

WISDOM: THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

A Foundational Study Through: **The Book of Proverbs**

Fall 2020 Sunday School at Fellowship Church
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Introduction:

Establishing Our Course of Study

As we begin our study, we must identify essential elements that I believe govern the study of Proverbs. The hope is that any lack of understanding of this vital book due to unfamiliarity and intimidation will be remedied. The result is help and healing for life lived on planet earth, and this translates to great anticipation as we await entrance into that “perfect day”!

Here are the essential elements this introduction will identify:

- 1) Defining a Proverb
- 2) Five Major Building Blocks
- 3) Sound Doctrine is Sound Living
- 4) The New Testament Links
- 5) Explaining “The Thread” of each Chapter
- 6) Repetition in Proverbs
- 7) Outline of the Book itself

Defining a Proverb

Our first step is to define what a Proverb actually *is*:

- ✓ **Generally** speaking, a proverb is a short, often repeated sentence that states a well-known truth or common fact ascertained by experience or observation. It is a “maxim” of wisdom. A maxim is an established principle or proposition generally admitted as true.
- ✓ **Scripturally** speaking, a proverb is a moral sentence or maxim that is a dark saying of the wise that requires interpretation.

These are not two separate definitions per say, but rather complimentary. We see a beautiful inter-working of the two in the book of Proverbs

~**Proverbs teaches by way of contrast and parallels.** Although the single sentence format is the *primary* way of such instruction, there are double sentences, paragraphs, and even “blocks” of instruction that serve the contrast and parallel function well. Below is a brief demonstration of the “one sentence” structure in these regards:

- ~ **Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things. (28:5)**
- ~ **The light of the eyes rejoices the heart: and a good report makes the bones fat. (15:30)**

*The first reference is a clear **contrast**: It is between *evil* men and *righteous* men. Although the phrase “righteous men” is not mentioned, it is *implied* by the phrase “they that seek the LORD”. We can see already how interpretation is given to a “dark saying of the wise”!

*The second reference is a clear **parallel**: A rejoicing heart and fat bones are the result of *good* things, i.e. “light” and a “good report”. Moreover, these two could certainly be thought of as one and the same. All such handling of verses will be developed and explored throughout this study, and we go to our next consideration...

Five Major Building Blocks

Our second step is to help identify the structure and presentation of Proverbs. I believe there are **five main areas** that will help us do this, and I have called these areas “building blocks” for the foundational purpose they serve. As each will be thoroughly developed in due course, a simple and brief introduction is given to each.

#1 The Author of Proverbs is King Solomon, son of David

While David is a most famous bedrock type of Christ in scripture, he was prevented from building the House of the Lord due to his wars. Solomon, his son (meaning “peaceable”) was the historical choice of God to both build His House and demonstrate how a King should rule in the righteousness wisdom provides, resulting in “rest on all sides” in his Kingdom. It is a marvelous foreshadowing of the coming Kingdom w/ Christ on the Throne.

All this being true, Solomon’s failure in the end is also well known; but this serves as a reminder that we are all at best fallible humans. However, the grace of God is completely evident in His usage of not only Solomon, but in us as well in spite of our weakness.

In understanding the great plan of God, and how the scriptures are put together, knowing that a Branch was to come, and that a child was to be born who would sit on the throne of David, when the ultimate King arrived He declared, **One greater than Solomon is here!** And we go to our second building block...

#2 Proverbs Is a Revelation of Jesus Christ

In modern theology, this is a much overlooked, and even *ignored*, scriptural key. It is only listed “second” here for continuities sake, and in no wise implies a “secondary” importance. One **must** understand that **all** scripture points to, and reveals the Lovely Lord Jesus: He is its grand subject. This is not “devotional” thinking at all, but is sound Bible understanding.

*Jesus is the **WORD** of God (John 1:1) who **became Flesh** (John 1:14).

*He came forth from the very heart of the Father (John 1:18)--and “out of the heart the mouth speaks”.

*He is everything God wanted to say to us concerning life and love, good and evil. We rightly say: **Jesus IS the Theology of God. Truth is a Person.**

If we miss Jesus Christ, we miss *everything*. We will see The Word who became Flesh revealed on every page of Proverbs, for all that could be said or revealed about wisdom He fulfills,

- ~ **But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom...**(1 Cor. 1:30);
- ~ **...and of Christ; in whom are hid ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge** (Col.2:2-3).

Concerning the fruit of His very own ministry Jesus said, **But Wisdom is justified of all her children.** (Lk. 7:35) Note that Jesus referred to wisdom as “her”. Jesus had a *faithful help meet*, and we move to our third building block...

#3 Proverbs presents to us Two Women

The Two Women are:

- ~ The **Virtuous Woman**, who is *wisdom*;
- ~ The **Strange Woman**, who is *folly*.

The **Virtuous Woman** is the main presentation between the two. When a certain quality or thing is given a human description, it is called a *personification*. It is profound that the teachings of virtue vs. folly come to us personified as two *women*; these two women are intricately connected with the presentations of *fidelity* vs. *adultery* especially in the spiritual sense.

Remember the Garden of Eden where woman was created to be a helper and co-regent with her husband: *We will see that lady wisdom is the faithful helpmeet of God, and desires to be the same unto us.* Harlot folly is the **strange woman** sent forth from Satan, and is the perverter of God’s ways, and the seducer of men.

It must be noted in this regard that the Virtuous Woman is far superior to the strange woman, and thoroughly slays her in the book: thus she is a woman of POWER. Indeed, this is the inherent meaning of the word Virtue, note well the definition:

Virtue- Strength, bravery, valor, power, excellence.

Lady Wisdom is a mighty warrior! She is a powerful *ally* to both God and man in the war against evil! Consider this in relation to the woman of God, and being a wife! Indeed, concerning the root of virtue being power, note Mark 5:30 concerning Christ,

And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

The Greek word underlying the word *virtue* is the word “dunamis”, from whence we get dynamite, or power. The Hebrew word “chayil” bears the same idea as valor, war, strength, power, etc. The Latin word “virtue” captured this entire meaning back in the day. Today, virtue primarily means “moral purity”; but how powerful to understand the entire meaning in these regards—there is **power** for victory inherent in purity!

Wisdom and folly represent two entirely different realms with their desire to “wed” themselves to man. The question becomes, “To whom are you wed?” This will determine what kind of “children” you will produce. Do you understand the spiritual application? Recall the words of Jesus again, **But Wisdom is justified of all her children**.

We will either pass on a legacy of godliness or foolishness depending on the kind of “fruit” that is eaten from our respective “tree”; therefore, our third block...

#4 Proverbs presents unto us Two Trees

They are:

- ~ The **Tree of Life**, which is *wisdom*.
- ~ The **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**, which is *folly*.

Again, we have in a flashback to the Garden of Eden, and as a question was just asked, “To whom are you wed?” it is now asked: “From which tree are you eating?” Proverbs presses us to realize the source of life and understanding lies *outside* of us. In having decided to be wise in our own eyes by eating from the “knowledge tree” in the beginning, we were severed from *true* spiritual understanding relating to good vs. evil.

Thus, true wisdom, which is only from God, must now be *learned* by us. **It is not naturally in us**. As we gain sound wisdom from eating the healing fruit from the Tree of Life we are equipped for life’s journey based on God’s wisdom...not ours. Therefore, our fourth block....

#5 Proverbs Primarily Contemplates the Preservation From Unnecessary Trouble Due To Foolish Choices in This Life.

The key word here is “unnecessary”. Troubles, sorrows and death come are to be expected as fallen descendants of Adam. However, Lady Wisdom wishes to impart God’s light so as to *avoid* foolish choices in order *avoid* unnecessary trouble. Thanks be to God!

*However, even with this being the case, let us be careful, for we should not become too harsh of judges toward others, for the enemy is very subtle, and we are *all* weak in our natural man; God alone knows the individual heart and is very aware of all these matters: Consider even the mercy and testimony of Proverbs itself in this regard,

...for a **just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.** (Prov.24:16a)

Amen. The number seven in scripture denotes perfection, completion, or fullness. Thus, our text is declaring that falling is a “given”— *even as children of God*, for we are all imperfect as long as we are in this flesh. But God is not thwarted by any of this!

God already knew what we were about when He saved us; and in His indescribable providence and grace He uses all the above for our greatest teaching! He is for us! *And so should our attitude be toward one another as God’s children!*

These issues of understanding the difference between good and evil, and making choices accordingly is called sound doctrine in the Bible, and to this we now go.

Sound Doctrine is Sound Living

In Proverbs, and in the Bible as a whole, what is referred to as **good doctrine** and **sound doctrine** is about the very life and character of God being expressed through those who have been made in His image. Thus, sound doctrine is about *the hatred, and subsequent rejecting of evil*, which is pride, arrogancy, the froward mouth, and the evil way (Prov.8:13). These things *destroy* life; they are not *sound*:

- ~ **For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law** (4:2)
- ~ **But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine** (Tit.2:1)

The instructions that follow the above scripture references are not discourses on “Dispensational Truth”; “Calvin’s institutes”, “History of the _____ Church”, or any so-called “systematic theology”, movement, cause, etc. It is sad that over time sound doctrine has been defined by, and/or reduced to such loyalties rather than by sound and godly living by the indwelling Spirit.

On the blessed contrary, the instructions after the verses listed above deal with God’s design for man and how he is to LIVE in relation in to both God and man. This living is to be rooted in love that promotes the sanctity of life.

This is what righteousness/goodness truly is, and can be understood as: **right heart motives that produce right action—and promote the sanctity of life, both in our own lives and in the lives of others!**

This is the heart of wisdom, which is the heart of the law as we will see here in Proverbs. It is also what the Life of Christ fulfilled in the Gospel! He is THE WORD! With this understanding we go to our next consideration...

Each Chapter has a “New Testament Link”

Seeing that Jesus is the grand fulfillment and embodiment of all righteousness, love and life, it is no surprise to find unity of thought in both Old and New Testaments on any given study; they are essentially ONE: the New is the *fulfillment* of the Old. Nothing has been “replaced”, it has been fulfilled

Therefore, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. (Matt. 13:52).

So, our New Testament link does just that--- it is the pulling out of treasures both old and new, keeping us “linked” so there is not an unnecessary disconnect in one’s mind concerning the scriptures. In other words, Proverbs is *relevant* to the believer in Christ: Christ dwells in us; He is wisdom; wisdom and truth do not change; He is more than willing to instruct us so that we can make good choices in this life, based on the sanctity of this life, and avoid unnecessary trouble.

Now, in having a “link”, there has to be a subject matter back of that; and a subject matter demands organized thought. Therefore we go to our next consideration...

Each Chapter has “A Thread”

Proverbs is not a selection of random thoughts and teachings concerning wisdom. Rather, I believe *a thread* and *a purpose* exists in each individual chapter. These build upon one another weaving a lovely garment of wisdom to be worn by the righteous.

Note that I did not say a “theme” exists in each chapter, for a theme would be dominant. I state that there is a “thread” if you will; a “thread”, (to me anyway) represents a gentle flow of thought that still gives liberty for rich and varied application within the chapter.

So, understand that these threads are “my take” on the chapters; the reader may see something else, and/or much more! However, I think you will both see, and enjoy, how the mentioned thread functions and comes to light throughout.

The Repetition in Proverbs

There is clearly a repetition of many topics in Proverbs, even a re-stating of verses almost verbatim from time to time. I believe this serves some vital purposes:

~Even though a principle is stated again at times, its setting is a little different from the others and they tend to build on each other. In the end, there is composite picture of the issue giving a well-rounded view of the subject matter at hand.

~With this, it is known that *repetition* is one of the keys to learning, and it demonstrates three vital things:

- ~ The importance of the topic,
- ~ The hardness of men’s hearts, hence, the repetition,
- ~ And, just as important, the *same issues* generally affect life all the time—they are just in *different* circumstances depending on the individual. Wisdom will guide you through any of them because truth does *not* change, but circumstances *do*; therefore “the remedy is the remedy” no matter what!

The Outline of the Book

Our last exercise is to give a general outline of Proverbs. The Book can be naturally divided into three sections:

- ~ **Chapters 1-9: Preparation and foundation.** In these chapters we are both introduced to and presented with all the book is about; i.e. the fear of God, wisdom, folly, righteousness, sin, the two trees, the two women, and how they “evangelize” mankind, etc. Having understood these, one is finally “prepared” to receive the actual presentation of a true one sentence Proverb format. This format does not officially begin until chapter 10.

- ~ Chapters 10-29: Can be understood as **“In the House of Lady Wisdom; Feasting at Her Table”**. The actual format of single sentence instruction begins in chapter 10. This takes us all the way to chapter 29 and assumes the grounding from chapters 1-9.

- ~ Chapters 30-31: These chapters are introduced as **“The Prophecies”**, and thus have a different layout than the previous chapters. They speak of God’s creation as a great teacher of wisdom; They tell and teach of what will happen concerning an individual life as well as a generation that would reject wisdom; all comes to the end with a mother’s final warning leading into the grand finale’ of the power, victory, and splendid qualities of the Virtuous Woman, who is WISDOM.

~Proverbs has 31 chapters, 915 verses, and 15,043 words~

May the good LORD GOD, through Jesus Christ, open our eyes through His precious Holy Spirit as we begin our study.