

Why Read Proverbs?

Proverbs 1:1-6

May 24, 2015

Proverbs 1:2-6

1 *The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel [given to the readers]¹:*

2 *for attaining wisdom and discipline;*

for understanding words of insight;

3 *for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,*

doing what is right and just and fair;

4 *for giving prudence to the simple,*

knowledge and discretion to the young—

5 *let the wise listen and add to their learning,*

and let the discerning get guidance—

6 *for understanding proverbs and parables,*

the sayings and riddles of the wise.

I. First Benefit (2a)

- Attaining
 - To acquire; to know; to become acquainted
 - Emphasis—life-long ambition
 - Solomon is emphasizing that when we read Proverbs, we are receiving God's gift
- Wisdom
 - Hebrew thought—wisdom is never only abstract (just ideas or information)

Exodus 28:3 *Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve Me as priest.*

Exodus 31:1-6 *Then the LORD said to Moses, 2 "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill [wisdom], ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts— 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. 6 Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill [wisdom] to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you:*

- Skill = wisdom
- Wisdom is practical!
- Knowing what to do and how to do it
- Our own skill is not the end
 - Only when we know the Lord personally can we have true wisdom (1:7)
 - Fear of Yahweh is beginning and life-long
 - This wisdom will help with our relationships with people as well
- Discipline
 - Idea of correction
 - Either external or self-correction
 - God's correction is so that we can know God

¹ Andrew Steinmann, *Proverbs: Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 51.

- We were not born wise—we have to be corrected
 - We do not like correction
- We must listen
 - Failure to listen
 - He stands in judgment against us

Note: In Proverbs we will find the corrective education that we all need for skill in godly living.²

II. Second Benefit (2b)

- Understanding
 - To analyze and penetrate the meaning of God's word

Psalms 119:73 *Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn Your commands.*

Nehemiah 8:8 *They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.*

- To know difference between the opposites: good-bad; wise-folly
- We are not to depend on our own understanding

Proverbs 3:5 *Trust in YHWH with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*

- Words of insight
 - Scripture
 - Solomon is saying that we are to study the Scriptures
 - Analyze it
 - Allow His words to penetrate us
 - Allow His words to change us
 - We are to know the difference between the good and the bad; worthwhile and the worthless
 - When we analyze Scripture, it analyzes us

James 1:22-25 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*

- Insight
 - difference between parents and children
 - Parents have insight, seeing that the non-obvious becoming obvious³

III. Third Benefit (3)

² Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs* (The Woodlands: Kress, 2011), 43.

³ Raymond Ortund, *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works: Preaching the Word Series*, edited by R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 21.

- Acquiring—receiving
 - Receiving what?
 - God’s revealed word
 - WE have to open the words of God and study hard
- Disciplined and prudent life
 - Or intelligent discipline (or wise behavior⁴)
 - Solomon gives us the benefits when we receive intelligent discipline
 - Doing right
 - Just
 - Fair
 - Wise men would live according to God’s own way. He is conforming himself to the character and action of God.⁵

IV. Fourth Benefit (4)

- Solomon’s target audience are two people
 - Simple
 - Young
- Simple
 - Gullible; naïve, lacks experience
 - Person in dangerous state
 - Very close to going down the path of folly
- Young (or youth)
 - Immaturity—have not yet grown up
 - They live for the now—usually have no plans
- For the simple—prudence
 - Shrewdness—having sharp powers of judgment

Proverbs 14:15 *A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.*

- Idea that this person is able to distinguish the shades between wise and folly
- For Solomon it is the fear of YHWH that provides that goal
- For the young—knowledge and discretion
 - Knowledge—experience
 - Thoughts developed into a plan
 - Wisdom from God leads youth to gain experience and good thoughts
 - The ability to form a plan and works to its end
 - The transition from youth to adult is planning (youth lives for the now; adult prepares for the future)

V. Fifth Benefit (5a)

- Let wise men listen
 - Listen = reading the Word of God
 - Not talking about “hearing” the voice of God
 - Wise man admit that he does not know everything and needs more instruction
- Add to their learning

⁴ Peter Steveson, *A Commentary of Proverbs* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 2001), 5.

⁵ John Kitchen, *Proverbs: The Mentor Commentary Series* (Cornwall: Christian Focus, 2006), 49.

- Add to their reserve
- They have stored up knowledge, then they add some more
- Wisdom calls for us to gain more wisdom
- Application
 - If a Christian reads the Bible and then forgets it
 - Or if a Christian hears a sermon and then forgets it
 - Then they have added nothing
 - When troubles come, you have no wisdom to overcome it

VI. Sixth Benefit (5b)

- Discerning
 - Knowing good from bad and right from wrong
- Get guidance
 - Navigational term—pulling a rope to steer a ship⁶
 - Proverbs of Solomon is used to help us steer a course in life
 - Steers us into a holy life pleasing to God

VII. Seventh Benefit (6)

- A wise man is able to read Proverbs and apply it to his life
- Solomon understood that there are different ways to communicate the same truth
 - Proverbs
 - Parable—more accurately, taunt or mock
 - God often uses taunt to communicate truth
 - Sayings of wise men
 - Riddles—hard sayings that require much thinking

Coram Deo

To sum up what Solomon is saying in his introduction to Proverbs section: When a wise man who fears YHWH, listens to His words, through hard work and thought, he will have a blessed life from YHWH.

⁶ Phillips, 60.