

Pearls

FROM PROVERBS

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Pearls from Proverbs

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	5
Lesson 1 <i>The Pearl of Wisdom</i>	7
Lesson 2 <i>The Pearl of Awe and Reverential Trust</i>	15
Lesson 3 <i>The Pearl of Humility</i>	25
Lesson 4 <i>The Pearl of Honesty and Integrity</i>	33
Lesson 5 <i>The Pearl of Diligence</i>	41
Lesson 6 <i>The Pearl of Self-control</i>	49
Lesson 7 <i>The Pearl of Friendship</i>	57
Lesson 8 <i>The Pearl of a Happy Home</i>	65
Lesson 9 <i>The Pearl of Wholesome Speech</i>	73
Lesson 10 <i>The Pearl of Sound Financial Management</i>	83
<i>Conclusion</i>	93
<i>Leader's Guide</i>	95

Dedicated

*to the women who have attended the Winning Weighs program at
First Baptist Church, Arlington Heights, Illinois,
and who have encouraged me by their response to the
study of God's Word.*

Preface

The book of Proverbs is like a lovely string of pearls. One proverb after another is strung together to make the whole. The purpose of this study is to look at ten of those pearls—ten themes that are developed in Proverbs.

Because of the nature of Proverbs, it is difficult to do a verse-by-verse study. Instead, it is better to find what the book says on a given subject and study that topic. This study is arranged in that way.

In addition to discovering what Proverbs says on a given topic, you will look at other supporting passages throughout Scripture, and you will consider Biblical people who exemplify each truth. Each lesson closes with an opportunity for you to put the truths of Proverbs into practice in your own life, as well as a suggestion for praying the truths of Proverbs to the Lord.

I would encourage you to read one chapter of Proverbs each day during the weeks and months of this study. (You can coordinate your reading with the calendar; e.g., read chapter 1 on the first day of the month, chapter 2 on the second day.) In each day's reading, note a specific verse to meditate on during the day. Repeated exposure to the great themes in Proverbs will help you realize—and practice—the truths of this book.

It is my prayer that this study of Proverbs will enrich your spiritual life; that it will be practical for everyday life; and that these pearls will become part of your “wardrobe” in the days ahead.



The Pearl of Wisdom

*“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!”
(Proverbs 16:16).*

If you were told you could have any one thing your heart desired, what would you request? Would it be a specific sum of money? relief from physical pain? a mate (or a different mate)? a new home? a different job? a slimmer body size? The way each of us would answer that question reveals something about us, doesn't it?

A man in Bible times was presented with this exact opportunity. He could ask for anything he wanted. His answer—and a major theme in the book of Proverbs, which he wrote—is astonishing. We will look at him and the request he was granted as we start this study of Proverbs.

People with very little Bible knowledge know something about the book of Proverbs. We often think of a proverb as a wise saying, and it is that. The word is from a verb that means “to be like, to be compared with.” “A proverb, then, is a statement that makes a comparison or summarizes a common experience.”¹ The book contains maxims, poetry, short parables, and pithy questions—all designed to help the reader know how to live wisely and godly in an ungodly world.

The principal writer of the book was Solomon (Proverbs 1:1), although chapter 30 was written by a man named Agur and chapter 31 by King Lemuel. We know little about these men, but we know a great deal about Solomon.

8 *PEARLS FROM PROVERBS*

The Writer

1. Read 2 Samuel 12:24. Who were Solomon's parents?
2. Look in the marginal references in your Bible or in a Bible dictionary.
What does the name "Solomon" mean?
3. (a) What other name did Solomon have (2 Samuel 12:25)?

(b) What did it mean?

David was the second king of the nation of Israel. Before his death, he proclaimed that Solomon would succeed him on the throne (1 Kings 1:28-40).

4. Read 1 Kings 2:2 and 3. (a) What was David's final charge to his son?

(b) What would be the result if Solomon did this?

Soon after David's death, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told Solomon to ask of Him anything he wanted.

5. Read 1 Kings 3:5-9. What was Solomon's request?

6. Read 1 Kings 3:10-14. What was God's answer?
7. Solomon's wisdom was put to the test right away. Summarize the event that is recorded in 1 Kings 3:16-28.

In New Testament times Jesus identified Solomon as a wise man (Matthew 12:42), and even today we use the expression “the wisdom of Solomon.” Unfortunately, Solomon did not always live wisely. He allowed his wealth and his many wives to turn his heart from the Lord (1 Kings 11:1-6). However, God used Solomon during his lifetime as a writer of inspired Scripture: the majority of the book of Proverbs, which extols wisdom; Song of Solomon, a beautiful love story; Ecclesiastes, which describes the emptiness and folly of a life lived apart from God.

Understanding Wisdom

8. Using a standard dictionary, define knowledge and wisdom; distinguish the differences between them.
- Knowledge
 - Wisdom

10 PEARLS FROM PROVERBS

- Differences

9. Are all “smart” people wise? Can an uneducated person be wise? Explain your answers.

In the spiritual realm a person who possesses *bokmah* [the Hebrew word for “wisdom” used 45 times in Proverbs] in reference to God is one who is both knowledgeable and experienced in following God’s way. So in the Bible’s Wisdom literature being wise means being skilled in godly living. Having God’s wisdom means having the ability to cope with life in a God-honoring way.²

10. Read Proverbs 2:6. Who is the source of wisdom?

11. Read Proverbs 9:10. (a) What is the beginning of wisdom?

(b) What do you think this phrase means? Use your dictionary.

(c) How does fearing God help us have wisdom? (Refer to the definition of wisdom.)

The Value of Wisdom

12. Read Proverbs 3:13-18. In this passage wisdom is personified as a woman; the pronouns “her” and “she” refer to wisdom. According to these verses, what are the values of wisdom?

13. What does Proverbs 16:16 teach about the value of wisdom?

14. Why do you think Solomon placed such high value on wisdom?

The Wise Person

15. The following verses tell us about the wise person and how she lives. Read each verse and note the characteristic of the wise person.
 - Proverbs 3:13

 - Proverbs 9:8, 9; 17:10

 - Proverbs 12:15

12 *PEARLS FROM PROVERBS*

- Proverbs 14:16
- Proverbs 16:21
- Proverbs 3:35

Christ, the Wisdom of God

16. Read 1 Corinthians 1:24. (a) How is Jesus Christ described in this verse?

(b) Read verse 30. What did Christ become for us?

Man apart from God knows only worldly wisdom. (See 1 Corinthians 3:19 and 20 and James 3:15–17.) Worldly wisdom may help a person survive in this world, but it does nothing to help a person prepare for eternity. The wisdom of which Solomon wrote—the skill to live a godly life—comes only from being rightly related to Jesus Christ.

Sin broke our relationship with God. We have all sinned (Romans 3:23). Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking on Himself the punishment for our sin (Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24). When we place our trust in the work He did and receive the free gift of salvation (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8, 9), the relationship is restored.

The plan of salvation is so simple—and so opposite of what man strives to do; namely, work to win God's favor—that Paul said “the preaching [message] of the cross is . . . foolishness” to people who do not receive God's gift (1 Corinthians 1:18). But “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). To those who believe, Christ is our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. In Christ alone can a person be truly wise.

Jesus Christ is made to me, All I need, all I need,
He alone is all my plea, He is all I need.
Wisdom, righteousness and power, Holiness this very
hour;
My redemption full and free, He is all I need.

—*Unknown*



Proverbs in Practice

1. Explain the wisdom described in Proverbs in your own words.
2. How can a person who is uneducated as far as this world is concerned be wise in God's sight?
3. Why do you think the wisest man who ever lived (apart from Jesus Christ) lived foolishly at the end of his life?
4. Have you believed the "foolish" message of the preaching of the cross? Has Jesus Christ been made wisdom to you?
5. For what life situations do you need wisdom this week? Claim the promise of James 1:5 for those situations.



Proverbs in Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, at the start of this study in Proverbs, I come to You, asking for wisdom. You have said that it is better to get wisdom than to have gold. Lord, I want Your wisdom! I want to respond to life in a way that pleases You. Having Your wisdom will help me avoid evil and the things that displease You. I honor and revere You as the infinite God, Who is all wisdom. And I come to You in the name of the Lord Jesus, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Amen.

Notes

1. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1985), p. 903.
2. Walvoord and Zuck, p. 902.