

## PROVERBS

### INTRODUCTION

*Author.* Although the opening title ascribes the proverbs to Solomon it is clear from other passages (22:17, referring to sayings of the wise; 30:1-33, attributed to King Agur; and 31:1-9 attributed to King Lemuel) that he was not the sole author. The headings of 10:1 and 25:1 include Solomon's name stating that they were compiled by Hezekiah's men. Because of Solomon's ability to produce proverbs (1 Kings 4:32 attributes 3,000 to him) it is not unlikely that he was the source of most of the proverbs.

*Date.* If Solomonic authorship is correct then the majority of the proverbs were written in the 10th century B.C. The role of Hezekiah's men in collecting many of Solomon's words must have taken place from between 715 to 686 B.C.

*Wisdom Literature.* “Wise men” or “sages” were an important class in Israelite society. Their function was to give advice to kings and instruct the young. Whereas priests and prophets dealt with religious life, wise men were concerned with the philosophical and practical aspects of every day life. The way of wisdom is a description of the way the world runs under the sovereign hand of God. Wisdom is based on the fear of the Lord. Although due to the unforeseen circumstances of life nothing is certain the teachings of proverbs is a valid collection of general principles of the way the world works. The proverbs must not be interpreted as prophecy or statements about certain effects and results as absolute promises. While it is generally true that “the years of the wicked are cut short” and “the righteous live long and prosperous lives” (10:27) it is not always so. While the wicked and righteous usually “receive their due on earth” (11:3), their rewards and punishment often lie after the grave.

*Structure.* The book opens with a statement of purpose and theme (1:1-7). This is followed by a well balanced discourse on the way of wisdom (chapters 1-9) in which wisdom is commended (2-4) and folly is condemned (5-7). These sections are balanced by appeals to youth in chapters 1 and 8-9. They may be outlined in the following way:

A	<i>Two Appeals To Youth</i>	1:8-33
B	<i>Commendation Of Wisdom</i>	2:1--4:27
B <sub>1</sub>	<i>Warnings Against Folly</i>	5:1--8:36
A <sub>1</sub>	<i>Two Appeals To Youth</i>	9:1-18

The next major section is an anthology of Solomon's proverbs (10-22) followed by various collections of wise men (cf. outline, 22-31). The book closes (31) with an acrostic account of the wise woman which corresponds to the opening discourses concerning lady wisdom and lady folly.

*Occasion/Purpose.* As is the case with all wisdom literature, the application to the audience reaches across nearly all time periods and cultures. The only identifiable audiences stated in the text are the young and the wise. The goal of the work is to teach young people wisdom and to make the wise even wiser (1:4-5). The frequent references to “my son” (1:8, 10; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1) emphasize the intention to instruct the young in wise living.

*Message Statement. The path to a wise, abundant life is found in fearing and knowing God.*

## SURVEY

### 1A PROLOGUE: PURPOSE AND MOTTO

1:1-7

### 1B *Two Appeals To Youth* 1:8-33

Notice the contrasts and counterfeits . . .

#### On “work” in the future

“We should not think of ourselves as destined to be celestial bureaucrats, involved eternally in celestial “administrivia.”

That would be slightly better than being caught in an everlasting church service.

No, we should think of our destiny as being absorbed in a tremendously creative team effort, with unimaginably splendid leadership, on an inconceivably vast plane of activity, with ever more comprehensive cycles of productivity and enjoyment.

THIS is the “eye hath not seen, neither ear heard” that lies before us in the prophetic vision (Isa 64:4).

—Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 399.

### 2B *Commendation Of Wisdom*

2:1--4:27

### 3B *Warnings Against Folly*

5:1--8:36

#### 1C Warning against adultery

5:1-23

#### 2C Warnings against perverse ways

6:1-19

#### 3C The cost of adultery

6:20-35

#### 4C The description of two women--the harlot and wisdom

7:1--8:36

### 4B *Two Appeals To Youth*

9:1-18

Proverbs 9:1-9

1 Wisdom has built her house;  
she has hewn out its seven pillars.  
2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine;  
she has also set her table.  
3 She has sent out her maids, and she calls  
from the highest point of the city.  
4 Let all who are simple come in here!  
she says to those who lack judgment.  
5 Come, eat my food  
and drink the wine I have mixed.  
6 Leave your simple ways and you will live;  
walk in the way of understanding.

Proverbs 9:13-18

13 The woman Folly is loud;  
she is undisciplined and without knowledge.  
14 She sits at the door of her house,  
on a seat at the highest point of the city,  
15 calling out to those who pass by,  
who go straight on their way.  
16 Let all who are simple come in here!  
she says to those who lack judgment.  
17 Stolen water is sweet;  
food eaten in secret is delicious!  
18 But little do they know that the dead are there,  
that her guests are in the depths of the grave.

2A	THE MAIN COLLECTION OF SOLOMON'S PROVERBS	10:1--22:16
3A	THE SAYINGS OF THE WISE	22:17--24:34
4A	PROVERBS OF SOLOMON COLLECTED BY HEZEKIAH'S MEN	25:1--29:27
5A	THE SAYINGS OF AGUR	30:1-33
6A	THE SAYINGS OF KING LEMUEL	31:1-9
7A	EPILOGUE: THE IDEAL WIFE	30:10-22

Proverbs 3:15 She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her 8:11 For wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her	Proverbs 31:10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies
Proverbs 8:35 For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD	Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD
Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.	Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised