

Proverbs: covenantal, Christ-centered instruction

Rebekah Buitter

The book of Proverbs was written by King Solomon to his young adult son. Solomon's purpose in writing Proverbs was "that the generation to come might know them [God's wonderful works]...that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Ps. 78:6-7). Throughout the book, Solomon is fulfilling his covenantal duty as a father to teach his son wisdom and understanding (4:1-4). Since the covenant is central to the book, Proverbs is not merely a collection of good advice for success and happiness. Solomon is demonstrating to his son the way of life in the family of God (the way of *wisdom*) in contrast to the way of folly outside of God's family. He is not merely concerned that his son becomes wealthy, has a good name, and avoids troublesome people. Solomon is concerned about his son's salvation.

In the opening verses of chapter 1, Solomon equates the simple with the young man (1:4). The simple person is one who lacks discernment, is easily influenced, and is easily led

astray. You, as a young person, are vulnerable to the influence of the world. Therefore, your parents have an urgent calling to train you up in the way you should go (22:6). The whole book of Proverbs is meant as an exhortation to the young person to be wise, or as Ephesians 4:14 puts it, "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Solomon is very concerned for his son's spiritual welfare, and he endeavors to teach him wisdom so that he finds his refuge in the Lord (18:10) from sinners who seek to entice him (1:10).

Later in chapter 1, Wisdom is personified and found crying in the streets with an important message for young people: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (1:23). Wisdom concludes her crying with, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (1:33). Wisdom also has grave warnings for those

who refuse her: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh...Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer... For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD" (1:26-29). Reading this, we are tempted to be frightened and to think, "What if I don't turn and hearken to wisdom? What if in a moment of sin I do not choose the fear of the Lord?" Lest we fall prey to those thoughts and despair of God's mercy, a proper understanding of Wisdom's identity is crucial as we read through Proverbs.

Our first hint is in chapter 2:6: "For the LORD giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Our next clue is in chapter 2:10-12: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart...discretion shall preserve thee...to deliver thee from the way of the evil man." Our next clue is very revealing: "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens" (3:18-19). So far our clues tell us that Wisdom proceeds from the mouth of the Lord; that Wisdom is by whom the Lord created the heavens and the earth; and that Wisdom is the one who enters hearts to preserve and deliver God's children from evil. Our fourth and final clue is from chapter 8:22-31:

The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth...When he prepared the heavens, I was there...Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

This passage confirms that Wisdom *is* eternal God and, more specifically, God who was "brought forth." Creator, Savior, Preserver, Eternal, Begotten, proceeds from the mouth of God (the Word)—Wisdom is Jesus Christ! That is why you do not need to be discouraged when you read through the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is not just a collection of good advice; the words in this book are life and grace to you (3:22), filled with the power to work salvation in your heart through the Holy Spirit (1:23). The gospel of Jesus Christ is the golden thread that runs through this "practical" book. As you read Proverbs, keep Christ and his gospel at the center of each vice and virtue, each promise, and each exhortation.

Date	Read	Study	Psalter
Oct 8	Prov. 1	What are the three different kinds of people and their respective ends? Is there hope for the simple or the fool to escape judgment? (See 1:23; 2:19; 8:5; and 17:16.)	146
Oct 9	Prov. 2	How do we obtain the fear of the Lord? Does verse 6 contradict the five previous verses?	38
Oct 10	Prov. 3:1–18, Psalm 23	Do you trust where your Shepherd leads you?	100
Oct 11	Prov. 3:19–35	Read Psalm 73 for reference. Why must we not envy the oppressor?	19
Oct 12	Prov. 4:1–13	Read Deuteronomy 6:6–7 for reference. What does Solomon understand about his role as a father?	213 stanzas 1–3
Oct 13	Prov. 4:14–27	Are you grateful for the godly instruction of your parents (v. 11) or do you grumble at their strictness (vv. 25–27)?	325
Oct 14	Prov. 5	Why is it important to find a godly spouse? Is Solomon speaking from experience (vv. 9–14)?	360
Oct 15	Prov. 6:1–15	Do you understand your calling to work for your daily bread? How do you add value to your home (regardless of income)?	246 stanza 3
Oct 16	Prov. 7	Who is the strange woman, and why is she so dangerous (v. 26)?	188
Oct 17	Prov. 8, Job 38:1–11	What stark contrasts do you see between Wisdom and Job (a mere earthly man)?	404
Oct 18	Prov. 10	How do verses 3 and 14 explain the promised riches of the diligent in verses 4, 5, 16, and 22?	309
Oct 19	Prov. 11	What do verses 24–26 say about generosity? What is the root sin behind stingy behaviors (v. 28)?	398
Oct 20	Prov. 12	What do verses 11, 14, and 27 teach you about how you should conduct yourself in the workplace?	7
Oct 21	Prov. 13	In connection with verse 7, what kind of inheritance should we leave to our children (v. 22)?	27

Oct 22	Prov. 14:1–19	In your relationships, how can you apply verses 15–18? Why is it so important within the life of the church to refrain from this kind of behavior?	21
Oct 23	Prov. 14:20–35	How should we deal with the poor? Why? (See also 17:5; 21:13; 22:2, 9, 16, 22–23; 23:10–11.)	113 stanzas 1–4
Oct 24	Prov. 15:14–33	What is the difference between diligent gain and greedy gain? (See also 10:4, 5; 12:11.)	135
Oct 25	Prov. 16:1–19	How does verse 5 speak to the various worldly movements (BLM, LGBTQ, abortion, feminism, etc.)? What does God think of their pride and solidarity (vv. 18–19; see also 11:20–21)?	205 stanzas 4, 7, 9, 11
Oct 26	Prov. 18	Do you need to feel fulfilled in your career? (Compare 18:20 with 16:26.)	169
Oct 27	Prov. 19	How are the friends in verses 4 and 7 different from the friends in 18:24 and 17:17?	73 especially stanza 4
Oct 28	Prov. 20:1–14	What is the folly in convenience and comforts? Has society allowed us to get too comfortable?	329
Oct 29	Prov. 21	What is the difference between the thoughts of the righteous and the desire of the slothful? Is it wrong to have dreams and desires for your career (vv. 5, 25)?	104 stanzas 3–5, 8–10
Oct 30	Prov. 23	What are we laboring for (23:4; 16:26; 13:7)? What kind of riches do we seek?	163
Oct 31	Prov. 24:1–22	Are you troubled by the way our country is being governed? How should the Christian respond? (See also 21:1; 12:11.)	223
Nov 1	Prov. 24:23–34	What does verse 27 mean for you in your current stage in life? How does the wisdom of this verse help you avoid the problem of verses 30–34?	357
Nov 2	Prov. 26:1–16, Mark 14:55–65	How did Jesus determine when it was necessary to answer a fool?	23

Nov 3	Prov. 27	Do you have a friend who sharpens you, or do you stick with those who make you feel comfortable (vv. 6, 17)?	90 stanzas 1, 2, 5, 6
Nov 4	Prov. 28	Make a list of characteristics of the righteous versus the wicked in this chapter. What sets them apart (v. 13)?	20
Nov 5	Prov. 29	Do you have a "vision" for your life? What is it and where did you get it? (See Lam. 2:9; Ezek. 7:26-27; Amos 8:11 for a clearer understanding of a "vision.")	323
Nov 6	Prov. 30	What is your goal in working at your job (vv. 7-9)?	286
Nov 7	Prov. 31	Who is the virtuous woman? What stands out to you about her character?	359