

The Book of Proverbs

I. Background on Proverbs

A. The original Hebrew title of the book of Proverbs is "Míshlê Shlomoh" which means "The Proverbs of Solomon". It is known now as simply "Proverbs". Most of the sayings are attributed to Solomon himself, most likely before his decline into idolatry. As can be noted in I Kings 4:32, Solomon was an avid writer, and shared his wisdom through 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. Obviously we do not have all of his sayings available to us, but what we do have gives us great insight into how we can live in wisdom before God.

B. The Proverbs can be broken down into a loose outline, as seen below in the Brief Outline section. There is enough evidence to suggest that the book is similar to the Psalms in that it would appear that Solomon wrote chapters 1-9, and then added on more proverbs as he went along. There are also two additional writers mentioned, Agur the son of Jakeh (chapter 30) and King Lemuel (chapter 31). We know absolutely nothing concerning these two men. There have been efforts by scholars to suggest these two names are simply pseudonyms for Solomon, however, there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case. It is far easier to simply accept that two godly men added their own wisdom to Solomon's book, either by Solomon's invitation to do so, or by their own initiative. Since God deemed it important to retain these two chapters in His Word, we accept them as divinely inspired wisdom.

C. The Book of Proverbs offers us a unique insight into the wisdom of Solomon, paying particular attention to how we should live and walk with wisdom in our lives. It is noteworthy that Solomon did allow his heart to be taken into idolatry by his foreign wives. There are several applications to draw from this, as noted in the Lessons to be Learned section.

II. Proverbs in the rest of the Bible – note that, by far, Peter quotes the most from Proverbs

- A. Romans 12: 20 – Paul quotes from Proverbs 25:21-22
- B. Hebrews 12:5-6 – The Hebrew writer quotes from Proverbs 3:11-12
- C. James 4:6 & I Peter 5:5 – James and Peter quote from Proverbs 3:34
- D. I Peter 4:8 – Peter quotes from Proverbs 10:12
- E. I Peter 4:18 – Peter quotes from Proverbs 11:31
- F. II Peter 2:22 – Peter quotes from Proverbs 26:11
- G. Possible reference by Jesus in Luke 14:10 – Jesus teaches a parable that is nearly identical in language and substance to Proverbs 25:6-7

III. The Purpose of the book

A. To teach wisdom. There is some wisdom that can only be learned by experience. However, the wisest of us take note of those who make mistakes or endure hardships and utilize those lessons without having to personally go through those situations. Proverbs is meant by Solomon to be a book that can help prevent mistakes and help people to understand the wisdom we should have in our life.

IV. Some lessons to be learned:

A. **Just because someone is wise does not mean they are perfect** – As human beings, we often admire those who are wise and experienced...we must be careful to not lose sight of what is right, as those who are wise do not always do that which is right, as in Solomon's case.

B. **Possessing great wisdom can cause people to not be as circumspect (aware) as they should be regarding their own heart, as in the case of Solomon** – Solomon allowed his heart to be taken away into idolatry, yet he was the wisest man to ever live...obviously Solomon did not pay as close attention to himself as he should have. Whether he was puffed up by his own wisdom, or was paying too much attention to others than himself, the lesson remains to be aware of ourselves and what we are doing.

C. **Just because someone has great wisdom that applies to different areas of life, does not mean that person is spiritually wise** – While all wisdom is either born from experience or from teaching, not all wisdom carries over to the spirit. Wisdom can be very specialized. Wisdom formed from business experience and learning, for

instance, will not necessarily carry over to spiritual wisdom. This is a lesson that many Christians fail to take into account.

D. **Wisdom is a necessary and valuable tool for the Christian...as long as it is coupled with action** – Much of the wisdom from Solomon details the reasoning behind an action or inaction and the consequences associated with both. We can be as wise as Solomon, but if we don't put that wisdom to good use to be better servants and help those around us, it profits us nothing.

V. Brief Outline of Proverbs

- A. **Solomon's instructions to his "son" (chs. 1-9)**
 - 1. Valuable life lessons, chapters 1-7
 - 2. The value of wisdom, chapters 8-9
- B. **Proverbs of Solomon (10-24)**
 - 1. Proverbial sayings of Solomon (10-22:16)
 - 2. Thirty sayings of "the wise" (22:17-24:22)
 - 3. More sayings of "the wise" (24:23-34)
- C. **Sayings of Solomon copied by Hezekiah's men (25-29)**
- D. **Sayings of Agur son of Jakeh (30)**
- E. **Sayings of King Lemuel (31)**
 - 1. Duties of a king, 31:1-9
 - 2. The virtuous woman, 31:10-31