

*"Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience." — **"Don Quixote," Miguel de Cervantes***

*"The Book of Proverbs is about godly wisdom, how to get it and how to use it. It's about priorities and principles, not get-rich-quick schemes or success formulas. It tells you not how to make a living, but how to be skillful in the lost art of making a life." — **"Be Skillful: God's Guidebook to Wise Living," Warren Wiersbe***

*"A proverb has three qualities: shortness, sense, and salt." — **C.H. Spurgeon***

*"If the Bible were a medicine cabinet, Psalms would be the ointment put on inflamed skin to calm and heal it. Proverbs would be more like smelling salts to startle you into alertness." — **Tim Keller***

Life under the sun: Topics covered in Proverbs



Anger, beauty, calamity, conflict, deception, diligence, discernment, discipline, drunkenness, excess, faithfulness, favor, fear of the Lord, fidelity, folly, friendship, greed, guidance, happiness, the heart, honesty, honor, hope, humility, hunger, impulsiveness, inexperience, integrity, justice, kindness, knowledge, laziness, life, love, lying, marriage, money, motives, neighbors, obedience, oppression, parenting, patience, peace, pride, prosperity, prudence, purity, righteousness, rulers, satisfaction, security, self-control, sex, sovereignty of God, sowing & reaping, speech, temptation, theft, unkindness, violence, wealth, wickedness, wisdom, youth

What is wisdom?

““Wisdom is the skill of living. It is a practical knowledge that helps one know how to act and how to speak in different situations. Wisdom entails the ability to avoid problems, and the skill to handle them when they present themselves.” — **“How to Read Proverbs,” Tremper Longman III**

“According to Scripture, wisdom is, broadly speaking, knowledge of God’s world and the knack of fitting oneself into it.” — **“Discerning the Spirits: A Guide to Thinking about Christian Worship Today,” Cornelius Plantinga Jr. and Sue A. Rozeboom**

“Wisdom is a moral rather than an intellectual quality. To be ‘foolish’ is to be godless (Psalm 14:1). True wisdom is a gift from God to those who ask it (Job 28:12–28; Proverbs 3:13–18; Romans 1:22; 16:27; 1 Corinthians 1:17–21; 2:6–8; James 1:5). — **“Easton’s Bible Dictionary”**

The foolish and the wise

The fool

- **Rejects God:** Fools deny the existence or relevance of God (Proverbs 1:7, Psalm 14:1).
- **Lacks self-control:** They vent their anger and refuse to listen to advice (Proverbs 29:11).
- **Proud and arrogant:** Fools are often dismissive of correction (Proverbs 12:15).
- **Self-delusional:** Their folly leads them to deceive themselves and others (Proverbs 14:8, Romans 1:22-23).

The wise

- **Fears God:** Realizes that the creature is not equal to the Creator (Proverbs 1:7)
- **Delights in God's discipline:** Knows that God's way is the way of flourishing (Psalm 1)
- **Depends on God:** Knows where real truth and knowledge can be found (James 1:5)
- **Seeks to be obedient:** Hearing the Word, he seeks to do it (Matthew 7:24-27)

"One might expect the problem of Proverbs simply to be labeled 'sin' — the perennial problem of the biblical drama. And this is true. But in Proverbs, the problem is far more earthy than an abstract notion of sin. Folly is personal — a way of life, part of the ornery ordinary of our creaturely existence." (**Benjamin T. Quinn, Craig G. Bartholomew, and David J. H. Beldman, *Walking in God's Wisdom***)

Difficulties

The book of Proverbs is filled with challenging sayings, parables, metaphors, folksy examples, puzzles, maxims and similes, many of which are presented in the form of Hebrew poetry. It is loaded with imagery, which, by its very nature, is indirect language that requires interpretation.

We find a series of more or less sustained "discourses" in chapters 1-9, while the remainder of the book consists, for the most part, of single "proverb-type" sentences with no apparent coherence in the way in which they have been gathered together.

Proverbial problems

- Proverbs 26:4 and Proverbs 26:5
- Proverbs 10:4 and Proverbs 10:22
- Proverbs 29:19 and Proverbs 17:2

It's the nature of proverbs.

- Look before you leap. / He who hesitates is lost.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. / Don't beat your head against a stone wall.
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder. / Out of sight, out of mind.
- Many hands make light work. / Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- Haste makes waste. / Time waits for no man.
- You're never too old to learn. / You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Dangers

"If there was one bit of wisdom, one rule of thumb, one single skill I could impart, one useful tip I could leave that would serve you well the rest of your life, what would it be? What is the single most important practical skill I've ever learned as a Christian?"
"Here it is: Never read a Bible verse. That's right, never read a Bible verse. Instead, always read a paragraph at least." — Greg Koukl, author of "Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions" and "The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important that Happens in Between"

Principles not promises

- *Proverbs 22:6*
- *Proverbs 12:21*
- *Proverbs 28:27*

Assessing a proverb

- *Values — What value(s) does this proverb commend or praise?*
- *Virtues — What virtue(s) does this proverb implicitly celebrate and command?*
- *Vices — What vice(s) does this proverb prohibit and denounce?*

- *Proverbs 27:1*
- *Proverbs 27:2*
- *Proverbs 27:7*
- *Proverbs 27:8*

WARNING

Do not consume Proverbs without a biblical foundation, spiritual awareness, and a healthy dose of the fear of God.

- *Proverbs 26:7*
- *Proverbs 26:9*
- *Proverbs 1:32-33*
- *Proverbs 1:7*