

THE PROVERBS

PEARLS OF SUCCINCT TRUTH FOR DAILY LIVING STRUNG TOGETHER WITH THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF DIVINE WISDOM

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding" (Prov. 1:1-2).

BOOK ONE: "The proverbs of Solomon" (1:1)

Introduction: 10 Key Words (1:1-6)

1. *Wisdom* (v. 2): skillfulness, from word for "practiced," the ability to use knowledge aright. Used 37 times in the book of Proverbs.
2. *Instruction* (v. 2): to teach by discipline; used 26 times in Proverbs; sometimes rendered "chastening" (3:11) or "chasteneth" (13:24).
3. *Understanding* (v. 2): or "intelligence" as in the *AV*. Discernment; consideration to understand the things that differ.
4. *Apprehension* (v. 3): "wisdom" in *AV*. Has the force of "bereave." Learning through unhappy experiences, either of myself or of others.
5. *Righteousness* (v. 3): or "justice" as in *AV*. Refers to our conduct; might well be rendered "right behavior."
6. *Judgment* (v. 3): equivalent to "decisions." Learning to act with propriety because of the ability to draw a sound conclusion.
7. *Equity* (v. 3): refers to principles rather than conduct; uprightness, moral integrity.
8. *Prudence* (v. 4): "subtlety" in the *AV*. Craftiness, but here it conveys the ability to detect it in others.
9. *Knowledge* (v. 4): information that is sound and sensible. The true way to view a thing, as God does.
10. *Discretion* (v. 4): thoughtfulness through reflection on a matter.

—with help from H. A. Ironside

"The Words of the Wise" (1:6) (1:7-9:18)

Fifteen poetic clusters & two monologues:

1. *Cluster 1* (1:7-19): The danger of enticement to evil on every hand. *MONOLOGUE 1* (1:20-33): Wisdom shouts her warnings in the city.
2. *Cluster 2* (2:1-22): Wisdom is the deliverer from these temptations.
3. *Cluster 3* (3:1-10): Wise and careful living brings its own rewards.
4. *Cluster 4* (3:11-20): Through chastening gain wisdom, the true wealth.
5. *Cluster 5* (3:21-26): The relationship between wisdom and security.
6. *Cluster 6* (3:27-35): How wisdom deals with the perversity of sinners.
7. *Cluster 7* (4:1-9): Wisdom, the principal thing, should be taught at home.
8. *Cluster 8* (4:10-19): Two paths diverge; take the right path of the just.
9. *Cluster 9* (4:20-27): The wise life tends to health in body and soul.
10. *Cluster 10* (5:1-23): The danger of entrapment by the alluring ones.
11. *Cluster 11* (6:1-5): The high cost of being surety for a friend.
12. *Cluster 12* (6:6-11): The danger of laziness and an example of industry.
13. *Cluster 13* (6:12-19): Seven things that God hates; esp. discord sowers.
14. *Cluster 14* (6:20-35): The command of God the antidote to adultery.
15. *A Cluster Quartet* (7:1-27): The houses of wisdom and of folly.

MONOLOGUE 2 (8:1-36): Wisdom cries again to warn the city of dangers.

—with help from J. Sidlow Baxter

BOOK TWO: "The proverbs of Solomon" (10:1)

More "Words of the Wise" (22:17) (10:1-24:34)

PART ONE: 375 proverbs in the form of couplets of which there are three basic kinds (10:1-22:16):

- **CONTRASTIVE**, in which the second line gives an opposing view to the first line—for example:
*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine;
But a broken spirit drieth the bones.*
- **COMPLETIVE**, in which the second line adds a concluding thought to the first line—for example:
*Commit thy works unto the Lord;
And thy thoughts shall be established.*
- **COMPARATIVE**, in which the second line places something to be evaluated beside something else. It is often marked out by the second line beginning with "than"—for example:
*Better is little with righteousness,
Than great revenues without right* (15:16).

PART TWO: 15 epigrams—a concise poem, pointed and often satirical; perhaps paradoxical or ending with an ingenious turn of thought (22:17-24:34). Often divided from what went before by a "hear" or a "my son" statement:

1. *INTRODUCTION* (22:17-21): "excellent things" (v. 20).
2. Various subjects (22:22-29): an epigram sampling.
3. Control of our appetites (23:1-8): food and riches.
4. Various subjects (23:9-18): "speak not..."; "remove not..."; "withhold not..."; "let not..."
5. Control of our appetites (23:19-21): gluttony.
6. Parents of wise children rejoice (23:22-25).
7. The griefs of whoredom, wine, woe (23:26-35).
8. Various subjects (24:1-9): good & evil; wise & fools.
9. Three "if thou" statements (24:10-12).
10. The sweet reward of finding wisdom (24:13-14).
11. Just men and the ruin of evil men (24:15-20).
12. The son warned of unstable souls (24:21-22).
13. Do all things without partiality (24:23-25).
14. True neighborliness (24:26-29).
15. The field of the slothful man (24:30-34).

BOOK THREE: "These are also proverbs of Solomon" (25:1)

Compiled by "the men of Hezekiah" (25:1-29:27)

1. An epigram for the king (25:2-7).
2. Various proverbs, many to do with neighborly relations (25:8-26:2).
3. Portrait: a fool (26:3-12).
4. Portrait: a sluggard (26:13-16).
5. Social pests (26:17-26).
6. Various proverbs, many re. the use of the tongue (26:27-27:4).
7. Some secrets of a healthy friendship (27:5-10).
8. Various proverbs, many re. interpersonal relations (27:11-22).
9. Portrait: a good farmer (27:23-27).
10. 55 proverbs (or aphorisms) in the form of contrastive, completive or comparative couplets (chs. 28-29).

Some Figures of Speech:

1. **ELLIPSIS**: Leaving something out that can be, and should be, inferred:
*"It is as sport to a fool to do mischief;
but [to exercise] wisdom [is as sport]
to a man of understanding"* (Prov. 10:23). It is second nature; they naturally respond that way.
2. **ACROSTIC**, one of 13 in the Bible (called *Abecedarian* when following the alphabet): Prov. 31:10-31 with 22 verses of two lines each begins with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
3. **METONYMY**: where one noun is used in the place of another: e.g.:
*"A soft tongue [gentle speech]
breaketh the bone [overcomes obstinacy]"* (Prov. 25:15). Often used in Proverbs (see 5:10; 8:24; 18:8; 27:7).

The Words of Agur & Lemuel (30:1-31:31)

- A. **AGUR'S CONFESSION** (30:1-3).
- B. **AGUR'S SETS OF NUMBERS**:
 1. Six questions about God (v. 4) and #6 the most startling of all.
 2. Two facts concerning God's Word (vv. 5-6) and the right response.
 3. Two things Agur asked of God (vv. 7-9) and the reasons for them.
 4. A lone proverb that anticipates Paul's words in Rom. 14:4 (v. 10).
 5. Four characteristics of a godless generation (vv. 11-14).
 6. Four things like a horseleach that are never satisfied (vv. 15-16).
 7. A lone proverb (v. 17) warning youth to honor parents (Eph. 6:1).
 8. Four things too wonderful for Agur (vv. 18-19).
 9. A lone proverb (v. 20) warning about the ruthlessness of sin.
 10. Four things the earth cannot bear (vv. 21-23).
 11. Four little but wise creatures on the earth (vv. 24-28).
 12. Four things that are beautiful to watch in action (vv. 29-31).
 13. Two final proverbs (vv. 32-33).

- A. **LESSONS FOR LEMUEL** (31:1-9)
- B. **LEMUEL'S PORTRAIT OF A VIRTUOUS WOMAN** (vv. 10-31) in acrostic form:
 1. Note what she does (vv. 12-22, 24-27, 29).
 2. Note what her husband and children do (vv. 11, 23, 28).
 3. Obvious conclusions (vv. 30-31).

The reason for the Proverbs: "God would save all who heed what is there recorded from the heart-breaking experiences...of the man who was chosen to write them" (H. A. IRONSIDE).