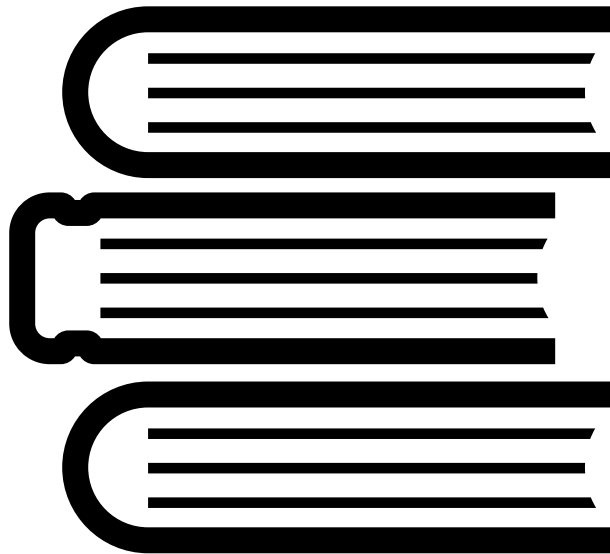


Proverbs

A Topical Study



By Nathan Combs

Introduction to Proverbs

I. What is a proverb?

- A. A proverb is a short, pithy saying that is easy to remember and teaches practical wisdom.
 - 1. Necessity is the mother of invention ~ Irish Proverb
 - 2. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush ~ English Proverb
- B. Proverbs are not intended as precise, absolute statements; they teach general principles.
 - 1. Although the Biblical proverbs are general, they are also inspired by God.
 - 2. Therefore, we should meditate on His principles and not dwell on all the possible exceptions.
- C. Some of the Biblical proverbs are meant to be taken as absolute statements which are always true.
 - 1. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (1.7).
 - 2. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight" (12.22)."

II. What's the goal of this book and why is it special?

- A. Read 1.1-7
- B. Summary: to help all people (both inexperienced and wise) grow in godly wisdom.
- C. Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4.32).
- D. The Holy Spirit handpicked only 900 proverbs from Solomon and other sages for our use.

III. How do we understand the proverbs?

- A. In order to understand how to read and interpret the Proverbs properly, we need to become familiar with the poetic form of *parallelism*, which is used frequently in the book.
- B. *Parallelism* - two or more lines corresponding to each other in some way.
- C. In the Proverbs, there are four different kinds of parallelism at work.
 - 1. **Synonymous Parallelism** - the second line of the pair repeats the idea of the first line without really adding new ideas.
 - a) "Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice" (1.20)
 - b) "An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue (17.4)
 - 2. **Antithetic Parallelism** - the second line is put in contrast to the idea of the first line, and usually connected by the word "but."
 - a) "A wise son makes a father glad, *but* a foolish son is a grief to his mother." (10.1)
 - b) "The thoughts of the righteous are just, *but* the counsels of the wicked are deceitful." (12.5)
 - 3. **Emblematic Parallelism** - the first line gives a visual picture of the principle that the second line teaches. Watch for the words "like" and "as."
 - a) "*Like* vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy one to those who send him." (10.26)
 - b) "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion." (11.22)
 - 4. **Synthetic parallelism** - the second line develops the thought of the first line by adding ideas. If the second line provides no further clarification of the first, the parallelism is classified as synonymous, but if it does bring clarification or expansion, it is synthetic.
 - a) "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good." (15.3)
 - b) "The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil." (16.4)

IV. Outline of proverbs

- A. Title, Goal, and Motto (1.1-7)
- B. A Father's Invitation to Wisdom (1.8-9.18)
- C. Proverbs of Solomon (10.1-22.16)
- D. Thirty Sayings of "the Wise" (22.17-24.22)
- E. Further Sayings of "the Wise" (24.23-34)
- F. Hezekiah's Collection of Solomon Proverbs (25.1-29.27)
- G. The Sayings of Agur (30.1-33)
- H. The Sayings of King Lemuel (31.1-31)

V. Suggestions for preparation

- A. *Analyze* the proverb's structure so you can properly interpret it. Which form does it use?
- B. *Visualize* the picture the proverb provides (if there is one). What does it look like?
- C. *Meditate* on the meaning of the message of the proverb. What does it mean?
- D. *Apply* your meditations to relate to your personal life. What does it mean for *me*?
- E. *Record* thoughts in the space under each proverb. What do I want to remember about it?

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The Wise

Proverbs 9.9 - Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

Proverbs 11.30 - The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.

Proverbs 12.18 - There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 13.20 - Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 14.8 - The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.

Proverbs 16.16 - How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

Proverbs 20.3 - It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.

Proverbs 22.17-18 - Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips.

Proverbs 24.5-6 - A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Proverbs 24.13-14 - My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

Proverbs 29.11 - A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

The Simple

Proverbs 9.1-6 - Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks sense she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

Proverbs 9.13-18 - The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" And to him who lacks sense she says, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

Proverbs 14.15 - The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.

Proverbs 14.18 - The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Proverbs 19.25/21.11 - Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.

Proverbs 22.3/27.12 - The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.

The Fool

Proverbs 10.21 - The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.

Proverbs 10.23 - Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.

Proverbs 12.15-16 - The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.

Proverbs 13.20 - Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 14.9 - Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance.

Proverbs 17.10 - A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.

Proverbs 17.12 - Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly.

Proverbs 18.1-2 Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

Proverbs 24.7 - Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth.

Proverbs 26.4-5 - Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Proverbs 28.26 - Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.

The Scoffer

Proverbs 9.7-8 - Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Proverbs 9.12 - If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Proverbs 13.1 - A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 14.6 - A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding.

Proverbs 15.12 - A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.

Proverbs 21.24 - "Scoffer" is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.

Proverbs 22.10 - Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.

Proverbs 24.9 - The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind

Proverbs 29.8 - Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath.

The Sluggard

Proverbs 6.6-9 - Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

Proverbs 13.4 - The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.

Proverbs 15.19 - The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.

Proverbs 19.24/26.15 - The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

Proverbs 20.4 - The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.

Proverbs 22.13/26.13 - The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!"

Proverbs 24.30-34 - I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

Proverbs 26.14 - As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed.

Proverbs 26.16 - The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.

The Heart

Proverbs 3.5 - Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Proverbs 4.23 - Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 15.11 - Sheol and Abandon lie open before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of man!

Proverbs 16.9 - The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Proverbs 20.5 - The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Proverbs 21.2 - Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

Proverbs 24.12 - If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?

Proverbs 25.20 - Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.

Proverbs 27.19 - As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.

Proverbs 28.14 - Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

The Tongue

Proverbs 10.19-20 - When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.

Proverbs 11.9 - With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.

Proverbs 11.11-13 By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown. Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.

Proverbs 15.1-2 - A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

Proverbs 15.4 - A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Proverbs 15.28 - The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

Proverbs 17.14 - The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.

Proverbs 17.28 - Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

Proverbs 18.8 - The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

Proverbs 18.13 - If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

Proverbs 25.8-10 - Do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame? Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret, lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.

Proverbs 26.20-22 - For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

Truth and Lies

Proverbs 6.16-19 - There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

Proverbs 20.14 - "Bad, bad," says the buyer, but when he goes away, then he boasts.

Proverbs 20.23 - Unequal weights are an abomination to the LORD, and false scales are not good.

Proverbs 23.23 - Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

Proverbs 24.28 - Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips.

Proverbs 25.18 - A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.

Proverbs 26.2 - Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight.

Proverbs 26.18-19 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I am only joking!"

Proverbs 30.6 - Do not add to his [God's] words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Self-Control and Anger

Proverbs 10.12 - Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.

Proverbs 14.17 - A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 15.18 - A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

Proverbs 16.32 - Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Proverbs 20.3 - It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.

Proverbs 22.24-25 - Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Proverbs 25.23 - The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.

Proverbs 25.28 - A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Proverbs 27.3-4 A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

Proverbs 29.20 - Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 30.32-33 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth. For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife.

Humility and Pride

Proverbs 8.13 - The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

Proverbs 11:2 - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10 - By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom.

Proverbs 16.18-19 - Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 18.12 - Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.

Proverbs 22.4 - The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

Proverbs 25.6-7 - Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

Proverbs 29.23 - One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.

Wealth, Poverty, and Justice

Proverbs 8.18-21 {Wisdom personified is speaking in this passage} Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries.

Proverbs 11.24-26 - One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.

Proverbs 13.22 - A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.

Proverbs 14.31 - Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

Proverbs 19.4 - Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend.

Proverbs 21.13 - Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.

Proverbs 21.26 - All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back.

Proverbs 28.8 - Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.

Proverbs 28.22 - A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him.

Friends, Brothers, and Neighbors

Proverbs 3.3 - Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Proverbs 3.27-28 - Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.

Proverbs 16.7 - When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Proverbs 16.28 - A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.

Proverbs 17.17 - A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 25.17 - Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he have his fill of you and hate you.

Proverbs 27.10 - Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

Proverbs 27:17 - Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Marriage and Sexuality

Proverbs 5.1-6 - My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.

Proverbs 5.15-20 - Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

Proverbs 12.4 - An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.

Proverbs 19.14 - House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22 - He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

Proverbs 21.9/25.24 - It is better to live in a corner of a housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

Proverbs 31.10-12 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

Training Children

Proverbs 1.8-9 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Proverbs 13.24 - Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Proverbs 19.18-19 - Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death. A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.

Proverbs 20.7 - The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!

Proverbs 22.6 - Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22.15 - Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Proverbs 23.13-14 - Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 23.24-25 - The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.

Proverbs 29.3 - He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.

Proverbs 29.15 - The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 29.17 - Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.