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## Proverbs

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6*

**Proverbs Key verses: 1:2-9; 3:5-12; 15:1**

**Key personalities: David and Solomon**

**The Book of Proverbs** is a philosophical collection of wisdom sayings and common sense, partially written and collected by Solomon. These are short acts of a variety of topics ranging from morality, character, and justice to relationships, knowledge, and righteousness and how we can get along with God and others--how to live life well and please God. The Proverbs are condensed and concise sayings of God's insight that have lasting practical repercussions if not followed and effectual life when adhered to. Proverbs are more of an operation manual of what happens when we follow God's precepts than a book of promises. Think of it as a linear equation; If you do A, then B happens; if you do not do A, then C happens. Consequences for our choices. It is the action of wisdom for a triumphant life that blesses you and others around you (1 Kings 4:29-32; Prov. 22:17; 24:22-34; 25:1).

A Proverb, Hebrew *mashal*, means “to represent,” is the proper guiding precept by real wisdom in functionality. In this case, it is God's wisdom and our reverence or disobedience to Him. However, we still live in a sinful world where others bad choices and the consequence of sin will infect and infest us. Yet, God is there, guiding us, offering us discernment and direction through it all for His glory and our benefit.

**Key Happenings:** God's wisdom for an effectual life!

**Theme:** One of the primary themes of the book of Proverbs is the contrast between the wise man and the fool. The Word of God gives us the right and just way; we also learn the wrong and irrational way. This is wisdom in application. We need to see the value and importance of being willing to learn and be taught. If we don't, we will keep repeating the same mistakes by repeating the patterns of wrong thinking, infecting our lives, church, and those around us. The point of Proverbs is if we refuse to learn and grow, we place ourselves in the realm of what the Bible calls the fool, taking the wrong direction in life and completely missing God's best for us.

- We have to ask ourselves, *Why would I want to be a fool and miss out on so much? Why would I want to do as I see fit, hanging on to the patterns and ways that do not work, going from broken relations to more failures and more hurt, causing more hurt and pain, loneliness and depression, dysfunction and strife? Why? Just to hang out in our own pride? So, why be the fool will miss out on so much!*

**Contrasts:** We have several patterns of wisdom where we are called to refocus from our wayward sinful nature to God's Truths with synonyms, contrasts, and parallels that amplify or build up to the point (Isa. 45:6-7; Prov. 4:23; 9:1-18; 11:25; 16:8, 24: 12:21; 15:1; Matt. 6:13, 33).

- Proverbs are also about observations of the problems of people contrasted to wisdom and wise council of God's profound Truth applied versus Truth ignored. Sin has consequences and right

living has its rewards. In a sinful world, these are not guarantees; rather, this is what is best (Prov. 3:5-8; 8:17-21; 10:24-25; 26:7-9)

**Wise.** These are people who are willing to grow and improve themselves. It is not about intelligence or education; rather, wisdom. Intelligent people can do really stupid things and lead lives of self-destruction. Those who are wise and blessed because they are willing to learn, look at their behavior and mistakes, and apply the guidance of God's Word, to develop the needed skills of life to be better than they were before while learning how to avoid the same mistakes (Prov. 15:33; 31:30; Matt. 23:34-36).

**Fool.** Means making mistakes by arrogance, deceit, and or irrational behavior that will lead to destruction. This is an extreme insult to God! This is a very strong reprimand to wrong thinking and wrong behaving and how judgment falls on those who are a fool! Beware not to ignore God; there will be an accounting for us all--Judgment! Beware not to live for the creatures and the created while ignoring the Creator (Luke 7:35; 1 Cor. 2:14; James 2: 14-26).

- How can you take care to not be a fool? Be a person who applies God's Truth, listens to wise people, and take the time to observe your own behaviors. Repent and grow! Recognize your pride, your past refusal to learn, and commit to reading, learning and applying God's Word--improve yourself. These improvements are in the realm of our character, values, and ability to relate to others better (Deut. 6:6-7).

**Blessed** mean to enjoy God's 'face,' His favor and blessings so we are 'kept' by Him. The opposite means when He turns His face away and takes His grace away; we do not have to fear as Christians. (Num. 6:24-25)

**Fear.** This is about God's Holiness and how we are to come before God. It is a term of endearment and respect that is supercharged with more meaning and power. This type of fear is not that of being afraid other than being fearful of God's wrath. It is intense respect, reverence, and awe towards God. Our word for 'respect' is a frail and weak in comparison to its Hebrew and Greek equivalent. Thus, "fear" is used instead of "respect" or "reverence" in most English translations (Psalm 111:10; Prov, 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Rom. 3).

- In Jewish wisdom literature, *the fear of God* is a foundational theme. Proverbs tells us that fear of God is the theme of the whole book. The *fear of the LORD* is the loving reverence for God that contains our love for Him, embraces our submission to His Lordship of our lives, and causes us to keep His precepts and Word (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 3:5; 9:10; 31:30; Ecc. 12: 13).
- Fear also means that God is God. He is our *King*; He is as our *friend*. We also should see Him as *Who He is* in total character, not just as a friend, but His position and power in the universe, so we will stand in awe of Him and worship Him (Mal. 1:14; Psalm 2:11; Isa. 12:6; John 14).
- Proverbs tells us the opposite of the fear of God is to be a *fool!* These are the *reprobates* in Romans, Chapter 1, who trust in themselves and not God, who hate knowledge and correction. They seek distortion and destruction of others and themselves. They stir others to strife and contention—the very opposite of what we are to do on this earth (Prov. 1:22; 1:31-23; 5:12; 12:1; 14:1; 11; 20:3; 28:26; 29:11)!
- To fear God is also to be fulfilled and content by being in Christ (Job 28:28; Matt. 10: 27-33)!

- Proverbs gives us many verses that show our human weakness and fallen state that seeks the destruction of each other instead of building each other up as God desires us to do (Prov. 1:5-7; 3:11-12).

**How do we apply Proverbs?** Read it, study it, and use the classic disciplines of the Christian faith like devotions, Bible study, good Christian fellowship, and being in a quality church where you can worship where God's Word is proclaimed with conviction.

- Following God's precepts is a form of love and respect; it is also a form of *perseverance* as having confidence in God so we trust Him in difficult situations and still see His grace and love. We can do this by being encouraging with Christ-like temperament (2 Chron. 32:1-8; Esther 7; Luke 16:22-31; 18:9; Acts 19:8-10; 26:19-23; Rom. 15:14-16; Phil. 1:6; 12-14, 25; 2 Tim. 2:25).
- The bottom line of Proverbs is that God calls us to repent! Have you? Really, in every aspect of your innermost thoughts and ways? We need to make every decision based on "How can I please God?" not "How I can please myself or others?" Life is about Christ, what He did and what He can do in you. If we do neither, we become lukewarm and become calloused and indifferent in life (Rev.3:14-22).
- What gets us through our rough patches and dry spells is simple, yet deep beyond measure: Trust in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! We have no need to be afraid or worry when we are in Christ! Christians who stand in truth will develop the maturity and character that will build them up and influence others for Him! Joseph prospered in Egypt, even though he was enslaved and imprisoned. God blessed and restored him because he held on to character above all the enticements around him.

**What makes a fool?** The fool will keep repeating his mistakes over and over. This is why so many go into numerous, varied relationships and marriages in seemingly endless cycles, i.e. from one that does not work, to the next one that does not work, and so on, and so on. They never seem to learn; they do not strive to make it work. The fool refuses to learn. Just read through Proverbs, and let God's Word reveal to you what will happen. By reading just one chapter a day, you can get through it all in one month. You will spend less than five minutes a day, and be far wiser, too! The sad fact is, too many of us will not spend the time needed in the Word. Too many Christians will put their minds in the ways of the fool and not in the ways of the righteous. It's hard to be told why something is right or wrong. It's hard not to want our own way. This may sound like fun, but the lifestyle of the fool results in consequences and misery we should all pray might never happen to us.

Beware that you do not to hear the call of our Lord, because of the noise of our will is too loud; this creates an atmosphere of distrust. Being set apart for the Gospel is to be totally at the disposal of our Lord and master.

**Key Takeaway:** Without real wisdom from God--His True Truth--we will only have speculation, and we will not be able to know and apply good judgment. Real, authentic Christian formation is developed when we give up the rights to ourselves, handing over our will to Christ. In so doing, we begin to understand what is important in life, and we experience true freedom as the chains of slavery formed by our self-willed actions and thinking are broken. We become transformed and renewed by what He has done, which works more deeply and more powerfully as our devotion increases, and we become more aware of whom we are in Him (Rom. 12).

If Proverbs are not applied by the leadership of the church, they will be causing discontent. Not only are they missing the mark that Christ has for us, but they create such an atmosphere of distrust that

the true believers cannot confide with counseling matters, nor do they mature adequately. This is a lesson for all of us. We all have skills and issues that we need to work on in our spiritual walk with the Lord. I do not believe we as Christians will ever achieve full perfection, nor does God call us to be totally perfect. But, God does call us to be our best. When we refuse to grow, and we keep making the same mistakes over and over again, all we're doing is hurting Christ, His people, and ourselves.

**The foreshadow of Jesus Christ?** Jesus teaching is all about wisdom, how we go before God and please Him, as does Proverbs. When we appreciate God's true Truth, we honor Him and take what He says to heart and to live. This is what it means to follow Jesus, know Who he is, what he has done and trust Christ by faith. This all embodies wisdom. We can't hear the voice of God--at least, not openly--unless we know it is Truth and are wise enough to apply it (John 1:1,14; 1 Cor. 1:24-30; Col. 2:3).

### Questions to Ponder

1. Read Proverbs 1:5-7; 3:11-12. Proverbs is about wisdom; how can you begin to be a person who learns?
2. How and why does a fool come about? What can you do to not be one?
3. Do you believe that if you only seek what you can get, you will end up in despair? If so, how are you practicing this? How can you do things differently?
4. How would you define 'wisdom'? What have you learned from Proverbs?
5. Why does the world hate God? Why do most people have a dislike for truth, love, and Authority?
6. How important is *listening* to you? How much do you need to be listened to? How much effort do you spend listening to others? (Take the time to observe your own behaviors!)
7. How can you recognize your pride and your past refusal to learn? (Have some doubts about pride? Then, just look up "pride" in any concordance.)
8. How does Proverbs show our human weakness and fallen state that seeks out the destruction of each other instead of building each other up as God desires us to do?
9. Why is maturity important in order to be in leadership or when sharing yourself with someone else? Why is this important?
10. God does not call you to do anything that He has not empowered and enabled you to do! How can this fact encourage and empower you in relationships?
11. Once we get ourselves properly lined up with God and His Will, a whole new world opens up. What would that world look like for you?
12. Are we Missing the Mark that Christ has for us? Try not to be the person for whom others and God weep; rather, take responsibility and initiative and be the person who builds his or her church and life on His Word and authority.