

Introduction to Proverbs May 3, 2015

Introduction

The need for God's wisdom has never been greater than today when we are facing many of life's difficult questions and situations. There are two opposing wisdom that clamor our attention. Solomon says that Lady Wisdom shouts from the street for all who will hear her; however, the loudest voice we hear is from Lady Folly. Her words are sensual and alluring. It seems right to us and seems to promise us a good and healthy time. However, Lady Wisdom tells us that

Proverbs 12:5 *The plans of the righteous are just,
but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.*

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the end it leads to death.*¹

When we ignore what God says, we are inviting sorrow and death. James calls Lady Folly's calling as Satanic:

James 3:15 *Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.*

That is what is clamoring for our attention: God's voice and the devil's voice. As Christians, it is sometimes hard to hear Wisdom's voice, but thankfully, God has given us Proverbs to hear Wisdom more clearly. What happens when we commit to Wisdom?

Proverbs 15:24 *The path of life leads upward for the wise
to keep him from going down to the grave.*

Even in the book of Proverbs we have the gospel of Jesus Christ, that in Him we have life. It is important that we study Proverbs. How do we study it? What is the structure of Proverbs? What words appear frequently in Proverbs? These questions we will answer today.

I. Framework of Proverbs

- Living life in the fear of Yahweh²
 - This is the foundation of Proverbs

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

Proverbs 31:30 *Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

- The book is bracketed with this thought
- He repeats this idea 12 more times in between
- The first implication is that every verse in Proverbs should be read with the fear of Yahweh in mind

¹ I am keeping the NIV 2-line structure to show the Line A and Line B in Proverbs. It takes more space, but the style is worth it.

² Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs* (The Woodlands: Kress, 2011), 103.

- We must apply the fear of Yahweh into every verse in Proverbs
- The second implication is that the fear of Yahweh goes back to the Law—Deuteronomy
 - The fear of Yahweh is actually present in the whole counsel of Scripture

Luke 12:4-5 *I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him.*

1 Peter 1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

- This fear motivates us to live in faith and obedience
- It is the very gospel itself

Revelation 14:6-7 *Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."*

- My son, listen to my words³
 - From father (and mother) to son
 - Instructions for the son
 - Instructions about choosing two opposing worldview
 - Wisdom or folly
 - Good or seems good
 - Life or death
 - Urgent warnings for young man because...
 - Sexual passions of the young man is heaviest
 - Thinking that he can do anything and every thing
 - NO thoughts to safety
 - Reality is that it is the Heavenly Father speaking to us

Proverbs 3:12 *because the LORD disciplines those He loves, as a father the son He delights in.*

- God is warning us to live in fear of Him
- Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God⁴

1 Corinthians 1:30 *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—*

- Jesus is the perfect Wisdom and only through Him can we have that wisdom
- Proverbs is not used to live a good life
 - It is used to live a God-fearing life
 - The only way to live a God-fearing life is through Christ Jesus

³ John Kitchen, *Proverbs: The Mentor Commentary Series* (Cornwall: Christian Focus, 2006), 25-26.

⁴ Raymond Ortund, *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works: Preaching the Word Series*, edited by R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 12-13.

- We cannot live a good life and then God finds acceptance—then we'd be a fool because we are not listening to God's call of salvation
- Proverbs is used to transform us to be more like Christ Jesus

II. Vocabulary in Proverbs⁵

- Words that are used most often (between wisdom and folly)
- Wisdom
 - Meaning
 - Knowledge **AND** ability to apply knowledge to one's life
 - Knowledge **AND** living in the fear of Yahweh
 - Knowledge
 - Awareness of self's situation
 - Relationship with God through faith that guides our life

Proverbs 2:5 *then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

- Good sense
 - Following God's way even when something else seems more desirable

Proverbs 19:11 *Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. (ESV)*

- Understanding
 - How we think and know—how all things come together

Proverbs 23:4 *Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease! (NKJ)*

- Prudence
 - Using intelligence and wisdom to accomplish God's will

Proverbs 8:5 *You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.*

- Discipline
 - Correction from outside

Proverbs 13:1 *A wise son accepts his father's discipline, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. (NAS)*

- Correction from within

Proverbs 24:32 *I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw:*

- Fear of God
 - Relationship that a person wants to please the heavenly Father

- Folly

⁵ Andrew Steinmann, *Proverbs: Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 25-32.

- Meaning
 - No knowledge or ignoring warnings
 - Not wise
- Gullible person
 - Inexperienced and immature—easily fooled
 - Not a full-blown fool

Proverbs 22:3 *The prudent sees the evil and hides himself,
But the naive go on, and are punished for it. (NAS)*

- Fool
 - Confidence in himself and his own power

Proverbs 28:26 *He who trusts in himself is a fool,
but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.*

- Stupid (or stubborn) person
 - Willful acceptance of evil and rejecting good

Proverbs 14:8 *The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways,
but the folly of fools is deception.*

- Lacking sense
 - Cannot understand the consequence of their actions

Proverbs 6:32 *The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense;
He who would destroy himself does it. (NAS)*

- Laziness
 - Looks for short cuts in work
 - Does no work

Proverbs 10:4 *Lazy hands make a man poor,
but diligent hands bring wealth.*

- Mocker
 - Makes fun of all things of God

Proverbs 21:24 *The proud and arrogant man—"Mocker" is his name;
he behaves with overweening pride*

III. How to Approach Proverbs⁶

- Proverbs is poetry
 - Specifically, Hebrew poetry
 - English poetry usually rhyme words
 - Hebrew poetry rhymes thought
 - It is usually brief and few words as possible
 - It uses word pictures to explain something
 - It uses parallel structure

⁶ Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs* (The Woodlands: Kress, 2011), 15-32.

- Usually in two-lines—Line A and Line B
- Proverbs defined
 - Brief statement of wisdom, artfully crafted to be striking, thought-provoking, memorable, and practical
 - It is sometimes hard to read proverbs and to get a feel for it
 - Solomon intended for us to think
 - To not think through the proverbs is laziness
- Types of proverbs
 - Same thought proverbs
 - Line B repeats Line A with different words

Proverbs 11:25 *A generous man will prosper;
he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

- Opposite thought proverbs
 - Line B is opposite of Line A—usually has “but” in it

Proverbs 10:1 *A wise son brings joy to his father,
but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

- Comparison proverbs
 - Line A is like Line B—uses “like” or “as”

Proverbs 10:26 *As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
so is a sluggard to those who send him.*

- Evaluation proverbs
 - Line A is better than Line B—uses “better”, “rather”, “more”, or “than”

Proverbs 17:12 *Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs
than a fool in his folly.*

- Consequence proverbs
 - Line B is what happens when you do Line A

Proverbs 19:27 *Stop listening to instruction, my son,
and you will stray from the words of knowledge.*

- Extended proverbs
 - Line A and what’s more, Line B

Proverbs 16:29 *A violent man entices his neighbor
and leads him down a path that is not good.*

Coram Deo

The goal is to be like Christ, and we can find in Proverbs the wisdom that will transform us to be like Him. Not only that, but we can find in Proverbs salvation when it points to Christ.