

PROVERBS

The Wisdom of Walking in God's Way

Why Proverbs?

If you were given the opportunity to sit down and learn from the wisest person on the planet, would you? I think most of us would jump at that chance! What would you want to know? Would you want to learn how to handle your finances or how to deal with difficult people? Would you want to get advice on training your children or counsel about a sticky problem concerning a particular relationship? You might have questions about the best way to handle dozens of practical issues that relate to your life.

God actually does give us the opportunity to learn from the wisest person who ever lived through the book of Proverbs. Proverbs was largely written by King Solomon. Before Solomon was made King, he asked the Lord for an understanding heart and God answered that prayer by giving him wisdom that exceeded all who preceded him and who would come after him. In 1 Kings 3:12, God said to Solomon, *"...I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you."*

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men... He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five...And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:29-34).

The wisdom Solomon received from God has been recorded in Scripture for our benefit! God included many of the proverbs spoken by Solomon in the Old

Testament book of Proverbs, which is a discipleship manual for practical living.

Proverbs deals with our relationship with God in practical terms.

Central to discipleship is a right relationship with God. The book of Proverbs directs us to orient our lives so that our choices please the Lord.

The concept of wisdom in Scripture does not deal as much with what you know, as it does with what you do with what you know. Biblical wisdom is the ability to make choices in life that reveal that God is at the very core of one's life.

Proverbs addresses issues of character.

A godly person is not merely someone who professes to believe certain truths, but rather someone who puts those truths into practice.

One of our greatest failures as Christians is not that we know too little, but that we don't do what we know. Proverbs forces us to translate biblical principles into personal practice.

Proverbs reveals that what is right is also what is good.

While Proverbs does teach us how to be happy and how to prosper, this is not the primary aim of the book. More than anything else, we are instructed in Proverbs to be godly and righteous in our conduct. Those who pursue happiness as their goal in life will not find it, but those who seek holiness will also find happiness as a by-product.



LOOK CLOSELY

observation

Solomon is the writer of most of the proverbs in the book of proverbs (see Proverbs 1:1). As we begin our study through proverbs, by way of introduction, this week we will examine 1 Kings 3:5-14, which describes where Solomon received his wisdom.

1 Kings 3:5-14

5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" 6 And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7 "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 "And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" 10 The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 "behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 "And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. 14 "So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

- **What did you find most interesting about this passage?**
- **Before you decide what this passage means, look closely at what it says.**

From v 5 identify how the LORD "appeared" to Solomon

From v 5 identify what God said to Solomon

From v 6 identify the words Solomon uses to describe his father's walk before God

From vv 6-9 identify the words and phrases Solomon uses to describe God's actions

Identification Key

Develop your own key for identifying the various words and phrases in the text provided. Use different colored pencils, circles, boxes, underlining, etc., but be consistent from week-to-week.

From v 9 and v 11 identify the request Solomon makes of God

From vv 10-14, identify God's response to Solomon's request

From v 11 identify what Solomon did not ask

Circle 'because' in v 11; 'so that' in v 12, 13; 'So,' 'if,' 'then' in v 14



THINK CAREFULLY

interpretation

- v 5 **"...in a dream..."** This is the first of 2 appearances of God to Solomon (1 Kings 9:1-9). Even personal appearances by God cannot guarantee a life of commitment—that requires committed obedience.
- v 6 **"...mercy...kindness ..."** Hebrew hesed – a term denoting God's covenant faithfulness. God is true to his promises. Note how this word was used to show God's faithfulness to David (2 Sam 22:51; 1 Kin 3:6; Psa 89:1-37).
- vv 7-9 **"...your servant..."** Solomon viewed himself as subject to God. His position as king would be under God's direction and authority.
- v 7 **"...little child..."** Solomon is approximately 20 years old at this time. Clearly he was young for the task ahead of him, but the emphasis of this term is on his inexperience in government (see, 1 Chron 22:5, 25:1).
- v 8 **"...your people..."** "The responsibilities facing Solomon were all the greater in that Israel was God's chosen nation. She had to be governed in accordance with God's precepts if the people were to experience his blessing." (Frank E Gaebelain, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 46).
- v 9 **"...understanding heart ..."** Literally 'a hearing heart'. Solomon wants God to guide his decisions as he carefully fulfills his new responsibilities as Israel's king.

How do the words Solomon uses to describe himself reveal a heart that is pleasing to God?

What in the passage exposes that Solomon had a proper view of God's role in his life?

How does Solomon's request show humility?

Where did Solomon believe was the source of wisdom?

Even though Solomon had the Law of God, why do you think he asked for wisdom?

What does God's response to Solomon's request reveal about wisdom?

Compare Solomon's request with Paul's prayers in Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-10. How should the content of these prayers affect the way we pray for others and ourselves?



RESPOND WISELY

application

In what ways do you feel inadequate to handle life's responsibilities on your own?

How does your view of God move you to acknowledge a complete reliance on Him?

If God offered to grant you a request, what would you ask for?

How does God's response to Solomon encourage you?

Based on God's response to Solomon, do you believe that God will always provide what you need to be what He has called you to be? Why or why not?

Does God always grant a prayer for wisdom (see James 1:5-8)?

List some things that might keep you from God's wisdom.

What steps can you take to increase in wisdom?

Solomon reflected a heart to please God, an attitude of humility, and a right view of God. As a result, he understood his need for wisdom from God. List some ways that parents can direct their children to pursue God and see a heart for wisdom develop in their lives.