

Outline of Proverbs

This overview and outline of Proverbs has been written to assist in the study of the Word of God. May you grow ever closer to Him.

The book of Proverbs is a book of wise sayings. The book begins with these words:

The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel.

The word “proverb” used here comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to be like” or “to represent,” perhaps by way of comparison. A proverb is a concise statement of a truth. The proverbs contained in this book are attributed to Solomon (around 971-931 B.C.), although the book was not compiled until centuries later, perhaps during the time of Hezekiah (728-686 B.C.). Proverbs 25:1 tells us that:

These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.

The book is about wisdom.

The book is poetry. Hebrew poetry consists in parallelism that is:

- sometimes synonymous — the second line repeats the thought of the first line using similar words or ideas (Proverbs 1:2),
- sometimes antithetical — the second line reinforces the first line by stating the opposite side (Proverbs 10:1),
- sometimes synthetic — the second line completes the first line (Proverbs 3:6)
- sometimes climatic — the second line takes up the same words as the first line with the exception of the last word (Proverbs 31:4)
- sometimes emblematic — one line conveys the main thought and the other illustrates (Proverbs 25:25)
- sometimes formal — two dissimilar thoughts are joined in parallel expression (Proverbs 15:33)

The book is addressed to a son. However, it is not sexist. While warnings are replete against evil women, the book contains an equal amount of material about evil men, and opens with such a warning. Further, the book closes with the last 22 verses being an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet extolling the virtues of an excellent woman. The warnings and virtues contained therein are true of either sex.

According to Bruce Waltke, Proverbs is quoted or referenced 60 times in the New Testament. Familiar passages about God’s chastisement (Hebrews 12:6-6), His giving grace to the humble (James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:51), and our need to give food to our enemies (Romans 12:20) all come from this book (Proverbs 3:11-12; 3:34; 25:21-22, respectively).

There is an eternal perspective in the Proverbs that often is missed (Proverbs 12:28; 14:32; 23:17-18). Not all of the promises of the Proverbs come to pass in this life, but they all will come to pass.

Proverbs contains an interesting statement in 23:11 referencing a Redeemer and in 30:4 referencing the Holy One’s

Son.

11. . . for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.

4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!

This is a Yahweh book. "God" is found only eight times. "LORD" is found 87 times.

"Righteous" or "righteousness" is found 70 times in the book. "Wisdom" or "wise," is found 85 times and is linked closely to righteousness. In contrast, "wicked" or "wickedness" is found 85 times and is linked closely with "folly," "foolish," "foolishness," and "fool," found 71 times.

Date: 940 B.C.

Divisions: The book of Proverbs may be divided as follows:

I. The Virtues of Wisdom 1-9 (The twelve "My son" instructions—1:8, 10; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1 [my children]; 4:10, 20; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 7:1—followed by two chapters on wisdom)

- A. Introduction 1:1-7
- B. Avoid Evil Men 1:8-19
- C. Wisdom's Call 1:20-33
- D. Life Wisdom 2 (This is an alphabetical chapter with verses 1, 5, and 9 each beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet ("Aleph") and verses 12, 16, and 20 each beginning with the first letter of the second half of the Hebrew alphabet ("Lamed"). The two letters together form a word that begins each verse in Proverbs 3:27-31)
 1. The "Aleph" Section
 - a. Seek Wisdom 1-4
 - b. The Source of Wisdom 5-8
 - c. The Benefits of Wisdom 9-11
 2. The "Lamed" Section
 - a. To Deliver You From From Evil Men 12-15
 - b. To Deliver You From Evil Women 16-19
 - c. The Benefits of Deliverance From Evil 20-22
- E. The Life of the Wise 3
- F. Pay Attention 4
- G. Avoid Adultery 5
- H. Warnings About Evil (debt for another; laziness; wicked men) 6:1-19
- I. More Warnings About Adultery 6:20-7:27
- J. Wisdom Personified 8

K. Wisdom and Folly 9

II. The Proverbs of Solomon 10-22:16

III. The Sayings of the Wise 22:17-24:34

A. The Words of the Wise 22:17-24:22

B. More Words of the Wise 24:23-24:34

IV. More Proverbs of Solomon 25-29

V. The Words of Agur 30

VI. The Words of Lemuel 31

A. Avoid Evil, Do Good 31:1-9

B. An Excellent Wife 31:10-31

Key Idea: “The Fear of the LORD” is found 14 times:

1. the beginning of knowledge **1:7**
2. brings answered prayer **1:29**
3. equated with knowledge **2:5**
4. to hate evil **8:13**
5. the beginning of wisdom **9:10**
6. prolongs days **10:27**
7. gives strong confidence **14:26**
8. a fountain of life **14:27**
9. better than great treasure with trouble **15:16**
10. the instruction of wisdom **15:33**
11. leads to life **19:23**
12. leads one from evil **16:6**
13. brings riches, honor and life **22:4**
14. rewards hope **23:17-18**

The phrase is found only seven times outside of the book of Proverbs.

Key Passage: Proverbs 1:7

Key Lesson: Wisdom comes from living righteously.

