

INTRODUCTION

The Wisdom that Comes from God

What are proverbs?

*Instruction given in proverbial form is one of the most ancient forms of teaching. Simply stated, proverbs are sayings or sentences of ethical wisdom. The most appropriate definition is expressed in the following: **"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a picture of silver"** (Proverbs 25:11). View the book of Proverbs as a map that foretells your journey through life. Clearly marked are the reflective signs of danger. Examine them, memorize their size, shape, and the meaning of each marking. Some reflect the obstacles that you must overcome, while others point to pitfalls and chasms that must be avoided at all costs, for they will swallow your soul. Others offer gracious instructions that fill the heart with confidence, courage, and vision.*

Our life experiences from youth to adulthood expose us to many forms of deception. The first time we experience betrayal by a friend or are taken advantage of, we experience a pain and emotion that can alter our outlook and enjoyment of life. We become confused by activity that our peers present as fun, only to discover that, after being lured into that activity, it brings embarrassment and regret. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be aware of those painful pitfalls in advance so we could avoid them? God has provided the knowledge that informs us of those perils in life. Accompanying these instructions are sayings that, if assimilated into our hearts, will bring joy, enthusiasm, and a love for life that others may only dream about. God guides us in every endeavor we pursue in this life with dignity, honor, moral character, and guiltless innocence.

A powerful weapon Satan uses against us as we grow in Christ is the accusation that being a Christian makes us naive. He wants nothing more than to lower our self-image to that of a gullible wimp. We can be tricked into thinking a Christ-centered life will cause us to miss out on all this life has to offer. This perception is based upon a worldly view that one must experience something in order to comprehend it. We have heard people talk of some immoral or illegal act with arrogance and pride. Their boldness may have impressed you and caused you to wonder what it would be like to do such a thing. It may be, because of this kind of thinking, you have engaged in some immoral activity, only to suffer the pain of regret and the embarrassment that accompanies foolish behavior. Prisons, homes for unwed mothers, and cemeteries are full of individuals who have wished they had known what the result of their actions would be before they did them. Peer pressure and an obscured view of worldly activity will lead us to dishonor our lives and destroy our plans for the future.

The fact we are tempted to do wrong should be of no surprise. *All that is in the world* are the things that tempt us (1 John 2:16). Being tempted is not sinful. We sin when we make uninformed or foolish decisions to do the wrong thing. (James 1:14-16). Appropriate decisions are based upon knowledge of righteousness and a willingness to make proper application of that knowledge. It is the proper application of knowledge that gives birth to **wisdom**. It is in our search for this wisdom that we embark upon this study of the book of Proverbs. Because pain and sorrow accompany wrong decisions, our approach toward this study has a real purpose. God, through these inspired writings, will define wisdom and provide insight into how we are to apply it in our lives. The result of this study is to enable us to avoid those foolish things that bring pain to ourselves, embarrassment to our families, and most importantly, separation from our Lord.

God chose the medium of the Scriptures to communicate to us. Realizing God is our Creator, He alone knows what is best for us. Let us accept His word as truth, receive His word with gladness, and allow it to affect our lives in such a way that we might enjoy the abundant life promised us in Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 2:13; John 10:10). While we may readily accept the abundant life in Christ as a concept, when exposed to the influence of the world, we can lose sight of what God's "perfect plan" is for our life. May we ever hold God's eternal light before us. Let us learn from God today those precepts and principles that will prepare us for tomorrow. We must refuse to allow Satan to rob us of the life that now is, and the one that is to come.

To properly prepare our minds for this study, meditate on these words of Solomon from the book of Ecclesiastes, "Remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from your eyes...remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Ecclesiastes 11:10-12:1). The instructions are to enjoy living and realize we are not to go forward without restraint or instruction. How does remembering God relate to enjoying life? Does this only mean that we have some mental image of His existence? No! It is to acknowledge Him as the One who has given us not only our physical existence but a spirit that is in need of His guidance and direction. It is to accept His word as the source of all truth. While some view the Bible as a book of obscure religious doctrine that has little relevance to their lives, the Scriptures provide everything man needs to know about life and abundant living. (2 Peter 1:3). In our study of Proverbs, **God will communicate what He wants every person to know today—about tomorrow.**

Our relationship with God is founded upon our knowledge of Him. As we receive His instruction in wisdom He will in turn bless us, and we will express to God our recognition of His majesty and our gratitude to Him for the direction He has given to our lives. May our hearts be filled with thanksgiving for the gift of life. May we develop a desire to honor and obey Him in all things, a regret for past indiscretions, and a sincere willingness **to perceive the words of understanding and to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity.**

Foundational principle:

A wise man does not think he knows everything! (Proverbs 1:2-6)