

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 5-6-12 PM NOTES
PROVERBS
#22 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

Romans 12:20 (NKJV) "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

1 Peter 5:5b (NKJV) "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

Hebrews 12:5b-6 (NKJV) "⁵My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Acts 16:31 (NKJV) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Proverbs 10:27 (NIV) "The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short."

"A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience..."

So, these proverbs are gems of wisdom that are principles meant to be God's guide to living. Remember they are just that—principles and guides. They are not meant to overrule any special plan that God may have for His saints. They are not meant to be iron-clad contracts but principles and guides."

—Adrian Rogers

I. The Theme of Proverbs

Proverbs 1:1-3 (HCSB) "¹The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ²**For gaining wisdom and being instructed**; for understanding insightful sayings; ³for receiving wise instruction [in] righteousness, justice, and integrity."

Daniel 2:20 (NKJV) "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His."

A. The Value of Wisdom

Proverbs 8:11 (ESV) "for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."

1. Knowledge Comes by Looking Around; Wisdom Comes by Looking Up
2. Knowledge Changes but Wisdom Remains the Same

Malachi 3:6a (NKJV) "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change."

3. The Ability to Gain Knowledge Is Based on One's IQ, but the Ability to Gain Wisdom Is Based on One's Walk With God

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV) "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

B. The Definition of Wisdom

Wisdom is the ability to see everything from God's perspective. Wisdom is the God-given ability to choose the best means to accomplish God's ends. To put it another way, wisdom is the God-given ability to choose the best goals and the best means to meet those goals. To put it yet another way, wisdom is the God-given ability to make proper application of knowledge and understanding.

C. The Beginning of Wisdom

Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV) “The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.”

II. The Teaching Methods in Proverbs

Proverbs 27:15 (HCSB) “An endless dripping on a rainy day and a nagging wife are alike.”

Proverbs 11:22 (HCSB) “A beautiful woman who rejects good sense is like a gold ring in a pig’s snout.”

Proverbs 25:25 (HCSB) “Good news from a distant land is like cold water to a parched throat.”

A. Contrasts

Proverbs 13:1 (NKJV) “A wise son *heeds* his father’s instruction, **but** a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”

Proverbs 13:4 (NKJV) “The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing; **but** the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.”

Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV) “A soft answer turns away wrath, **but** a harsh word stirs up anger.”

B. Completion

Proverbs 14:13 (NKJV) “Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, **and** the end of mirth *may be* grief.”

Proverbs 16:3 (NKJV) “Commit your works to the Lord, **and** your thoughts will be established.”

Proverbs 16:32 (NKJV) “*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*”

C. Comparison

Proverbs 15:16 (NKJV) “**Better** *is* a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble.”

Proverbs 25:11 (NKJV) “A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in settings of silver.”

Proverbs 25:28 (NKJV) “Whoever *has* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city broken down, without walls.”

III. Categories of People in Proverbs

A. The Fool

Proverbs 1:7b (NKJV) “...fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Proverbs 1:22b (NKJV) “...fools hate knowledge.”

Proverbs 12:15 (NKJV) “The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel *is* wise.”

Proverbs 29:11 (NKJV) “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise *man* holds them back.”

Proverbs 14:9 (NKJV) “Fools mock at sin, but among the upright *there is* favor.”

B. The Simple

Proverbs 14:15 (NKJV) “The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.”

Proverbs 7:7 (NKJV) “And saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding.”

Proverbs 22:3 (NKJV) “A prudent *man* foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.”

C. The Scoffer

Proverbs 14:6 (NKJV) “A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not *find it*, but knowledge *is* easy to him who understands.”

Proverbs 21:24 (NKJV) “A proud *and* haughty *man*—‘Scoffer’ *is* his name; He acts with arrogant pride.”

D. The Wise

Proverbs 1:5 (NKJV) “A wise *man* will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.”

Proverbs 11:30 (NKJV) “The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life, and he who wins souls *is* wise.”

Proverbs 14:16 (ESV) “One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.”

Proverbs 16:23 (NKJV) “The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.”

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PROVERBS

#22 in Series, “The Glory of God in the Old Testament”

Proverbs is right in the middle of a section of the Old Testament called the wisdom books. The wisdom books are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon (Song of Songs). As we will see in a moment, the theme of Proverbs is wisdom. The book of Proverbs was often quoted by the New Testament writers. When Paul wanted to speak about how to deal with enemies, he quoted Proverbs 25:21-22 in **Romans 12:20 (NKJV)** Therefore “*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*” When Peter and James wanted to speak about humility, they quoted Proverbs 3:34. **1 Peter 5:5b (NKJV)** “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*” When the writer of Hebrews wanted to encourage Christians going through tough times, he quoted Proverbs 3:11-12 in **Hebrews 12:5b-6 (NKJV)** ⁵ “*My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;* ⁶ *For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*” While Psalms was the Israelite’s hymn book, Proverbs was the teacher’s manual for practical wisdom.

To rightly interpret the book of Proverbs, we must understand what a proverb is and how proverbs are to be used. The English word “proverb” comes from the Latin “pro”

(instead of) and “verba” (words). In other words, a proverb is a short, precise statement usually limited to a single sentence. A proverb is a bite sized bit of truth. Most every culture has its proverbs. A Chinese proverb says, “He who thinks he is leading and no one is following is just taking a walk”. I grew up with proverbs like. “Early to bed and early to rise makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise”. “A penny saved is a penny earned”. Here are some of my favorites: “He who would not fall ought not to walk in slippery places”. “Never wrestle a pig; you both get dirty, but the pig enjoys it”. “It is better to marry a man worth a million who doesn’t have a cent that to marry a man with a million, that isn’t worth a cent”. The difference between proverbs like these and those in the Bible is that those in the Bible are inspired by God. God inspired the book of Proverbs to give us practical wisdom to guide our decisions in life.

The biggest mistake people make when it comes to interpreting the biblical book of Proverbs is to treat a proverb like a promise. A biblical proverb is not a promise; it is a proverb. A promise involves an obligation: “If A is done, then B **will** follow”. Here is an example of a promise: **Acts 16:31 (NKJV)** “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” A Proverb on the other hand has to do with a general observable principle of life that is usually true. A Proverb says: “If A is true, B will **generally** follow”. Let me give you an example of how a proverb is not a promise. **Proverbs 10:27 (NIV)** “The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.” Is this a promise that if you fear the Lord, you will live a long life and if you are wicked, you will die young? What about godly people like David Brainerd, Jim Elliot, and Robert Murray McCheyne who were some of the godliest men who ever lived and all three died before they were 30. What about John and Betty Stam, a godly young missionary couple in China with China Inland Mission (founded by Hudson Taylor) who were martyred in 1934 by the communists. At their death, John was 27 and Betty was 28. So is Proverbs 10:27 in error? No, because this verse is not a promise; it is a Proverb and it is generally true. People who lead lives in bondage to sins like drugs, alcohol and promiscuity usually die younger than people who fear God and walk in obedience to His precepts. However in God’s sovereign plan and for the sake of the gospel, some godly people die young and on the other hand, God in His sovereign mercy grants great sinners a long life inviting them in the general call to repent and be saved from their sin. When making decisions for living daily life, it is wise to fear the Lord and when you do you will not die young as the result of a sinful lifestyle. Do you see the difference between a promise and a Proverb?

My favorite definition of a proverb is from Adrian Rogers: “A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience”. The inspired Proverbs of Scripture are nuggets of wisdom that God has given to us through divine inspiration to enable us to live wisely. Adrian Rogers gives a good summary: “So, these proverbs are gems of wisdom that are principles meant to be God’s guide to living. Remember they are just that – principles and guides. They are not meant to overrule any special plan that God may have for His saints. They are not meant to be iron-clad contracts but principles and guides” [Adrian Rogers, *God’s Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom*, Page iv].

I. The Theme of Proverbs

The theme of Proverbs is living according to true wisdom. Solomon tells us that this is the theme of the book in **Proverbs 1:1-3 (HCSB)** “¹The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ²**for gaining wisdom and being instructed**; for understanding

insightful sayings; ³ for receiving wise instruction [in] righteousness, justice, and integrity". The book of Proverbs approaches life with the conviction that God has all the answers, because He has all knowledge, all understanding, and all wisdom. Since God is the source of all true wisdom, we can walk in wisdom only as we fear and honor and walk in obedience to God and His Word. To help us understand the book of Proverbs, we need to understand what the Bible means by wisdom. The word "wisdom" and "wise" are used 114 times in Proverbs. What is wisdom? How is wisdom different from knowledge and understanding? Wisdom is one of the perfections (attributes) of God. The prophet Daniel said in **Daniel 2:20 (NKJV)** "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." If we are to have true heavenly wisdom, it must come from God.

A. The Value of Wisdom

We read in **Proverbs 8:11 (ESV)** "for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her." Let's contrast wisdom and knowledge. They are not the same thing!

1. Knowledge Comes by Looking Around; Wisdom Comes by Looking Up

To put it another way, knowledge comes by study, but wisdom comes from God. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts while wisdom is the Spirit enabled ability to see the facts from God's perspective and how they fit into God's plan.

2. Knowledge Changes but Wisdom Remains the Same

Knowledge is constantly increasing, and changing. What passes as knowledge today may seem ridiculous tomorrow. In 1943, Thomas Watson who was the chairman of IBM said, "I think there is a world market for about five computers". Ken Olson, president of Digital Equipment Corporation said in 1977, "There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home". That is man's knowledge! True wisdom, on the other hand, never changes. Remember that we said that wisdom has its source in God and we read in **Malachi 3:6a (NKJV)** "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change..."

3. The Ability to Gain Knowledge Is Based on One's IQ, but the Ability to Gain Wisdom Is Based on One's Walk with God

Since wisdom is from God, IQ has nothing to do with gaining true wisdom. Our ability to gain wisdom and live by wisdom is dependent on your walk with God and your knowledge of His Word. Let me give you a silly illustration of this truth. Suppose your neighbor (who loves to brag) has an expensive 60 inch flat screen with surround sound in his "man-cave". On the other hand, you have a 19 inch TV you bought for \$50 at a garage sale. Suppose Tennessee is playing a really important football game and your neighbor is over at your house. He sees that the game is about to come on and after throwing out a few disparaging remarks about your TV, he says, "I'm going home to watch the game on my 60 inch with surround sound in my man cave TV". But there is something he doesn't know. The game is on a channel that you get on basic cable, but with his 750 channel satellite hook up he doesn't have. If the goal is to watch the game, all his fancy equipment and great surroundings aren't of any benefit, because he is not hooked up to the right source. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)** "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." Wisdom is a "thing of the Spirit". In Isaiah 11:2, He is called "the Spirit of wisdom". Those who are not rightly related to God and do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them have no access to Godly wisdom.

B. The Definition of Wisdom

We have described wisdom and we have seen that its source is in God, but let's look a

little more closely at exactly what we mean by wisdom. The most basic definition of wisdom (as it is used in Proverbs) is the ability to see everything from God's perspective. I have wisdom when I see everything that God causes or allows as He sees it. While that is a good general definition, let's get a little more specific. Wisdom is the God given ability to choose the best means to accomplish God's ends. To put it another way, wisdom is the God given ability to choose the best goals and the best means to meet those goals. To put it yet another way, wisdom is the God given ability to make proper application of knowledge and understanding. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts; understanding is seeing how those facts fit together and apply to the situations we face. Wisdom is the God given ability to apply knowledge and understanding to accomplish God's desired ends or goals.

C. The Beginning of Wisdom

Since God is the source of wisdom, the beginning of wisdom would involve a proper attitude toward and a proper relationship with God. **Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)** "The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding." There is no godly wisdom, apart from the fear of the Lord. What is the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is a reverential, worshipful awe of His holiness and His majesty and awareness that everything I say, do, and think is open and exposed before Him. The fear of the Lord is a fear of His discipline and the awareness that I must give an account for all that I say, think, do, and everything He has told me to do and I didn't do. It is when I approach him with that sense of awe and fear that I am open to see everything from His perspective. If a person has no fear of the Lord, they can't even get started on the path of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom is the application of the fear of the Lord to life and life's decisions. Wisdom is the skill of living a God honoring life.

II. The Teaching Methods in Proverbs

There are at least three methods of teaching in Proverbs, but prevalent in all three are word pictures. Some of the word pictures are so graphic, you can feel them. For example, we see in **Proverbs 27:15 (HCSB)** "An endless dripping on a rainy day and a nagging wife are alike." Is that not a great word picture? **Proverbs 11:22 (HCSB)** "A beautiful woman who rejects good sense is like a gold ring in a pig's snout." **Proverbs 25:25 (HCSB)** "Good news from a distant land is like cold water to a parched throat." Beautiful word pictures like those are all through Proverbs. Let's examine the three teaching methods in Proverbs.

A. Contrasts

The key word in contrasts is the conjunction "but". Proverbs gives practical wisdom by contrasting two opposite things. Here are some examples: **Proverbs 13:1 (NKJV)** "A wise son *heeds* his father's instruction, **but** a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." **Proverbs 13:4 (NKJV)** "The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing; **but** the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." **Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV)** "A soft answer turns away wrath, **but** a harsh word stirs up anger."

B. Completion

The key words in completions are "and" or "so". **Proverbs 14:13 (NKJV)** "Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, **and** the end of mirth *may be* grief." **Proverbs 16:3 (NKJV)** "Commit your works to the Lord, **and** your thoughts will be established." If your motive and direction and goal is right, God will guide your plans. **Proverbs 16:32**

(NKJV) “*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, **and** he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*”

C. Comparison

In using comparisons, the key words are “like”, “as”, or “better”. **Proverbs 15:16** (NKJV) “***Better*** is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble.” **Proverbs 25:11** (NKJV) “A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in settings of silver.” **Proverbs 25:28** (NKJV) “Whoever *has* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city broken down, without walls.”

III. Categories of People in Proverbs

Proverbs mentions often three categories of people who need wisdom.

A. The Fool

A fool in Proverbs is not referring to a mentally deficient person. What makes a person a fool is found in the moral and spiritual realm, not in the IQ realm. Let’s see some characteristics of a fool. Examine yourself to make sure you’re not fool.

1. A Fool Hates Instruction – **Proverbs 1:7b** (NKJV) “...fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Fools are determined to do it their way. They figure they know a better way. **Proverbs 1:22b** (NKJV) “...fools hate knowledge.”
2. A Fool Is Self Confident – **Proverbs 12:15** (NKJV) The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel *is* wise.” The fool has a highly elevated view of himself or herself.
3. A Fool Talks without Thinking – **Proverbs 29:11** (NKJV) “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise *man* holds them back.” A fool speaks without considering what will be said and whether or not it is appropriate. Sometimes it is voiced like this: “If it comes to my mind, I just say it”. I’ve heard people who are almost proud of that. Proverbs says you are a fool. You can always tell a fool by what he says.
4. A fool Mocks at Sin – **Proverbs 14:9** (NKJV) “Fools mock at sin, but among the upright *there is* favor.” The Hebrew word for “mock” includes the idea of refusing to make restitution for our sin. A fool minimizes and even makes light of their sin rather than make restitution for it.

B. The Simple

The simple are the naïve who believe everything and everybody. They have no discernment. Discernment is one of the by products of wisdom. **Proverbs 14:15** (NKJV) “The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps” **Proverbs 7:7** (NKJV) “And saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding”. The simple are just gullible and they eventually suffer for it. **Proverbs 22:3** (NKJV) “A prudent *man* foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.”

C. The Scoffer

The Hebrew word for scoffer literally means “to make a mouth”. It is the picture of a person curling their lip and sneering in scorn at another. **Proverbs 14:6** (NKJV) “A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not *find it*, but knowledge *is* easy to him who understands.” “Scoffer” is translated “mockers” in some other translations. The scoffer or mocker is shut out from wisdom. **Proverbs 21:24** (NKJV) “A proud *and* haughty *man*— ‘Scoffer’ *is* his name; he acts with arrogant pride.” Pride is the motivating factor behind the scoffer.

D. The Wise

The person who has wisdom is basically the opposite of the fool, the simple, and the scoffer. Look at some of the qualities of the one who has found and embraced wisdom: **Proverbs 1:5 (NKJV)** “A wise *man* will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel”. How opposite this is to the fool who hates instruction. **Proverbs 11:30 (NKJV)** “The fruit of the righteous *is a tree of life*, and he who wins souls *is wise*.” The wise person has an eternal perspective and therefore nothing is more important than winning souls. **Proverbs 14:16 (ESV)** “One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.” A wise person sets strict boundaries in his life because the thought of sin scares him, but a fool will see how close he can get to sin without stepping over the line. **Proverbs 16:23 (NKJV)** “The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.” The wise person recognizes the power and the potential danger in what he says and so he teaches his mouth to be very careful with what is said.

Examine your life: Are you wise, a fool, a scoffer. or simple?

CONCLUSION

There is hardly any subject that the book of Proverbs does not deal with and apply wisdom to. There is instruction about sexual purity, marriage, raising children, being successful at your vocation, choosing friends, good government, handling conflict in any area, and on and on. Let me challenge you to immerse yourself into the proverbs. There are 31 chapters and most months have 31 days. Consider for a year committing to read a chapter of Proverbs each day that corresponds to that day of the month. If you are reconciled to the giver of wisdom, indwelt by the Spirit of wisdom, and following the personification of wisdom – Jesus Christ, you will begin to see discernment in your decisions and wisdom in your relationships and growth in your walk with the Lord. (3155)