

# Proverbs

## Message

The Book of Proverbs purports to be a primer of wise saying designed to initiate the reader in the pursuit of wisdom and instruction (1:2-7), aimed at producing a life that conforms to the divine will.<sup>1</sup>



## Title

The Hebrew title of the book is “The Proverbs of Solomon, the Son of David, King in Israel” (לִּמְרוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה בֶּן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל) taken from the first verse of the book (1:1). The translators of the Greek Septuagint (LXX) titled the work simply ἑκκαθολογία (LXX) (“Proverbs of Solomon”). The Latin Vulgate likewise has simply “Liber Proverbiorum” (“The Book of Proverbs”). This title, if one includes the proper name, Solomon, refers to the major author of the book (see below—Author).

## Introductory Note on the Wisdom Books

Proverbs is the first of three Bible books purported to have been authored by King Solomon.<sup>2</sup> These three works, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, along with Job and Psalms, form part of the collection of five books known as the “Poetical Books.” The poetical books serve as a hinge by linking the past recorded in the historical books to the future recorded in the prophetic books.<sup>3</sup> *Proverbs is also one of three biblical writings known as “Wisdom Literature,” the other two being Job and Ecclesiastes.* This literature provides instructions for living a godly life while pondering the difficulties of life. Wilbur

<sup>1</sup>Message adapted from C. Hassell Bullock, “Proverbs,” in *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 160. This is the same theme found in Deuteronomy 28: Obedience to God will result in blessings (peace and prosperity) and disobedience will result in cursings (curses, calamity, and captivity). Ross proposes that “This book [Proverbs] is the most typical of the ‘wisdom literature’ of the Old Testament. It is a library of moral and spiritual instruction for the young and old alike to insure a Godly, happy life here and reward in the life to come” (Allen P. Ross, “Proverbs,” in *Psalms-Song of Songs*, vol. 5 of *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 886).

<sup>2</sup>The three books authored by Solomon are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Ancient Hebrew tradition suggested that the Song of Solomon (describing the delights derived from physical and emotional love in marriage) was composed during Solomon’s younger years, Proverbs (written to equip the reader with practical wisdom, discernment, discipline, and discretion for living a life pleasing to God) during his adult years, and Ecclesiastes (life lived apart from a recognition and acceptance of God is vanity—futile) in his old age.

<sup>3</sup>Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru The Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 139.

M. Smith identifies the theme of Proverbs as “wisdom” based upon the fear of God:

The Book of Proverbs contains the distilled essence of wisdom which is based upon a fear of God, setting forth in remarkable figures of speech, with innumerable contrast-ing clauses, what is right and what is wrong, in the sight of God, *pertaining to man’s conduct*. . . . The basic truth constantly affirmed in Proverbs is expressed in the famous statement, ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom’ (1:7; 15:33).<sup>4</sup>

### Wisdom in the Ancient World

While it is deemed beyond the scope of this present study, and will therefore not be considered, this field of study provides abundant extra-biblical evidence supporting the early existence of proverbial literature. This is important when discussing the authenticity of the Solomonic authorship of most of the Book of Proverbs. Especially in light of the fact that some of the proverbs appear to have been copied from, or at least influenced by, earlier Mesopotamian and Egyptian books of wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Walton points out several striking parallels between portions of the Egyptian wisdom literature, specifically, the “Teachings of Amenemope,” an Egyptian sage writing near 1200 B.C., which “exhibit remarkable similarities in language and theme with the ‘Sayings of the Wise’ in Proverbs (22:17–24:23).”<sup>6</sup>

### Proverb–Meaning

The Hebrew word translated “proverb” is *mashal*, which comes from a root meaning “to be like” or “to compare.” Although the Hebrew term *mashal* has a wide range of meanings, “In actual usage the noun can refer to the whole genre of wisdom literature, lengthy didactic wisdom discourses (as in Proverbs 1–9), slogans, reproaches and taunt songs, or an allegory. Most often, however, the word is used like the English ‘proverb’ to refer to a pithy saying expressing some moral idea or perception.”<sup>7</sup> By way of example, my mother used to always quote the following proverb to correct my wild musings: “a bird in the hand, is worth two in the bush.”

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<sup>4</sup>Wilbur M. Smith, *The Incomparable Book* (Minneapolis: Beacon, 1961), 36-37.

<sup>5</sup>Ross, “Proverbs,” 883–86.

<sup>6</sup>Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 251. For a detailed treatment of this subject see the following works: Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* 248–53; Derek Kidner, *Proverbs, An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1964), 16-20; For an extended treatment see the chapter “The Wisdom Movement and Its Literature by R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs—Ecclesiastes*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 18 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), XVI–LII. For an in depth treatment see the following two works: R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) and John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

<sup>7</sup>Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, etc al., vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 29.

In the oriental mind a proverb is a truth designed to govern life. Its short, pungent form makes it easy to remember. A proverb may be defined as “a precept or sententious saying regulating or governing conduct and life, often taking the form of a resemblance or parable. In fact, many proverbs are condensed parables.”<sup>8</sup> Duane Garrett defines the Old Testament proverb “as an ethical axiom,” that is, “a short, artistically constructed ethical observation or teaching.”<sup>9</sup> The famous Baptist preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, said that “A good proverb contains three elements: *shortness*, *sense*, and *salt* (tang/flavorful).”<sup>10</sup> Ross writes, “This book [Proverbs] is the most typical of the ‘wisdom literature’ of the Old Testament. It is a library of moral and spiritual instruction for the young and old alike to insure a Godly, happy life here and reward in the life to come.”<sup>11</sup>

### Authors

This is the first book to specifically name the author at the beginning. The opening ascription assigns these proverbs to “Solomon the son of David, king of Israel. In addition, Solomon’s name appears at the beginning of three sections of Proverbs (1:1; 10:1; 25:1), which serve as the opening verses of the three major sections of the book. According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon is said to have composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. It is estimated that about 800 of Solomon’s 3,000 proverbs are included in the three Solomonic collections recorded in the Book of Proverbs.

While Solomonic authorship of Proverbs is commonly attributed to Solomon’s prolific pen, the Book of Proverbs in its present form appears to be a compendium of the wise sayings of several different individuals ranging from the time of Solomon (971-931 B.C.) to at least as late as the time of King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.).<sup>12</sup> Solomon contributed the majority of the material contained in Proverbs 10:1–22:16; and 25–29. The heading in 25:1 affirms that Solomon was the author (or editor) of a larger collection from which the scribes of Hezekiah’s court excerpted the proverbs in chapters 25–29. Other authors include: the unnamed writer of chapters 1–9 (possibly Solomon), Agur, who composed chapter 30; King Lemuel, who wrote chapter 31:1-31, and various anonymous “wise men” (22:17–24:34). It may be that Solomon himself collected and assembled the writings of these other wise men who lived before his own time. Or it may be that Kidner is correct concerning the nature of the book’s final composition, as having been produced well after Solomon’s departure:

As to its *editing*, Proverbs gives us one statement (25:1), which shows that the book was still in the making at c. 700 B.C., about 250 years after Solomon. It is a fair assumption, but no more, that chapters 30–31 were added later as existing

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<sup>8</sup>Ross, “Proverbs,” 884.

<sup>9</sup>Garrett, *Proverbs*, 29.

<sup>10</sup>According to Scott, this saying originated with Archer Taylor, *The Proverb* (Cambridge: Publisher unknown but possibly Cambridge University Press, 1931), 7-8; 95 (Scott, *Proverbs—Ecclesiastes*, 3, 30).

<sup>11</sup>Ross, “Proverbs,” 886.

<sup>12</sup>Gene Merrill, “Proverbs,” in *Old Testament Explorer* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2001), 481. For a detailed account see Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, rev ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 173-75.

collections, and chapters 1–9 placed as the introduction to the whole by the final editor.<sup>13</sup>

### Date of Composition

As noted above, the vast majority of Proverbs were written by Solomon during his reign, 971-931 B.C. The collection and editing of Solomon’s proverbs (chaps. 25–29) by King Hezekiah’s men (25:1) occurred about 250 years later around 701 B.C. (Hezekiah reigned from 715-686 B.C.). The rest of the collection comprised of the “the words of the wise” (22:17–24:34; cf. 22:17 and 24:23), and writings of Agur (30) and Lemuel (31:1-9) may have also been written near the time of Solomon. Based on the evidence at hand it is reasonable to conclude that the book was completed not much later than 700 B.C.

### Literary Structure of Proverbs

#### **I. Literary Forms**

Proverbs uses various literary devices to present maxims that are striking and memorable. The basic poetic units employed are seen to be the following:

A. *Unit Proverbs*—this is presented in two basic forms:

1. A couplet in which the first line expresses a thought and the second line supplements it by expanding or interpreting it.

Example: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.  
*And he who wins souls is wise*” (11:30).

2. A couplet in which both lines are required to express the thought by the use of some form of parallelism.

Example: “Hatred stirs up strife,  
*But love covers all sins*” (10:12).

B. *Proverb Clusters*—groups of proverbs presenting a common theme. For example: Proverbs on the King (25:2-7), the Fool (26:1-12), and the Sluggard (26:13-16).

C. *Epigram*—is an enlarged proverb which has at its heart two lines (not necessarily consecutive) that express its gnomic germ thought, the rest being supplementary or an expansion of the same. Example: Shunning evil (1:8-9).

D. *Sonnet*—The distinction between the Hebrew sonnet and the English sonnet, popularly known as simply a brief poem (technically a fourteen liner [hexastich

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<sup>13</sup>Kidner, *Proverbs*, 26.

and octastich]), is not the exact number of lines, but that the poem begins with an opening couplet expressing the theme, then forms two blocks or two emphases of thoughts, one of which expands the first line of the couplet and the other expands the second line. This forms a poetic mold throughout the poem. Example: Evil Company (1:10-19).

- E. *Dramatic Monologue*—In this device inanimate objects or abstract ideas are personified to speak forth a warning or to emphasize their nature or purpose. The most famous of which is the personification of wisdom as “Lady Wisdom” (1:10-19; 8:1-36, and 9:1-18).
- F. *Acrostic*—Example: the “Proverbial Wife” that closes out the Proverbs (31:10-31).

## II. Literary Arrangement<sup>14</sup>

- I. Chapter 1:1-7—Introduction, identifying the title, author, and purpose of Proverbs.
- II. Chapters 1:8–9:18—contains fifteen clusters, epigrams, sonnets, or monologues.
- III. Chapters 10:1–22:16—has 375 Solomonic maxims mainly in proverbial form.
  - 1. Chapters 10–15 are mostly antithetic
  - 2. Chapters 16–22 are mostly synonymous or synthetic.
- IV. Chapters 22:17–24:34—contains sixteen epigrams with a variety of stichs.
- V. Chapters 25–29—comprised mainly of clusters, epigrams, and unit proverbs.
  - 1. Chapters 25–27—make up of seven epigrams on various subjects;
  - 2. Chapters 28–29—a compilation of 55 unit proverbs.
- VI. Chapter 30—consists of thirteen epigrams or unit clusters.
- VII. Chapters 31—An acrostic on the Hebrew alphabet, using the beauty of literary structure to emphasize the beauty of wisdom personified as a virtuous woman.

### Purpose

The stated purpose of the Book of Proverbs is recorded in the opening verses (1:1-7); it is to provide instruction in the principles of wisdom and understanding for living a meaningful and productive life. The writer admonishes his readers that “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7a; cf. Proverbs 9:10; Eccl 12:13-14; Job 28:28).

Wisdom, *hokhmah*, in the Bible is not the same as mere head knowledge—factual, theoretical, or philosophical—it has to do with the deeper questions of human behavior (i.e., spirituality, ethics, purpose, justice, equity, prudence choices, and discretion). The wisdom spoken of here refers to a divinely enlightened understanding of that which is good and evil (1 Kgs 3:9), and is derived from a proper response to and dependence upon

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<sup>14</sup>The Book of Proverbs appears to follow a natural seven-fold arrangement.

the God of the universe. This book, like James in the New Testament, demands equating true wisdom with godliness. Only those that are related to the Lord can be wise, but they need instruction in order for their wisdom to produce practical value in their lives.

The Book of Proverbs provides a marvelous collection of wise sayings and instructions designed primarily to help the readers to achieve success in life by avoiding the many snares and dangers common to fallen-man by living a productive and effective life for God. Proverbial wisdom is characterized by short, pithy statements; whereas the speculative wisdom used in Job and Ecclesiastes uses more lengthy monologues (Job) and dialogues (Ecclesiastes) to probe the meaning of life, the problem of good and evil, and the relationship that exists between God and His people.<sup>15</sup>

The emphasis in Proverbs is on **practical duty** even as *Psalms emphasizes devotion*. The people of God need both piety and practice. Whereas Psalms is calculated to make our hearts warm toward God, Proverbs makes our faces shine before men in prudent, discreet, honest and useful living. In the Psalms, love for God is exhibited; in the Proverbs, love for our neighbor is of prime consideration.<sup>16</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter writes concerning Proverbs:

Here are laws from heaven for life on earth. Here are counsels from above for conduct here below. Here are the words of the wise on the ways of the world. Here is homely wit for the daily walk; but it is human wit shot through with Divine wisdom; and he who is well versed in it will be sound-ly guided and safety guarded. We may put it that the general message of this Book of Proverbs is *Prudence through Precept*.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of proverbial teaching, then, is to inspire faith in the Lord (22:19). Since the motivation for faith and obedience comes from the Scripture, Proverbs admonishes believers in every age to seek after wisdom and the practical application of its principles to a heart that desires to serve the Lord in order to be wise and enjoy the benefits associated with wise living!

### Extended Message Statement

As with the Book of Psalms, it is very difficult to provide an “argument” for the Book of Proverbs since the book is actually a collection of proverbs by different writers. However, Kidner provides good insight as to the overall “logic” behind the books composition when he writes,

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<sup>15</sup>D. A. Hubbard, “Wisdom Literature,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, second edition, ed. J. D. Douglas, et al., (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1991), 1257.

<sup>16</sup>The material in this paragraph, contrasting Psalms and Proverbs, is adapted from class notes of this student taken from Curtis C. Mitchell, “Proverbs” (course # 102 Hebrew History, Biola Bible College, Fall 1978).

<sup>17</sup>J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 131-32.

So the introduction (1:2-6), an extension of the title, makes it clear that this book is no anthology, but a course of education in the life of wisdom. The motto (1:7) at once goes to the heart of the matter, and Section I (1:8–9:18) expounds it in a series of fatherly talks which illustrate and press home to the pupil the fateful choice he must make between wisdom and folly. By now the reader is in a position to orientate himself in the thicket of individual sayings which he enters in Section II (10:1–22:16), and to see in each cool, objective aphorism a miniature and particular outworking of the wisdom and folly whose whole course he has seen spread out before him in Section I.

In Section III (a. 22:17–24:22; b. 24:23-24) the teaching style returns, less expansively than in chapters 1–9, but nonetheless in sayings that spread into paragraphs and speak directly to the reader. There is a hand on our shoulder again.<sup>18</sup>

The message of Proverbs can be summarized this way: A wise person is one who learns to fear God in every sphere of life, which will result in success; and a fool is one who refuses to fear God, which will result in failure and death.<sup>19</sup>

### Outline<sup>20</sup>

#### I. Introduction: Author, Purpose and Theme 1:1-7

##### A. The author and the literary form is stated 1:1

Solomon is identified as the author of these Proverbs, as he is again in 10:1 and 25:1. There are others who contribute to the book, as will be noted later. This initial reference to Solomon may just apply therefore to the first section 1:2–9:18. The literary form is stated as Proverbs, defined as distilled observations and principles of human nature that point to general rather than universal truth.

##### B. The Purpose 1:2-6

1. To know wisdom (skill) and instruction (discipline)—*moral acumen*<sup>21</sup> 1:2a, 3-5

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<sup>18</sup>Kidner, *Proverbs*, 22-23.

<sup>19</sup>This is the same theme found in Deuteronomy 28: Obedience to God will result in blessings (peace and prosperity) and disobedience will result in cursings (curses, calamity, and captivity).

<sup>20</sup>This outline is adapted in part from my own study of the excellent analyses of Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 466-67; Sid S. Buzzell, "Proverbs," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 906; Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 288; Kidner, *Proverbs*, 22-23; Ross, "Proverbs," 894-96; Roy B. Zuck, "An Outline of Proverbs."

<sup>21</sup>The words "wisdom and instruction" (1:2a) complement each other as wisdom (*hokhmah*) means "skill," and instruction (*musar*) means "discipline." Skill is developed through discipline, and Proverbs provides practical knowledge designed to equip believers to live righteous lives for God's glory.

2. To discern the sayings of understanding—*mental acumen* 1:2b, 6  
The purpose of the book is to encourage others to acquire both a disciplined skill in right living and an ability to understand wise insights 1:2-6

C. The Theme 1:7

1. The theme of the book is stated: “those who humbly fear God can gain wisdom but fools, those who refuse to fear God, will despise wisdom and discipline 1:7
2. This verse contains six words that will recur repeatedly in Proverbs: *fear, Yahweh, knowledge, fools, wisdom* and *instruction*.

**II. The Twelve Discourses of Solomon: Contrasting Wisdom and Folly 1:8-9:18<sup>22</sup>**

A. The Exhortation to Heed Wisdom 1:8-9

1. The appeal to heed parental instruction 1:8
2. The adornment promised 1:9

B. The Twelve Discourses on Wisdom from a Father to His Son 1:10–8:36

1. **Lesson One:** My son, don’t yield to the invitation of robbers and murderers 1:10-19, and don’t reject the invitation of wisdom but embrace her and live securely 1:20-33

**Two Invitations**

- a. Don’t yield to the invitation of robbers and murderers 1:10-19
- b. Don’t reject the invitation of Lady Wisdom 1:20-33
  - 1) Lady wisdom invites all to come to her 1:20-21
  - 2) Lady wisdom invites especially the naive, scoffers, and fools 1:22-23
  - 3) Lady wisdom’s invitation is rejected 1:24-30
  - 4) Fools will be destroyed but the wise shall live securely 1:31-33
2. **Lesson two:** My son, if you will receive wisdom 2:1-4, then you will discern the fear of the LORD, And discover the knowledge of God 2:5-22

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<sup>22</sup>It should be noted that Proverbs 1:8–9:18 does not technically present proverbs, but rather, a series of twelve discourses from a father to his son on the innumerable benefits of choosing wisdom over folly. Each of these messages begins with “My son.” Ross points out that “This section runs in cycles: the purpose of Proverbs is to give wisdom (1:1-7), but folly may interrupt this purpose (1:8-33); there are advantages to seeking wisdom (2:1–4:27), but folly may prevent one from seeking it (5:1–6:19); there are advantages to finding wisdom (6:20–9:12), but folly may prevent this too (9:13-18)” (“Proverbs,” 889).



- a. The conditions for obtaining wisdom 2:1-4
  - b. The results of pursuing and acquiring wisdom 2:5-22
3. **Lesson three:** My son, trust and honor God 3:1-10
- a. Command: Remember my teaching 3:1
  - b. *Reward:* Long life and peace 3:2
  - c. Command: Be kind and true 3:3
  - d. *Reward:* Favor and good reputation 3:4
  - e. Command: Trust in the LORD 3:5-6a
  - f. *Reward:* Guidance 3:6b
  - g. Command: Remove pride. fear the LORD, reject evil 3:7
  - h. *Reward:* Health 3:8
  - i. Command: Give of your wealth to God 3:9
  - j. *Reward:* Prosperity 3:10
4. **Lesson four:** My son, wisdom brings you blessings 3:11-20
- a. God's discipline proves His love 3:11-12
  - b. God's wisdom provides His blessings 3:13-18
5. **Lesson five:** My son, keep wisdom and be wise in relation to others 3:21-35
- a. Keep sound wisdom and discretion 3:21-26
    - 1) Exhortation 3:21
    - 2) Results 3:22-26
  - b. Be wise in relation to others 3:27-35

\* **[Interlude on Wisdom: Sons are exhorted to acquire wisdom 4:1-9]**

- 1) The father's exhortation: gain wisdom 4:1-2
  - 2) The father's experience: gained wisdom from his parents 4:3-4
  - 3) The father's encouragement 4:5-9
    - a) Acquire and love wisdom 4:5-6
    - b) Acquire and prize wisdom 4:7-9
6. **Lesson six:** My son, follow the right path, do not follow the path of the wicked (avoid bad company) 4:10-19

**Two Paths**

- a. Reminder to stay on the right path 4:10-13
  - b. Reminder to stay off the wrong path 4:13-19
7. **Lesson seven:** My son, give attention to my words 4:20-22 and guard your motives and actions 4:20-27, And all your ways will be established 4:26b

- a. Give attention to my words 4:20-22
- b. Guard your motives and actions 4:23-27

8. **Lesson eight:** My son, avoid the adulterous woman 5:1-14<sup>23</sup>

**Two Exhortations**

- a. First exhortation: Wisdom helps guard against the adulteress 5:1-6
- b. Second exhortation: Wisdom rejected will lead to ruin 5:7-14

9. **Lesson nine:** [My son], enjoy your wife 5:15-23

- a. Exhortation 5:15-19
  - 1) Delight in sexual relations with your wife 5:15
  - 2) Do not engage in sexual relations with strangers 5:16-17
  - 3) Delight in your wife's physical charms always 5:18-19
- b. Reason 5:20-23

10. **Lesson ten:** My son, avoid foolish behavior (avoid: becoming surety, laziness, worthless and wicked men; and the seven abominations that God hates) 6:1-19

**Four Things to Be Avoided (at all cost!)**

- a. Avoid becoming surety for anyone 6:1-5
  - 1) The condition—ensnared by becoming a surety 6:1-2
  - 2) The command—deliver yourself from the surety 6:3-5
- b. Avoid practicing slothfulness 6:6-11 (**SLIDE—Ant and the Feather**)
  - 1) The exhortation regarding the ant's productivity 6:6
  - 2) The description of the ant 6:7-8
  - 3) The description of the sluggard 6:9-11

**Principle: Procrastination will result in Poverty 6:11**

- c. Avoid the worthless (wicked) person 6:12-19
  - 1) Character of the worthless person 6:12-14
  - 2) Consequences of the worthless person 6:15
- d. Avoid the seven abominations which God hates 6:16-19
  - 1) Introduction of the seven abominations 6:16
  - 2) Explanation of the seven abominations 6:17-19
    - a) Proud eyes 6:17a; cf. v 13a
    - b) Lying tongue 6:17b; cf. v 12b

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<sup>23</sup>This section exhorting against lust (5:1–23), can also be divided: 5:1-6 A warning against pursuing the adulterous woman; and 5:7-23 A second warning that wisdom rejected, by pursuing the adulterous woman, will lead to ruin (5:7-14); therefore, [My son], enjoy your wife (5:15-23).

- c) Murdering hands 6:17c; cf. v 13c
- d) Evil-scheming heart 6:18a; cf. v 14a
- e) Feet running to evil 6:18b; cf. v 13b
- f) Lying witness 6:19a; cf. v 12b
- g) Divisive words among brothers 6:19b; cf. v 14b

11. **Lesson eleven:** My son, observe parental teachings 6:20-23a, for they will protect you from the evil (adulterous) woman 6:20-35
- a. Exhortation: Obey parental teachings (instruction and reproof) 6:20-21
  - b. Reason: They provide blessings and they protect from the evil woman 6:22-35
12. **Lesson twelve:** My son, avoid the adulteress and follow wisdom 7:1–8:36

### **Two Women**

- a. Avoid the adulteress 7:1-27
  - 1) The exhortation—Heed parental instruction 7:1-5
  - 2) The dramatization 7:6-23
    - a) The young man lacking sense 7:6-9
    - b) The adulteress’s lewd character 7:10-122
      - i. Her seductive attire 7:10a
      - ii. Her cunning heart 7: 10b)
      - iii. Her boisterous, willful character 7:11a
      - iv. Her movements about the city 7:11b-12
    - c) The adulteress’s licentious tactics 7:13-21
    - d) The young man’s fall 7:22-23
  - 3) The concluding plea 7:24-27
    - a) Exhortation 7:24-25
    - b) Reason 7:26-27
    - c) Follow wisdom 8:1-36
      - 1) Wisdom’s public call 9:1-3
      - 2) Wisdom’s words 8:4-36

- C. Summary of Chapters 1:1–8:36: **Lady Wisdom Promises Life 9:1-12; Whereas, Damsel Folly Delivers Over to Death 9:13-18**

### **Two Feasts**

- 1. Lady Wisdom, like a virtuous and wise woman, invites the naive to her feast 9:1-12

- a. The preparation 9:1-3
  - b. The invitation 9:4-6
- The lesson 9:7-12
2. Damsel Folly, like an adulterous woman, invites the naive to her deadly feast 9:13-18

### III. Proverbs of Solomon—*Folio I 10:1-22:16*

This section in Proverbs (which contains 375 sayings) does not lend itself to an annotated outline since the Proverbs for the most part are not grouped by topics and any development is limited to the two (or occasionally more) lines of each verse.

Occasionally two or more verse are linked by a common word or subject. Chapters 10–15 tend to continue the contrast between the wise (or righteous) with the foolish (or wicked). The section from 16:1 to 22:16 is more varied in subject matter.

The topics of this section are too numerous to be listed exhaustively but some of the more significant of repeated ones include: *relationship to parents, poverty and wealth, the use of the tongue including slander, foolish talk, and wise silence, work and laziness, quarrels and discipline, truth and falsehood, justice, happiness, and good and bad friends.*

- A. Proverbs Contrasting Righteous (Wise) and Wicked (Foolish) Living 10:1–15:33<sup>24</sup>
  1. Proverbs of Solomon (375 Proverbs) 10:1a
  2. Proverbs contrasting the wise son with the foolish son 10:1b-14
  3. Proverbs contrasting the rich man with the righteous man 10:15-22
  4. Proverbs contrasting the wicked (fool) with the righteous (wise) 10:23-32
  5. Proverbs contrasting the wicked (treacherous) with the upright (righteous) 11:1–12:28
  6. Proverbs contrasting the ways of the wise with the ways of the foolish 13:1–15:33
- B. Proverbs Calling for Godly Living 16:1–22:16
  1. Proverbs concerning God’s sovereignty over human affairs 16:1-9
  2. Proverbs concerning royal (the kings) responsibilities 16:10-15
  3. Proverbs concerning wisdom’s (priceless) inestimable worth 16:16-25

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<sup>24</sup>Proverbs 10:1-22:16 is a collection of some 375 unrelated Solomonic Proverbs. This section consists of proverbial couplets contrasting wisdom and folly. Of the 184 verses in these chapters, 156 are verses of contrasts, 16 are verses of comparison, and 12 are verses of completion.

4. Proverbs concerning conduct in life: the wise versus the foolish 16:26–22:16

**IV. “The Words of the Wise” *Thirty Sayings of the Wise*<sup>25</sup> Concerning Various Practices 22:17–24:34**

A. Introduction to the *Thirty Sayings of the Wise* 22:17–24:22

1. The student is counseled to listen to the wise words to follow 22:17
2. The result will be pleasant because his trust will be in the LORD 22:18-19
3. The teacher speaks of his curriculum of thirty sayings 22:20-21

B. Thirty Units of Sayings, Most are Warnings, are Given for the Student 22:22–24:22

1. He is not to take advantage of helpless people 22:22-23
2. He is warned against associating with hot-tempered people 22:24-25
3. He is warned against co-signing for people 22:26-27
4. He is warned against deception resulting in stealing another’s property 22:28
5. He is encouraged to become skilled in his work 22:29
6. He is warned to have discipline and discretion when in the presence of his superior 23:1-3
7. He is warned against the struggle to become rich for wealth is fleeting 23:4-5
8. He is warned about becoming friends with a selfish man 23:6-8
9. He is warned against wasting wisdom on fools who despise wisdom 23:9
10. He is warned against stealing and taking advantage of the helpless for they have a Defender (lag) to avenge them 23:10-12
11. He is warned to discipline children 23:13-14
12. He is told that his wisdom will make his teacher happy 23:15-16
13. He is warned about becoming envious of sinners but instead to fear the LORD with whom there is a future 23:17-18
14. He is warned to avoid incontinence in drinking and eating 23:19-21
15. He is encouraged to listen to parental advice and to give all to get truth and wisdom 23:22-23
16. He is told of the delightful effect a wise and righteous child has on his parents 23:24-25
17. He is warned to avoid the prostitute 23:26-28
18. He is warned not to become an alcoholic 23:29-35
19. He is warned against envying and desiring the company of evil men 24:1-2
20. He is told that wise living brings good results 24:3-4
21. He is told that victory comes from wisdom though often through many advisers 24:5-6
22. He is told that wisdom is not suitable for fools 24:7

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<sup>25</sup>Of the 191 verses in this section, only 37 are contrastive (“but”). The other 148 verses are proverbial comparisons (mostly “and,” but 11 are “better than” 16:8, 16, 19, 32; 17:1, 12; 19:1, 22; 21:9, 19; 22:1) or completions.

23. He is told that trouble makers are fools and mockers 24:8-9
24. He is warned about quitting in times of distress 24:10
25. He is warned about pleading ignorance to something he should have taken action against 24:11-12
26. He is told that wisdom, like honey, is sweet and beneficial 24:13-14
27. He is warned not to cheat or rob a righteous man (thinking he can get away with it) for God's blessing rests upon him 24:15-16
28. He is warned not to gloat or rejoice at the misfortune of the wicked less it cause God to withdraw that punishment from him 24:17-18
29. Again he is warned not to be envious of the wicked for they have no future hope 24:19-20
30. He is warned to fear God and government for they both have the ability to bring sudden judgment 24:21-22

C. An Appendix of Additional “Sayings of the Wise” 24:23-34

1. Justice and fairness bring a judge respect and appreciation 24:23-25
2. An honest answer shows concern and affection 24:26
3. Priorities are important; diligence requires work to be done that produces an income before work that produces comfort 24:27
4. The student is warned about being a false witness because he is seeking revenge 24:28-29
5. The student is warned against laziness 24:30-34

**V. Proverbs of Solomon—Folio II—Compiled by King Hezekiah’s Men 25:1–29:27**

This collection of Proverb’s is similar in content and in lacking logical arrangement as were the Proverbs of 10:1-22:16

- A. Proverbs Concerning Interpersonal Relationships 25:1-28
- B. Proverbs Concerning Actions 27:1-28
- C. Proverbs Providing Instructive Contrasts Between the Wicked and the Righteous 28:1–29:27
  1. Chapter 28—The Proverbs in this chapter include contrasts between the wicked and the righteous, *primarily in their attitudes toward the law 28:1-10 and toward wealth 28:11-28*
  2. Chapter 29—Many, though not all of these proverbs present contrasts between the wicked and the righteous in relationship to their treatment of people  
For example: “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice,  
But when a wicked man rules, people groan” 29:2  
“The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor,

The wicked does not understand such concern” 29:7

“An unjust man is abominable to the righteous,  
And he who is upright in the way is abominable to the wicked” 29:27

## **VI. The Words of Agur 30:1-33**

The material in this section is different from the preceding material of Proverbs both in content and style.

- A. Introduction to the Author and Audience of this Section 30:1
- B. The Greatness of God Extolled 30:2-4
- C. The Word of God Extolled 30:5-6
- D. The Request of Agur—A request is made of God that the writer be protected from lying and have the provision of daily bread. The reason for the latter request is that he might be protected from the temptations of both wealth and poverty 30:7-9.
- E. Agur’s Observation’s About Life 30:10-33
  - 1. A general statement about meddling in another person’s domestic affairs 30:10
  - 2. Four kinds of undesirable behavior 30:11-14
    - a. Those who are disrespectful to parents 30:11
    - b. Those who are hypocritical, professing to be pure when morally filthy 30:12
    - c. Those who are proud and haughty 30:13
    - d. Those who are oppressive to the poor 30:14
  - 3. Four things are personified as never satisfied and a warning is included 30:15-31
    - a. Sheol (the grave) 30:16a
    - b. The barren womb 30:16b
    - c. Arid earth 30:16c
    - d. Fire 30:16d
    - e. The warning is directed against mocking parents, perhaps to demonstrate that the judgment of that behavior too will not be satisfied 30:17
  - 4. Four things are declared to be amazing and a warning is included 30:18-19
    - a. The way of an eagle in the sky 30:19
    - b. The way of a snake on a rock 30:19

- c. The way of a ship on a high sea 30:19
- d. The way of a man with a maid 30:19

Warning: After the adulterous has sinned she is able to treat her sinful ways as lightly as a meal: she declares, "I have done nothing wrong" 30:20

- 5. Four things are declared to be obnoxious [watch out for them!]30:21-23
    - a. An unprepared person taking leadership 30:22
    - b. A fool who is full of food 30:22
    - c. An unloved woman to enter into (or be in?) a marriage 30:23
    - d. A maidservant who takes on the position of mistress 30:23
  - 6. Four small but wise things are listed [i.e. don't despise the small but learn from them?] 30:24-28
    - a. Ants who are small and weak but work and plan ahead 30:25
    - b. Rock badgers who are small and weak but live in rock where they are safe 30:26
    - c. Locust who are organized without a leader 30:27
    - d. Lizards who are easily caught but can climb stone walls to live in a king's house [which few people can do!] 30:28
  - 7. Four stately creatures 30:29-31
    - a. A lion who retreats before nothing 30:30
    - b. A strutting roaster 30:31a
    - c. A he-goat 30:31b
    - d. A king with his army around him [security] 30:31c
- F. Concluding Advise: self-control is necessary because both pride and anger work against humility 30:32-33

## **VII. The Words of King Lemuel (Solomon?) 31:1-31**

- A. The Introduction of Lemuel 31:1
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. The Advice of Lemuel's Mother—The Wise King 31:2-9
  - 1. Warnings: Avoid immorality and intemperance 31:2-7
  - 2. Advise: Always judge equitably 31:8-9



C. The Acrostic Poem on a Virtuous Woman—The Wise Woman 31:10-31