

# Intro to PROVERBS

**Author:** King Solomon is the principal writer of Proverbs. Solomon's name appears in 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1. The Hebrew title of the book is "Mishle Shelomoh," which is translated "Proverbs of Solomon." He is the primary writer, however, it seems to also hold proverbs that were written by others, namely Agur and King Lemuel. Most scholars hold to the belief that Agur and Lemuel are not actual people, but rather, alternate and symbolic names that refer to Solomon, himself.

**Definition of a Proverb:** One definition of a proverb is that it is a condensed, but memorable saying which embodies some important fact of experience that is regarded to be true by many people. The actual word is derived from a Hebrew word that means, "comparison," and it was a saying taken from everyday life intended to serve as practical guideline for successful living. They are similar to parables, however, the proverb is a short saying and is easily remembered.

**Purpose of the Proverbs:** The theme of the book is wisdom and the ultimate purpose of the book of Proverbs is to impart wisdom. This purpose is expounded in the first chapter of the book.

## **I. To know wisdom and instruction (1:2)**

To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding. The NIV says "for attaining wisdom and understanding words of insight. "Wisdom" is having or being able to show good judgment in dealing with people or situations. In other words, the use of knowledge in a practical and successful way. The word "instruction" means training or discipline. The first purpose of the proverb is to know wisdom and instruction, or discipline, and to know and understand words of insight.

## **II. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity. (1:3)**

"Instruction of wisdom" = training in wise dealings and acquiring a disciplined life, so that we will know what is right and just and fair. The second purpose of the proverb according to Proverbs 1:3 is to receive the training that will help us discipline our lives so that we will know what is right, what is just, and what is fair in our imperfect world.

## **III. To give subtlety to the simple, and knowledge and discretion to the young man or woman. (1:4)**

"subtlety" = prudence, mental keenness, delicately skillful and clever, cautious and discreet, a safeguard against being misled.

"simple" = persons undecided in their views and easily influenced in their decisions.

The third purpose of the proverb is to safeguard those who are easily influenced from being misled, and to give knowledge and discretion to the young and impressionable.

## **IV. To understand a proverb and its interpretation, the words of the wise and their dark sayings. (1:5,6)**

The fourth purpose of the proverb is to help understand other proverbs, figurative sayings, dark sayings, which are riddles.

**The Key to obtaining wisdom through the proverbs (1:7):** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. "fear of the Lord" - a reverence for God expressed in full submission to His will. Wisdom is not acquired by a mechanical formula or a study course, but through a right relationship with God. What constitutes a "right" relationship with God is to believe in Him and to love Him with all of our hearts, mind, souls, and strength.

## **Division of the Book of Proverbs**

The 31 chapters of Proverbs can be logically divided into these main sections:

### **I. The Proverbs of Solomon (Chs. 1-24)**

- Title and prologue ( 1:1-7)
- Assorted discourses (1:8-9:18)
- Proverbial sayings (10:1-22:16)
- 30 sayings of the wise (22:27-24:22)
- Additional sayings of the wise (24:23-34)

### **II. The Proverbs of Solomon copied by the men of Hezekiah (Chs. 24-29)**

### **III. Sayings of Agur (30)**

### **IV. Sayings of King Lemuel (31)**

- Duties of a King (31:1-9)
- Praise of the Virtuous Woman (31:10-31)

## **Examples of Practical Teaching in the Proverbs**

### **- Friendship**

- is unconditional..."A friend loveth at all times" - Proverbs 17:17
- is there when needed..."Faithful are the wounds of a friend" - Proverbs 27:6
- is honest..."As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" - (27:17)
- is giving..."A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" - (18:24)
- is strong..."and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" - (18:24)

### **- Riches and Honesty**

- "wealth by vanity shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by labor shall be increased" - (13:11)
- "a false balance is abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight" - (11:1)
- "Divers weights and divers measures both of them are abomination to the Lord" - (20:10)
- "By humility and fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life" - (22:4)

### **- Laziness**

- "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" - (13:4)
- "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold, therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." - (20:4)
- "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." (13:4)

## **The Practical Key in Understanding the Wisdom of the Proverbs (2:1-12)**

- if you accept its words
  - turn your ear to wisdom
  - call out for insight
  - look for it as treasure

**...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God**