

We might rightly ask, ‘Why study a book of Wisdom during the Easter Season?’ Isn’t this the time to focus on the blessings won for us on the cross and the sure hope that is ours by Christ’s resurrection from the dead? But what better time? As we bask in the beautiful promises of sins forgiven and the final resurrection to life, the Lord encourages us to live for him now and to share the Good News! There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. *Students are encouraged to read one chapter per day and answer the study questions.*

King Solomon is known for wisdom. When Solomon became king over Israel, God’s chosen nation (after King David his father), the Lord appeared to him in a dream in the night and said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Solomon humbly said, “I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties...so give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people...” I Kings 3:5-9 He asked for wisdom! Since he asked for wisdom not for long life or wealth or the death of his enemies, God gave him great WISDOM like none before him or after him as well as Wealth and Honor. “Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and his song numbered a thousand and five.” I Kings 4:32 The book of Proverbs is a collection of close to six hundred of the three thousand.

Proverbs presents observations drawn from various areas of life, arrived at by means of a God-given understanding of man’s sinful nature, of physical creation, of moral order, of God’s rule and revelation and substantiated by experience. The book instructs the young and the inexperienced in the true wisdom of life. It also is of great value for more experienced Christians who are too often prone to forget real wisdom under the influence of the sinful world, the Devil and our sinful flesh. Might I suggest that every Christian should read this little book at least once every year. It provides valuable instruction and is worthy of our study and meditation.

Real wisdom can only come from one source, “*a fear of the Lord*” or faith in the Lord as our Savior (1:7). Faith in Christ is its beginning and its end. Only the believer can truly understand and appreciate what God in Christ has done for us and has a desire to do his will. Luther commented, “The book may justly be called a book of good works, in which Solomon instructs *young people in particular* to lead a good life before God in this world.” If we will but read and listen to that advice, we may be better able to avoid the sins that so easily overtake us and lead us astray!

The book is divided into three parts:

- 1) Chapters 1-9 Connected essays of wisdom (especially the benefit of wisdom);
- 2) Chapters 10-29 Specific single Maxims (wise sayings);
- 3) Chapters 30,31 Two appendices (Warnings & especially, Praise of a good wife).

The book is poetic in form and often, especially in the “wise sayings” or maxims will contrast the first half of the verse with what follows. The contrast often takes the form of the “wise” or those with more mature wisdom versus the “simple” or those who will suffer for their ignorance or foolishness.

This first section of the book contains a series of connected sayings, praising the wisdom of the true fear of God (faith) and exposing the folly of a sinful life.

The Theme (1:1-7)

1. What was God's purpose in sharing these proverbs with God's people? (1:2-4)
2. For whom are they intended? Two groups. (1:4 & 1:5)
3. Where does real wisdom begin? (1:7)

A Call to Embrace Wisdom (1:8-33)

4. To whom should the young turn to for advice? (1:8)
5. Against whom does he warn us? (1:10) What is their end?
6. Wisdom is personified (1:20ff) or given human characteristics. The simple are those who have no moral direction or are inclined towards evil.
What will be their end if they reject Wisdom? (1:33) Do we see this happening today?

The Benefits of Wisdom (Chapters 2 & 3)

7. How diligently should we seek after God's Wisdom? (2:4)
8. Who alone gives true wisdom? (2:6)
9. What is the Moral benefit of wisdom? (2:12ff)
10. The Lord invites us to trust in him (3:5). What other benefits does he promise? (3:2,4,10,23,24)?
11. How does the Lord contrast the wicked with the righteous (believers)? (3:32-35)

Do not Forsake Wisdom (Chapter 4)

12. Get and retain wisdom, at what cost? (4:7)
13. Note the contrast between the "way of the wicked" and the "path of the righteous" or believers.
Where does each lead? (4:18,19)

Maintain Discretion – The Adulterous (Chapter 5)

14. How is the adulterous described? (5:3-6)
Why does she seem so appealing? What is her end?
15. What is the end for those captivated by her fatal attraction? (5:8-14)

16. In Proverbs 5:15-19, we have an encouragement to keep the physical /sexual relationship inside of marriage (“every man should have his own wife” as St. Paul says.) What will be the end for those who lack such discipline? (5:22-23)

Other Warnings – Folly (Chapter 6,7)

17. What is the warning about co-signing on a loan? (6:1-5)
18. The industry of the ant is praised. How is the lazy person pictured?
What will his end be? (6:6-11)
19. We see the picture of the wayward wife (think of TV - “The Good Wife and Scandal”).
(6:24-29) What is lacking for those caught in this sin? (6:32)
20. Upon whom does the adulterous prey? (7:7)
What is her appeal? (7:10-20)
What is the end for her victim? (7:22-23)

Wisdom and Folly (Personified) – Their Calls (Chapters 8,9)

21. What blessing comes from truly wise rulers? (8:14-16)
22. How long has wisdom been around – God’s wisdom? (8:22-30) In what sense was wisdom the guiding principle in creation?
23. Lady Wisdom invites all to her banquet, especially those who are “simple” or “those lacking judgment”. How does the response of a “mocker” to correction differ from that of a “wise man”?
(9:7-9) How does the invitation of Lady Folly differ? (9:13-18)
24. Where alone can we find true understanding? (9:10) What is the reward of the wise? (9:12)