



## Summary of Proverbs

### Introduction

The Book of Proverbs is one of the Wisdom Books of Hebrew Scripture, along with Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs or Song of Solomon. The Greek Septuagint also includes the Books of Wisdom and Sirach. The primary purpose of the book is to teach wisdom, not only to the young and inexperienced but also to the learned. Proverbs personifies wisdom as an idealistic woman.

The Book of Proverbs provides profound insights and exceptional wisdom on how to live a happy and peaceful life, by honouring and respecting God as all-good and all-powerful. The guiding principles of the Book are to: <<*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight*>> (Proverbs 3:5), and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10).

The Book of Proverbs was mainly written during the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, prior to the Babylonian exile. The account of his legendary wisdom was noted in I Kings 4:29-34. Solomon's name is mentioned three times in Proverbs, at the beginning of the Book, and at the beginning of two collections expressly attributed to Solomon, i.e. Proverbs 10:1 and 25:1. It is noted at the beginning of the second collection that his sayings were collected by the men of King Hezekiah, who reigned from 715 to 687 BC. Other collections are the Sayings of the Wise beginning at Proverbs 22:17, the Words of Agur (Proverbs 30:1), and Lemuel (Proverbs 31:1). The entire Book of Proverbs is a composite work collected over time.

The Book offers excellent advice, such as to avoid <<*the loose woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the partner of her youth and forgets her sacred covenant*>> (Proverbs 2:16-17); how to conduct one's life, such as: <<*Fools show their anger at once, but the prudent ignore an*

*insult*>> (Proverbs 12:16); and observations, such as: <<*Just as water reflects the face, so one human heart reflects another*>> (Proverbs 27:19).

Christ and the Apostles directly quoted the Proverbs in John 7:38, Romans 12:20, and James 4:6, or they repeated its teaching.

### Chapter One

After the title the writer defines the design and nature of the instructions of the book. He paternally invites attention to those instructions and warns his readers against the enticements of the wicked. In a beautiful personification, wisdom is then introduced in a most solemn and impressive manner, publicly inviting men to receive its teachings, warning those who reject, and encouraging those who accept, the proffered instructions.

### Chapter Two

Men are invited to seek wisdom because it teaches those principles by which they may obtain God's guidance and avoid the society and influence of the wicked, whose pernicious courses are described.

### Chapter Three

The study of truth is commended. God must be feared, honoured, and trusted, and filial submission, under chastisement, exhibited. The excellence of wisdom is urged and illustrated by its place in the divine counsels. Piety is enforced by a contrast of the destiny of the righteous and the wicked.

### Chapter Four

To an earnest call for attention to his teachings, the writer adds a commendation of wisdom, preceded and enforced by the counsels of his father and teacher. To this he adds a caution against the devices of the wicked, and a series of exhortations to docility, integrity, and uprightness.

### Chapter Five

This chapter provides a warning against the seductive arts of wicked women, enforced by considering the advantages of chastity, and the miserable end of the wicked.

### Chapter Six

After admonitions against suretyship and sloth, the character and fate of the wicked generally are set forth, and the writer resumes the warnings against incontinence, pointing out its certain and terrible results. This train of thought seems to intimate the kindred of these vices.

## Chapter Seven

The subject from Chapter Six is continued, by a delineation of the arts of strange women, as a caution to the unwary. Wisdom will keep a man from the adulteress. The seduced young man followed her like an ox going to the slaughter.

## Chapter Eight

Contrasted with sensual allurements are the advantages of divine wisdom, which publicly invites men, offers the best principles of life, and the most valuable benefits resulting from receiving its counsel. Wisdom's relation to the divine plans and acts is introduced, as in Proverbs 3:19-20, although more fully, to commend its desirableness for men, and the whole is closed by an assurance that those finding it find God's favour, and those neglecting it ruin themselves.

Many regard the passage as a description of the Son of God by the title, 'The Gifts of Wisdom', which the older Jews used and by which Jesus is alluded to: <<*Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute"*>> (Luke 11:49), and John 1:1 describes him as 'the Word'. However, the passage may be taken as a personification of wisdom: for:

1. Although described as 'with God', wisdom is not asserted to be God.
2. The use of personal attributes is equally consistent with a personification, as with the description of a real person.
3. The personal pronouns used accord with the gender (feminine) of wisdom constantly, and are never changed to that of the person meant, as sometimes occurs in a corresponding use of spirit, which is neuter in Greek, but to which masculine pronouns are often applied: <<*He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you*>> (John 16:14), when the acts of the Holy Spirit are described.
4. Such a personification is agreeable to the style of this book, whereas no prophetic or other allusions to the Saviour or the new dispensation are found among the quotations of this book in the NT.
5. Nothing is lost as to the importance of this passage, which still remains a most ornate and also solemn and impressive teaching of inspiration on the value of wisdom.

## Chapter Nine

The commendation of wisdom is continued, under the figure of a liberal host, and its provisions under that of a festival; compare it to Luke 14:16-24. The character of those who are invited is followed by a contrasted description of

the rejecters of good counsel; and with the invitations of wisdom are contrasted the allurements of the wicked woman.

### Chapter Ten

Here begins the second major section of the book, Proverbs 10:1-22:16, which, along with Proverbs 22:16-25:28, contains series of proverbs whose sense is complete in one or two verses, and which, having no logical connection, make full analysis difficult. The parallelisms of Proverbs 10:1-15:33 are mostly antithetic; and those of Proverbs 16:1-22:16, synthetic. The evidence of art in the structure is very clear and indicates, probably, a purpose of facilitating the labour of memorising.

### Chapter Eleven

The Lord hates dishonest scales and the wicked earn false wages. Whoever gives water will get water; whoever trusts in riches will fall.

### Chapter Twelve

No one finds security through wickedness. Those who work the land have food. Rash words pierce like a sword. Righteousness leads to life.

### Chapter Thirteen

The righteous hate lies. Hope deferred makes the heart sick. Whoever heeds reproof is honoured. Whoever spares the rod hates his son.

### Chapter Fourteen

The talk of fools is a rod for their backs. Even in laughter the heart may ache. Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker.

### Chapter Fifteen

A gentle answer turns away wrath. The eyes of the Lord are everywhere. Plans fail for lack of counsel. The Lord hears the righteous.

### Chapter Sixteen

A man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Kings detest evil. Pride goes before destruction. Wisdom is a fountain of life.

### Chapter Seventeen

A wise servant will rule over a shameful son. Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam. Even a fool seems wise if he keeps silent.

### Chapter Eighteen

A fool delights in his own opinions. The name of Lord is a strong tower. A gift opens the way. The tongue can bring life or death.

### Chapter Nineteen

Wealth makes friends. A false witness will not go unpunished. A good wife is from the Lord. Whoever helps the poor lends to the Lord.

### Chapter Twenty

Wine is a mocker, beer a brawler. Even a child is known by his deeds. The Lord hates false weights. It is a snare to make rash vows.

### Chapter Twenty One

To do justice is better than sacrifice. Better to live on the roof than with a quarrelsome wife. No plans can avail against the Lord.

### Chapter Twenty Two

A good name is better than riches. Train a child and he will not go astray. Incline your ear and apply your heart to my teaching.

### Chapter Twenty Three

Do not gorge on choice foods or wear yourself out to get rich. Do not move a boundary marker. Buy the truth, and do not sell it. Do not linger long over wine.

### Chapter Twenty Four

Do not envy the wicked. Wisdom is sweet to the soul. Fear the Lord and the king. There are thorns in the field of the sluggard.

### Chapter Twenty Five

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence. If an enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. To seek one's own glory is not glory.

### Chapter Twenty Six

As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. Without gossip a quarrel dies down. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it.

### Chapter Twenty Seven

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. A loud blessing in the morning will be taken as a curse. A person is tested by being praised.

### Chapter Twenty Eight

Better to be poor and honest than crooked and rich. Whoever confesses sins will find mercy. Whoever trusts in the Lord will prosper.

### Chapter Twenty Nine

By justice a king builds up the land. Whether a fool rages or laughs, there is no peace. Correct your son and he will give you rest.

### Chapter Thirty

Every word of God is pure. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Four things are never satisfied: Sheol, a barren womb, earth and fire.

### Chapter Thirty One

Speak up for the speechless. Who can find an excellent wife? She buys a field, she makes garments, she watches over her household.