

MASTERING  
THE ENGLISH  
BIBLE

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes,  
Song of Solomon



DAVID W. CLOUD

*Mastering the English Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*

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Sample

# Introduction to *Mastering the English Bible*

*Mastering the English Bible* is a comprehensive survey of the Old and New Testaments, covering the Bible's full history and every book of the Bible.

It consists of the following segments:

- Old Testament History Genesis to the Silent Years
- Old Testament Job to Psalms
- Old Testament Proverbs
- Old Testament Prophetic Books
- The Gospels
- Acts
- Romans to Corinthians
- Galatians to Thessalonians
- Pastoral Epistles
- General Epistles
- Revelation

*Mastering the English Bible* is for beginning Bible students as well as for advanced ones. It is for youngsters (teens and above) and oldsters. In fact, the Bible pictures can be used for children. It is for individuals, homes, and churches. It is for preachers, both for those formally educated and informally.

*Mastering the English Bible* is nearly a complete Bible college curriculum in one course. The aim is to educate the student in **Bible history**, **Bible times** (e.g., Egypt, ancient Babylon, the Hittites, Assyria, neo-Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome), **Bible interpretation** (e.g., context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, defining words, paying attention to details, understanding repetition, interpreting metaphoric language), **Bible doctrine**, **theological terms**, **Bible geography**, **Bible typology** (e.g., the Passover, the Tabernacle, the Levitical Priesthood, the Levitical offerings), **Bible culture**, **Bible biography**, **Bible archaeology**, and **Bible prophecy**, and to teach the fundamentals of the law of Moses, the Gospel, Israel, and the Church. The course aims to give the student a broad comprehension of the Bible as a whole and how that each part fits into the whole.

*Mastering the English Bible* is very practical. There are extensive lessons on prayer, Christian growth, spiritual warfare, the husband-wife relationship, child training, evangelism, church planting, pastors, deacons, church discipline, the woman's ministry, youth discipleship, the church as a body, spiritual gifts, congregational singing, and much more.

*Mastering the English Bible* is accompanied by the *Way of Life Pictorial Bible*, which is an extensive series of multimedia PowerPoints packed with detailed maps, historical backgrounds, treasures from archaeology, Bible pictures, reconstructive drawings of ancient places, charts, video clips, and other visual aids. Many of these were captured by the author in the best archaeological museums in America and abroad, plus research trips to Israel, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Europe, and England.

*Mastering the English Bible* is the textbook, and *The Pictorial Bible* is the multi-media supplement. Both are an essential part of the course.

*Mastering the English Bible* is more than a Bible course. It is a philosophy that a true New Testament church is a church in which every member is a serious, lifelong Bible student. If this is not the case, the church cannot possibly be what God wants it to be. It cannot even have the congregational singing that God requires. Consider Colossians 3:16, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This is a description of a true New Testament church. It is a church in which the Word of God is dwelling in the members richly, not slightly, dwelling in all wisdom, meaning that the Word of God is getting down into the daily lives and producing practical wisdom for godly Christian living.

To be a serious, lifelong Bible student is necessary to know God (the greatest benefit), to know God’s will, to be prepared for God’s will (priest, ambassador, teacher, soldier, builder of the church, minister of spiritual gifts, and builder of the home); to make wise decisions; to be victorious in spiritual warfare; and to grow in Christ. Philip Henry, father of the Bible commentator Matthew Henry, observed, “All grace grows as love to the word of God grows.”

The goal is that this course will be the foundation for a whole life of Bible study. The student must learn how to carve out time from his schedule so that he makes daily Bible study a habit; he must learn how to *read* the Bible and how to *study* the Bible; he must learn how to apply rules of interpretation and how to use Bible study tools and how to pursue Bible study projects. These things are taught in the Way of Life course *The Effectual Bible Student*.

[https://www.wayoflife.org/publications/books/effectual\\_bible\\_student.php](https://www.wayoflife.org/publications/books/effectual_bible_student.php). This is a basic course. The advanced course is *Understanding the Bible for Yourself*, also available from Way of Life Literature.

*Mastering the English Bible* is a product of 49 years of serious Bible study and teaching. The author has a passion to help God’s people become effectual Bible students, beginning at the youngest age possible. The church and the home are to work in harmony toward this objective.

*Mastering the English Bible* also features a syllabus, review questions, tests, test scores, and other teaching tools. These are available to those who purchase the textbooks and register online.

The course syllabus is very important. It explains the course objectives, the requirements, and the student projects, and it gives a weekly timeline of what the student should accomplish and when to take the tests. It is a class schedule that can be used by teachers or by private students. For the larger courses, there are two ‘paces,’ one shorter and one longer.

### **No shortcut to learning the Bible**

- It requires commitment, sacrifice, labor, persistence, and holiness.
- Proverbs 2 likens the pursuit of spiritual wisdom to searching for silver. “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Pr. 2:3-6).
- The effectual student has to carve out time from his daily schedule, learn how to study the Bible, obtain the necessary tools, and work at it day by day for his entire life.

# Proverbs

Proverbs is wisdom for the wise and foolish. It can make the foolish man wise and the wise man wiser.

“Proverbs are meant to be to our practical life, what Psalms are to our devotional life” (J. Sidlow Baxter).

I love Proverbs. I discovered this wonderful book when I was a new Christian and began reading it the first year I was saved. The next year, at Bible college, a visiting preacher challenged the students to read a chapter of Proverbs every day, and I started that practice and kept it up for many years. I collected the best commentaries and studied every verse. I wrote my own commentaries on many verses. This was *immensely* profitable. A few months ago, I challenged a young preacher to do the same thing. He followed up by email recently as follows: “I appreciate very much your push of me as a young man to become a more devoted student of God's Word. Your testimony of yourself as a 23 year old young man who gave himself over to studying Proverbs, sparked more desire in my heart to never go a day without listening to or reading over Proverbs. My promptness, punctuality, and prudence have all been improving just over the past several weeks, because there is a stronger desire to be so much better than before to grow in Wisdom in the word of God, as well as in practical daily living.”

## Outline

Introductory Lessons on Proverbs

Proverbs for “My Son” (Pr. 1:7 - 9:18)

Topical Studies

## Introductory Lessons on Proverbs

1. The English title “Proverbs” is from the Latin Bible (*proverbium*). The Hebrew title is *Sepher Mashal* (book of wisdom). For a title to the book, I like this better than *Proverbs*. It is the book of practical wisdom!
2. The theme of the book of Proverbs is finding wisdom through the fear of the Lord. See Proverbs 1:2-3, 7.
3. Proverbs is not merely a collection of wise sayings. “God” and “LORD” are mentioned 190 times. Proverbs is revelation about God. Proverbs is a schoolmaster to teach men about God. This is the main knowledge that every person needs for life and eternity.

Following are just a few of the things that Proverbs teaches about God:

- God is in His character what Proverbs teaches in principle (i.e. justice, judgment, honesty, equity, righteousness, truth, light)
- God calls sinners to repent and receive wisdom (Pr. 1:20-23)
- God pours out His Spirit on those who turn at His reproof (Pr. 1:23).
- God judges those who reject His call (Pr. 1:24-30; 3:33)
- God gives wisdom to men (Pr. 3:5).

- God corrects those He loves (Pr. 3:12).
- God created the world by His wisdom (Pr. 3:19).
- God watches over those who fear Him (Pr. 3:26).
- God sees all things that man does (Pr. 5:21; 15:3, 11).
- God hates evil (Pr. 6:16-19).
- God cares for the righteous (Pr. 10:3).
- God hates a false balance (Pr. 11:1).
- God hears the prayer of the righteous (Pr. 15:29).
- God is in control of man's speech (Pr. 16:1).
- God understands man's motives (Pr. 16:2).
- God made all things for Himself (Pr. 16:4).
- God is in ultimate control of man's ways (Pr. 16:9, 33; 21:1; 21:31).
- God cares for the poor and blesses those who help the poor (Pr. 19:17).
- God's will cannot be resisted (Pr. 21:30).

4. In Proverbs, we see that God is concerned about every detail of man's life and has seen fit to show us the way of wisdom in the most minute matters. That the Creator would see fit to give a book of practical wisdom to sinful, careless men is an amazing thing and is an evidence of His grace. "The Book of Proverbs gives us the application of that wisdom which created the heavens and the earth to the details of life in this world of confusion and evil. This thought brings out the immensity of grace unfolded here. God deigns to apply His wisdom to the circumstances of our practical life, and to shew us, with His own intelligence, the consequences of all the ways in which man may walk. For it is often in the way of knowledge, not of precept, that the statements made in the Book of Proverbs are presented. It is a great blessing to be provided for in the labyrinth of this world, in which a false step may lead to such bitter consequences, with a book that sets forth the path of prudence and of life; and that in connection with a wisdom which comes from God" (John Darby).

5. Young people can learn wisdom. In fact, this is the best time to learn wisdom and this is where Proverbs begins. Proverbs is first of all a book for youth. See Pr. 1:4; 4:1; 5:7; 7:24; 8:32. In contrast to most teaching given to young people in churches today, Proverbs is very serious and has great depth. Churches cannot compete with the world's entertainment, but they can give young people something they won't get anywhere else, and that is eternal wisdom. Churches need to trade the entertainment program for the wisdom program.

6. The book of Proverbs is intended not only for Old Testament saints but also for New Testament saints. The writer of Hebrews quotes from Proverbs and applies it to the churches. Proverbs 3:11 says, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction." This is quoted in Hebrews 12:5 where we are told that the exhortation in Proverbs 3:11 speaks to New Testament believers. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which SPEAKETH UNTO YOU as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Each believer should see himself as the "son" to whom Proverbs is addressed in God's love and grace.

7. True godliness and wisdom are very practical. It gets down to where we live our everyday lives and involves every activity and relationship. Preaching that does not have this level of

practicality is not good Bible preaching. The New Testament teaches the same thing. In Titus 2 Paul gave practical instructions to each class of believer, the aged men, the aged women, the young men, and the young women, and preceded this instruction with these words: “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). The things that become, or are fitting to, sound doctrine are practical Christian living.

8. The book of Proverbs contains more wisdom about human life and the operation of home, society, commerce, and government than all of this world’s secular colleges and universities combined. There is more sound information on child training in the little book of Proverbs than in all of the child psychology books that have ever been written. As David Thomas wrote in about 1884, “The Book of Proverbs is a far better guide for a young man in business than Adam Smith or the *Times*.” (*The Times* is the famous London newspaper.)

9. The breadth of Proverbs is amazing. It contains practical wisdom for every type and class of person, for the king and the subject, the simple and the prudent, the male and the female, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the wise and the foolish, the married and the unmarried, the husband and the wife, the parent and the child, the angry and the calm, the patient and the impatient, the sluggard and the diligent, the friend and the enemy, the sad and the joyful, the one who talks much and the one who talks little.

10. The book of Proverbs is a mirror that shows us the condition of our hearts. I remember when I first started studying Proverbs as a very young Christian, and I was discouraged to find that I had some characteristics of the foolish person described by Solomon. I was “soon angry,” for example (Pr. 14:17). But the Word of God is not only a mirror, it is the means of repentance and spiritual power, and the individual who looks into Proverbs’ mirror can find cleansing and change by confessing what he sees there to the merciful God of his salvation.

11. The biographical portraits in the Bible are illustrated in the Proverbs. Consider three examples:

Haman is an example of Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” See Esther 3-7.

David’s encounter with Bathsheba is an example of Proverbs 28:13, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper,” and Proverbs 14:14, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways...” Compare Ps. 51:8-12.

Shimei and Goliath are examples of Proverbs 26:2, “... the curse causeless shall not come.” See 1 Sa. 17:42-51 and 2 Sa. 16:5-7.

12. The training of Proverbs is preparation for Christ’s kingdom (Pr. 2:20-22). His kingdom will be a kingdom of wisdom, righteousness, justice, and equity, and this is what we learn in Proverbs.

### What is a proverb?

1. The Hebrew word for proverb is *mashal*, the same word translated “parable,” and means to compare one thing with another. As we will see, most of the Proverbs are in the form of Hebrew parallelism or comparison statements.

2. The English word “proverb” is from *pro* (for) and *verba* (words) and is “a short statement that takes the place of many words.”



3. A proverb contains a wealth of teaching, but it is given in a form that is easy to remember. Consider Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” That is 11 words in English and 7 words in Hebrew but it contains unforgettable and far-reaching truth.

“The genius of the proverb lies in its shrewd concentration of a truth or of some sagacious counsel in a terse and striking way, so that it catches on, and becomes easier to remember than to forget” (*Explore the Book*).

4. Following are some other definitions of the term *proverb*:

“A proverb is a wise saying in which a few words are chosen instead of many, with a design to condense wisdom into a brief form both to aid memory and stimulate study”

“A proverb is a saying that conveys a specific truth in a pointed and pithy way.”

“A proverb is a short sentence drawn from long experience.”

“A proverb is a truth that is couched in a form that is easy to remember.”

”A proverb is a pithy statement that summarizes in a few choice words practical truths relating to some aspect of everyday life.”

“A proverb is wisdom in portable form.”

### **The human authors of Proverbs**

1. Solomon wrote Proverbs 1-29. We are told that he spoke 3,000 proverbs (1 Ki. 4:32), and we have perhaps 700 of these in the book of Proverbs. Solomon refers to his proverbs in Ecclesiastes 12:9, “And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.”

- Solomon was David’s son, the king of Israel.

- In his youth Solomon delighted in the Lord and was given great wisdom (1 Ki. 3:3-28; 4:29-34).

- Solomon’s kingdom was large and very wealthy (1 Ki. 10).

- Solomon wrote two other books of Scripture, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes.

- Solomon turned away from the Lord in his later years, but he repented and wrote Ecclesiastes as his swan song. See 1 Kings 11:1-8 and Ecclesiastes 12:8-14.

2. Agur the son of Jakeh wrote Proverbs 30. All we know for sure is that Agur was a prophet who spoke this message by divine revelation. Since he gave both his name and his father’s name, it is probable that Agur was well known to his generation, and it is probable that his proverbs were collected by the men of Hezekiah. Compare Proverbs 25:1.

3. King Lemuel wrote Proverbs 31 from the prophecy that his mother taught him (Pr. 31:1). Most conservative commentators have identified Lemuel as Solomon. Following are some examples:

- The Geneva Bible notes of 1557 said: “Lemuel, that is, of Solomon who was called Lemuel, that is, of God, because God had ordained him to be king over Israel. The doctrine which his mother Bathsheba taught him.”

- Matthew Poole, writing in about 1670, said, “It is believed by most conservative commentators, both Jewish and Christian, that Lemuel was Solomon.”

poor for our sake. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Co. 8:9). Consider Proverbs 18:24, “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,” reminds us of One who is a Friend of sinners indeed (Mt. 11:19)!

### **Outline of Proverbs**

The Purpose of Proverbs (Pr. 1:1-7)

The Proverbs for “my son” (Pr. 1:8 - 9:18)

The Proverbs of Solomon (Pr. 10-29)

The Proverbs of Agur (Pr. 30)

The Proverbs of Lemuel from his mother (Pr. 31)

### **Statements about Proverbs**

“The book of Proverbs gives us the application of that wisdom which created the heavens and the earth, to the details of life in this world of confusion and evil. This thought brings out the immensity of grace unfolded here” (J.N. Darby).

“The great object in each of the Proverbs ... is to enforce a moral principle in words so few, that they may be easily learnt, and so curiously selected and arranged, that they may strike and fix the attention instantaneously; while, to prevent the mind from becoming fatigued by a long series of detached sentences, they are perpetually diversified by the changes of style and figure. ... We look into this Book, and, as by the aid of the microscope, we see the minuteness of our Christian obligations; that there is not a temper, a look, a word, a movement, the most important action of the day, the smallest relative duty, in which we do not either deface or adorn the image of our Lord, and the profession of his name” (Charles Bridges).

“In this little book there appears more wisdom than in the combined monuments of Greek and Roman learning. The wisest of men wrote it, and his object is to make us wise:--But a greater than Solomon is here, for Wisdom speaks in her own person” (George Lawson).

“The Proverbs are so justly founded on principles of human nature, and so adapted to the permanent interests of man, that they agree with the manners of every age, and may be assumed as rules for the direction of our conduct in every condition and rank of life, however varied in its complexion or diversified by circumstances; they embrace not only the concerns of private morality but the great objects of political importance” (James Gray).

“What an importance attaches to all that I do if the God who created me and redeemed me does not consider it beneath His notice to instruct me concerning my behavior in the family, my place in society, and my methods in business. All are under His eye; and if I act in accordance with the book of Proverbs, I shall ‘behave myself wisely, in a perfect way,’ in every relationship of life. ... To the Christian who would hold the balance of truth, the precepts and warnings of Proverbs will have their place along with the precious truths of Ephesians. ... But as ‘the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,’ so the soul that most deeply enters into the reality of new creation will most appreciate the instruction of the great practical book of the Old Testament” (H. A. Ironside).

“Written by Solomon and others, the colorfully poetic book of Proverbs provides a liberal education. It covers a wide range of subjects—from spanking a child to ruling a kingdom. One sometimes wonders if there is any truth that is not found here, at least in germ form. It speaks of the liquor problem, installment buying, juvenile delinquency, and labor management. You will meet all kinds of

people here—the brawling woman, the proud fool, the man who does not like to be told his faults, and the ideal wife. And best of all, the Lord Jesus is here, speaking to us as Wisdom personified” (*Daily Notes*).

“Proverbs ought to be studied by believers as diligently as any other portion of God’s Holy Word. The prayerful searcher will soon be rewarded by many nuggets of divine truth” (Arno Gaebelein).

“Proverbs are laws from heaven for life on earth” (William Arnot).

“Like those concentrated essences of food, which explorers carry in their knapsacks, the proverb may not present to the eye the appearance of the wisdom that it was originally made of; but a great quantity of the raw material has been used up in making one, and that one, when skillfully dissolved, will spread out to its original dimensions. Much matter is pressed into little room, that it may keep, and carry. Wisdom, in this portable form, acts an important part in human life” (Arnot).

“This book unfolds the path of wisdom and way of blessing, not for eternity but for time, and not for Heaven but for earth. ... All, whether king or subject, master or servant, father or son, mother or daughter, husband or wife, will find the sayings contained here, invaluable, and he who directs his life accordingly will, under the moral government of God, spend a happy, useful, and prosperous life. The book should be carefully studied by all, and especially would it be to the advantage of the young, were these proverbs stored up in the heart and memory, and right blessed will the man be who orders his life by them” (Walter Scott).

### Proverbs for “My Son” (Proverbs 1:7 - 9:18)

“My son” is repeated 15 times in this passage (Pr. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:10, 20; 5:1, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1).

#### PROVERBS 1:7-33

##### The three most important lessons of life (Pr. 1:7-19)

The teaching of these three lessons must be the objective of every parent, every pastor, and every teacher. Education apart from these three fundamentals is humanism.

None of these things are in the child by nature. He has no fear of God; he has no respect for authority; he does not hate evil.

##### 1. A right relationship with God (Pr. 1:7)

- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. This refers to the true knowledge of life, of wisdom. Compare Pr. 9:10, ‘The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.’ Men may have much knowledge (in the sense of learning) apart from a right relationship with God, but such knowledge is not wisdom. It has no eternal benefit.

- The fear of the Lord is to submit to God as the God of my life. Proverbs defines the fear of the Lord in four ways: (1) **The fear of the Lord is humble submission to God; it is the opposite of a disobedient spirit** (“*but* fools despise wisdom and instruction,” Pr. 1:7). (2) **The fear of the Lord is a right relationship with God’s Word** (Pr. 2:1-5). It is impossible to walk in the fear of the Lord apart from the Bible. In Psalm 19 the Scripture is called six things, and one of those is “the fear of the Lord” (Ps. 19:9). An intimate relationship with the Bible is a necessary part of walking in the fear of God. (3) **The fear of the Lord is to hate evil** (Pr. 8:13). (4) **The fear of the Lord is to reject sinners** (Pr. 23:17). It is to walk in the narrow way of truth and reject the broad way of the world (Mt. 7:13-14). “[The fear of the Lord] is that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and

carefully to his Father's law. His wrath is so bitter, and His love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please Him, and--because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations--a holy watchfulness and fear, 'that he might not sin against Him'" (Charles Bridges).

- The fear of the Lord comes through salvation. Wisdom comes when a sinner repents and bows his knees to God and receives God's salvation in Jesus Christ ("repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Ac. 20:21). The Holy Spirit comes into that person's life and imparts wisdom (1 Jo. 2:27). Only then can a sinner understand God's Word properly, for the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Co. 2:13).

- Children learn the fear of the Lord by wise child training, the kind we see in Proverbs that includes the use of the rod for correction. Biblical child training is a schoolmaster to lead children to Christ. The discipline teaches them that God is holy and just and punishes sin; it teaches them that they are sinners; and it leads them to Christ.

## 2. Submission to authority (Pr. 1:8-9)

- Wisdom teaches submission to God-ordained human authority, beginning with parental authority. God is a God of order. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Ro. 13:3). The fifth commandment, which is to honor thy father and thy mother, is the first of God's commandments that had a promise associated with it (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3).

- Submission to parental authority is the fundamental aspect of a well-ordered society. When this is broken, society is broken and the nation is ruined. In the end times, there are powerful forces devoted to stirring up rebellion to authority at every level of society. It is the devil's mystery of iniquity plan to create disorder and to put his man on the throne of the world. These forces include Marxism, Socialism, humanistic psychology, and the pop culture which encourages children and youth to live as they please.

- The child is to be taught to obey all God-appointed authority, not only parents. This includes government rulers, police, pastors, and teachers (Ro. 13:7). There is to be respect for elders in general. Compare 1 Pe. 5:5.

- The one exception to submission to authority is when the authority contradicts God's authority. The higher law must always be obeyed ("We ought to obey God rather than men," Ac. 5:29). If a young person has parents who want him to go in the ways of folly, he must honor God more than his parents. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10:37). Yet even when the young person must refuse to follow unwise parental laws, he must still treat them with all possible respect and honor.

- Note that the law of one's mother is to be obeyed as well as the law of the father (Pr. 1:8). It is natural for mothers to spend more time with the children than the father, and her law is to be obeyed just as surely as the father's.

- Note that both parents are to be involved in the training of the children. The father is mentioned first because he is responsible to oversee all things that are done in the household. Compare Eph. 6:4, "And ye fathers ... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." God made Adam first, then Eve, and Adam was responsible even for Eve's error. Though Eve sinned first, God addressed Adam first (Ge. 3:9-10). Adam was judged for hearkening to the voice of his wife in the wrong thing (Ge. 3:17).

- Note that both instruction and law are needed in effective child training (Pr. 1:8). Parents have an obligation to lay down the law for their children. This is contrary to the modern method of "positive"

child training. The parents also have an obligation to instruct their children as to the reason for the law. They are to make them understand why we are to fear God and why wisdom is better than folly.

- Proverbs promises that obedience to parents is an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck (Pr. 1:9). The attitude of submission to authority is a beautiful thing in a young person. It is beautiful before God and man. Joseph had this beauty, as did David and Daniel and Jesus and Timothy. The attitude of submission to authority is far more beautiful than expensive designer clothes. Though the world does not value obedience, God does. It is beautiful before Him, and He will reward it. Proverbs teaches the true wisdom, the true beauty, the true riches.

### 3. Separation from evil (Pr. 1:10-19)

- "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not ... walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path" (Pr. 1:10, 15). Separation is a necessary part of walking in wisdom. It is a major theme of these chapters that are addressed to children and youth. Compare Pr. 1:10, 15; 4:14-15, 25-26; 5:8; 7:25; 9:6. Separation is almost a dirty word in Christianity today, but that is a sign of apostasy. Separation is much emphasized in Scripture and it is a matter of spiritual and moral protection. If a young person is regenerated and has wise parents and teachers who instruct him, he can still go astray into folly if he does not avoid wrong associations. Thus the Psalms begin with separation (Ps. 1:1) and the New Testament is filled with it. "... mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Ro. 16:17); "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Co. 15:33); "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Co. 6:17); "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11); "... withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" (2 Th. 3:6); "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Ti. 2:22); "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Ti. 3:5); "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4); "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jo. 2:15). For neglect of separation, Lot lost his family, Samson was blinded, Solomon turned to idols, and Demas forsook God's call.

- Sinners entice the righteous (Pr. 1:10). Not content to mind their own business, sinners are aggressive proselytizers. The devil drew many angels after him in his rebellion, and his chief business still is enticing others. Sinners entice in many ways: *by mocking righteousness and wisdom* and trying to make the person feel that he is not "cool" if he obeys God ("fools despise wisdom and instruction, Pr. 1:7), *by promising friendship* ("come with us ... cast in thy lot among us," Pr. 1:11, 14), *by promising excitement* ("let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily ... their feet run to evil," Pr. 1:11, 16), *by promising gain* ("we shall find all precious substance," Pr. 1:13). There are always testings and temptations in this present world.

- These sinners do not understand true riches. They speak of "precious substance" (Pr. 1:13), but in reality such "riches" are vanity that take wings and fly away (Pr. 23:5). True riches are "durable riches" (Pr. 8:18). They are those things that have eternal value (Mt. 6:19-20). "They call it precious substance; whereas it is neither substance nor precious; it is a shadow; it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery. ... It is cheap, it is common, yet, in their account, it is precious, and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls, in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands that they over-value the wealth of this world and look on it as precious substance" (Matthew Henry).

- These sinners pretend that they are not seen by God ("let us lurk privily," Pr. 1:11). They think they are committing their sin in the dark and in secret, but in fact God sees every thought, word, and deed. "... the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*" (Ps. 139:12).

- She entices men through flattery (“*which flattereth with her words,*” Pr. 2:16). Beware of an insincere, conniving, flattering, beguiling woman! She appeals to man’s natural pride and lust. She doesn’t flatter from a love for her victim. She flatters to get her own way. Flatterers are in love with themselves.

- She despises moral and spiritual instruction and breaks solemn covenants (“*which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God,*” Pr. 2:17). She turns her back on any Bible teaching she has received, any profession of faith she has made, any baptism, any confirmation, any church membership vow, any marital vow.

- Her house inclines unto death and those that enter her ways never return (“*For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life,*” Pr. 2:18-19). Consider three lessons from this passage: (1) This refers to the judgment of the law of Moses. Adultery was a capital offence (Le. 20:10). (2) This probably also refers to the fact that the vast majority who enter her ways are never saved. “Some instances indeed of deliverance are given ... but so rare are they, that it is as if scarcely none that go unto her return again. ... The spell of lust palsies the grasp, by which its victim might have taken hold of the paths of life for deliverance” (Charles Bridges). (3) This also means that once the hook of immorality enters a man or woman, it leaves its deep wounds and scars, even when bitterly repented of and forsaken. Immorality destroys virginity and wounds the soul. The youth who gives himself to sin is greatly harming himself, and even if he is later saved, he will always bewail his sin. He will have lost many things through his waywardness that will not be regained. Virginity lost cannot be restored. The gospel of Jesus Christ regenerates and cleanses and empowers, but it does not restore lost opportunities and wasted talents and the purity of a never-stained conscience. David learned this to his great hurt. Though he repented thoroughly of his sin with Bathsheba and God forgave him, he suffered for the rest of his life in multiple ways. And once a man has committed immorality, it is much easier to commit it again. His moral character is weakened. This is solemn business, and thus Proverbs warns young people to avoid the strange woman at all costs! It is God’s will to grant youth preventative grace that they might not enter into a life of sin. “Once a man is ensnared by her, it is almost impossible to escape. The verse actually seems to rule out any hope of a comeback at all. But many statements in the Bible must be understood as general rules, to which there may be a few exceptions. That is the point here. Once a man is initiated into her secrets, it is extremely hard to regain the right road” (*Bible Believer’s Commentary*).

The last three verses are a prophecy (Pr. 2:20-22). Again, the young person is taught to think about the future, to consider the longterm consequences of his actions. If one walks in wisdom he will avoid these terrible pitfalls and will remain in the way of good men and in the paths of righteousness and will therefore avoid judgment and destruction.

- This is the only sure protection from these evils. The individual that does not personally love the ways of God and possess strong Bible knowledge and godly wisdom and spiritual convictions is easy prey for evil men and the enticements of immorality. In 2021, I asked a 10th grader in a large public high school in America what percentage of the male students were involved in pornography, and without hesitation he replied, “100%.”

## PROVERBS 3

### Proverbs 3:1-12 Practical Lessons on Wisdom

The father gives his son more practical lessons in the way of wisdom (Pr. 3:1-12).

These are beautiful little two-verse jewels that contain endless instruction about life.

Each of the following exhortations is accompanied by a promise of blessing, because blessing always attends obedience.

We see here and elsewhere in Proverbs that parents and teachers and youth workers should aim to develop godly habits in young people--habits such as saying no to sinners (Pr. 1:10), Bible study (Pr. 2:1-4), obeying parents (Pr. 1:8), seeking God's will in all things (Pr. 3:5-6), and tithing (Pr. 3:9-10). Godly habits are difficult for Satan to break. They become part of the individual's character and help form a healthy conscience. Such habits can help a person during periods of spiritual sluggishness from going out into gross sin and suffering the resulting physical and emotional scars.

### 1. Keep the law of your father (Pr. 3:1-2).

- The importance of submitting to one's parents is emphasized by repetition (Pr. 1:8; 2:1; 3:1).
- "My son, forget not my law" (Pr. 3:1). We are exhorted not to forget wisdom because it is easy to forget it. There are many things in life that war against wisdom, many pressures that would cause us to forget wisdom, many enemies of wisdom, both within and without. Jesus warned about "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in" to "choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mr. 4:19).
- "let thine heart keep my commandments" (Pr. 3:1). It is not the mere external obedience that is necessary but obedience from the heart. A young person can obey his or her parents to some extent in appearance even while rebelling in the heart. This is hypocrisy, and it is a recipe for spiritual disaster.
- Again we must be reminded that the Bible is not saying that we must obey our parents regardless of what they command. There is a higher law, and that is the law of God, and a young person must obey God more than man if there is a clear conflict (Ac. 5:29).
- "For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee" (Pr. 3:2). The commandment to submit to parental authority is accompanied by a promise. Compare Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-3. It is usually true that those who live wisely according to God's Word live long lives.
- We see that fathers are to lay down the law for their children. It is their responsibility before God to lead the children in the right way.
- We see that fathers are to intreat their children in a kind and gentle manner, patiently and consistently exhorting them to follow the Lord and winning their hearts by tenderness rather than being overbearing and harsh and unreasonable and inconsistent and thus provoking them to wrath (Eph. 6:4).

### 2. Let not mercy and truth forsake you (Pr. 3:3-4).

- "bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart" (Pr. 3:3). Wisdom must be kept. This is a major theme of Proverbs. It was stated in Pr. 3:1, "My son, forget not my law..." In Pr. 3:3, wisdom is to be bound about the neck, meaning it is to be visible all of the time like a valued necklace. The individual is to be ever mindful of wisdom. Wisdom is to be written upon the table of the heart. It must not be merely an intellectual exercise like a crossword puzzle, something to be done from time to time and forgotten. Wisdom must be received into the depths of one's heart and kept there and protected there. The keeping of wisdom is repeated by way of major emphasis. Wisdom must be embraced (Pr. 4:8), taken fast hold of (Pr. 4:14), kept in the midst of the heart (Pr. 4:21), bound continually upon the heart (Pr. 6:21). There are many enemies and distractions and entanglements that can result in wisdom slipping from our lives. Compare Acts 11:23, "exhorted

provision for his needs (Heb. 13:5), comfort in tribulation (2 Co. 1:4), and many other things, including divine guidance.

4. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil (Pr. 3:7-8).

- The three things of verse 7 go together. The fear of the Lord is humility and departure from evil. The fear of the Lord is *evidenced* by humility and departure from evil.

- The fear of the Lord begins with humility. This is mentioned first. The person who is proud, who thinks that he knows something and refuses instruction and reproof, does not fear the Lord.

- The fear of the Lord requires departing from evil. Many young people in Bible-believing churches profess to know the Lord, but they are rebellious against holy living; they despise the pilgrim Christian lifestyle; they love the world and are conformed to it; they are proud and refuse reproof (Jas. 4:4; 1 Jo. 2:15-16). How they live proves that their profession is a lie.

- To fear the Lord is “health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones” (Pr. 3:8). The fear of the Lord brings great benefit. It must always be the first thing in one’s life. It will be spiritual strength and health for the entire person. It will even bring physical health in most cases. The individual who walks in the fear of the Lord and departs from evil will not be afflicted by the ills that come upon the rebellious. His health will not be destroyed by liquor and drugs and venereal disease and other facets of dissolute living. “The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid” (Matthew Henry).

5. Honor the Lord with thy substance (Pr. 3:9-10).

- Giving to the Lord a portion of one’s substance has been practiced by God’s people at least since the days of Abraham. He tithed to Melchizedek, and this was long before the law of Moses (Ge. 14:20). Jacob also tithed (Ge. 28:22). And Israel tithed (Le. 27:30, 32).

- Giving to the Lord is a matter of honoring the Lord. It is an act of worship. It is a way of acknowledging that God is the source of my life and of everything that I have. Every talent, ability, and opportunity comes from His hand. He owns me and He owns the earth and everything in it (Ps. 24:1). I need to give back a portion to Him for the furtherance of His business on earth.

- Giving to the Lord should be planned, purposeful, and proportionate (“fruitfruits,” Pr. 3:9). It should not be a matter of putting something in the offering plate or giving something once in a while. Giving to the Lord needs to be something that the believer carefully determines and proportionately practices. This is the principle of tithing, which is ten percent. This does not mean that ten percent is all that the believer should give, but it is scriptural to decide on a certain percentage and to give that amount to the Lord regularly.

- Giving to the Lord should be done out of “all thine increase” (Pr. 3:9). Whenever I earn money, whenever I receive a gift, I should honor God with a portion of it.

- Giving to the Lord brings great blessing (Pr. 3:10). God has promised to bless the giver. Compare Mal. 3:10-11; Lu. 6:38; 2 Co. 9:6-8; Php. 4:19. This does not mean that every time I give to the Lord He will give something material back to me. It does not mean that I will get rich if I give to the Lord. It means that He will bless me in many ways for giving and He will meet all of my needs. It is His promise. Those that regularly give to the Lord in a biblical fashion find many blessings, and it has been rightly said that no man has ever out-given the Lord.

6. Despise not the chastening of the Lord (Pr. 3:11-12).



must not be allowed to think that he is somehow better than others just because he is in a Christian home and church. He must be taught that he, too, is sinful before God and has the same fallen heart as the worldly person and must be born again through faith in Jesus Christ before he can be in right relationship with God (John 3).

4. He devises mischief continually (Pr. 6:14).

- There is no rest to his mischief and folly. He has no time for wisdom and truth. He is truly dedicated to mischief. His eyes, hands, and feet are devoted to sin. Unsaved people are not partially good and partially bad. God says they are completely bad in His eyes. See Genesis 6:5; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-19. Some teach that people are basically good and that all they need is to be religious and do good deeds, but the Bible says men are completely evil before God and His objective is not to make them better but to make them new (2 Co. 5:17). This is true Bible salvation, and this new life can only be found in Jesus Christ.

- In contrast to the wicked person who devotes his body to the service of sin, the wise person devotes his body to the service of Christ (Ro. 12:1-2).

5. He soweth discord (Pr. 6:14).

- Wickedness and strife go together. The wicked enjoy discord. They enjoy dividing friends from friends and sons from fathers, and daughters from mothers, etc. They enjoy dividing churches. The reason there is no peace in this world is because of sin. See Isa. 48:22; 57:21. The wicked person sows discord in society and in families by his evil ways; he sows discord by his talebearing and backbiting and evil, but clever, insinuations.

- This does not mean that all discord is sin. See the comment under Proverbs 6:19.

6. His end is sudden destruction (Pr. 6:15).

- Since he is walking in darkness and hates the light, his judgment will come upon him suddenly and unexpectedly. It will come by an automobile accident or a plane crash or by cancer or a heart attack or by a thousand other means. The wicked man is cut off from the earth and lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments (Lu. 16:22-24). Only then does he come to his senses and desire mercy and redemption, but it is too late. He will be "broken without remedy," meaning there is no second chance for salvation, no remedy for his terrible situation. The judgment cannot be reversed. Unsaved men have false hopes that everything will turn out alright in the end, but it will not unless they receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Salvation is not something to put off. Death comes quickly and carries the sinner away to judgment, and the coming of the Lord draws nigh with vengeance upon all that obey not the gospel (2 Th. 1:7-9).

**A warning about the seven things God hates (Pr. 6:16-19)**

Consider some general lessons from this passage:

- We see that God not only loves, He hates. The word "abomination" means something that is hated; an object of disgust; detestable (Ge. 43:32; Isa. 1:13; Lu. 16:15). The "modern" God that loves everything and does not hate sin is an idol. This is the God of end-time apostasy. The 2007 movie, *Evan Almighty*, for example, depicts God as an irreverent "cool" guy who loves but doesn't judge, who is compassionate but not holy. In the movie, God says that the flood of Noah's day was not about God's wrath and anger but more like "a love story about believing in each other and standing side by side." In spite of this gross heresy, the movie's premier concert featured four Contemporary Christian Music groups and the movie was promoted by many Christian organizations and churches. They need to read Proverbs 6:16-19. One of the most popular Christian novels is *The Shack*, which teaches

that God is a non-judgmental buddy who doesn't require repentance and doesn't put any "obligations" on people.

- True Christian love involves hatred of sin and error. God, who is love, hates some things, and His people must also hate that which God hates. Compare Ps. 119:128; Ro. 12:9; Re. 2:6.

- The seven things that God hates actually encompass every sin and transgression against God's law. Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. We see this in the first mention of seven in Scripture, which is in Genesis 2:2 where God rested on the seventh day after creation. Man's pride against God and his fallen heart that deviseth wicked imaginations is the root of all sin. From this fountain, flow the lying tongue, the violent deeds, the running to mischief, the false witness, and the discord.

- This is a description of fallen man. He is completely corrupted. He commits sin with his face and eyes, his tongue, his heart, his feet, and his mouth. Compare Romans 3:13-18. This is why man must be born again in order to enter Christ's kingdom (Joh. 3:3, 5). There must be a supernatural spiritual conversion. And when we are born again, we must reject the "old man" and put on the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).

- Solomon teaches his son about what God hates so that he will learn to know right from wrong. The conscience must be trained. People do not naturally know truth and righteousness. Young people will not be sensitive to sin unless parents and teachers teach them what sin is and emphasize how evil it is before God. Children must learn that God is a Judge and God is a Saviour. This is the teaching of the law of God, which is a schoolmaster to lead to salvation. See Romans 3:19-20 and Galatians 3:24.

Consider the seven things that God hates:

- **A proud look.** Pride is a great evil before God. It is the root and heart of sin. Pride was the cause of Satan's fall (Isa. 14:12-14; 1 Ti. 3:6). Pride is one of the chief characteristics of the fallen world: "the pride of life" (1 Jo. 2:16). It is a major part of the fallen nature (Mr. 7:19:21). Pride is the opposite of humility and is what keeps man from humbling himself before God and repenting. God warns about pride at least 14 times in the Proverbs.

- **A lying tongue.** Lying is a great evil before God, because He is truth and He loves truth. The devil is the father of lies (Joh. 8:44), and his lies plunged the world into rebellion and darkness and brought about every other evil. Deceit is a major part of man's fallen character. His heart is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9). "For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed ... deceit" (Mr. 7:21-22). God's redeemed people must put away lying. This is the first thing that is mentioned in Ephesians 2:22-25, when believers are instructed to put off the old man.

- **Hands that shed innocent blood.** God hates hands that shed innocent blood, because He is a God of justice and kindness. Cain was the first murderer of innocent blood, and God judged him (Ge. 4). Ever since then, innocent blood has been shed on countless occasions, but God hates it and will judge it. Murder comes from man's fallen heart (Mr. 7:21). Abortion is the shedding of innocent blood, and roughly 46 million unborn children are slain in the womb each year. We would hasten to add that the law of God makes a distinction between murder and accidental homicide or homicide committed in self-defense. See Nu. 35:10-34. There is also lawful killing of certain types of criminals (capital punishment). See Ex. 21:12, 15, 16, 17, 29; 22:19; 31:14. There is also the lawful killing of enemies, such as when David killed Goliath (1 Sa. 17).

- **An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations.** This is the root of man's sin and of the world's problems. The heart is fallen and dark and wicked. See Jeremiah 17:9. This fallen heart deviseth every wicked imagination (Mr. 7:21-23). We see that God searches the heart and knows its deepest secrets and judges man on the basis of what He finds there. Man's root problem is his wicked heart, and only

27:46). Yea--thou adorable Redeemer, nothing but the strength of thine own love could have brought thee out from the bosom of ineffable delight to suffer such things for such sinners! But this was 'the joy set before thee,' for which--unfathomable love!--thou wast content 'to endure the cross, despising the shame' (Heb. 12:2)" (Charles Bridges).

- Wisdom's delight is with the sons of men ("Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men," Pr. 8:31). Man is made in God's image, and the Son of God has delighted in man from the beginning. It was the pre-incarnate Son of God (Joh. 1:3) who fashioned man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Ge. 2:7) and planted a garden for man's pleasure (Ge. 2:8-15) and gave man his first commandment (Ge. 2:16-17) and brought the animals to Adam to name (Ge. 2:19-20) and made Adam's wife (Ge. 2:21-23). It was the Son of God who walked in the cool of the day to meet Adam and Eve after they fell (Ge. 3:8). It is God's delight in man that brought salvation. He delights in redeemed men today, and He will delight in redeemed men forever.

#### 15. Wisdom promises blessing and life to men (Pr. 8:32-36).

- It is impossible not to see Jesus Christ here, for it is in Christ that we have life (Joh. 1:4; 1 Jo. 1:2) and all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).
- The blessing is life and favor (Pr. 8:35). This is God's salvation.
- The blessing is for those who hear wisdom's voice and do not refuse it (v. 33). This refers to receiving the gospel. It is preached far and wide, but only those who hear and receive it are saved.
- The blessing is for those that keep wisdom's ways (Pr. 8:32). This is the product of salvation. Though salvation is by grace, grace teaches us to obey God and obedience brings manifold blessings. See Eph. 2:8-10. See also Titus 2:11-12, which says the grace of God teaches us to live holy Christian lives, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. If we obey God's laws about marriage and moral purity, for example, we will have the blessing of a godly home life and will avoid the curse of immorality.
- The blessing is for those that watch daily at wisdom's gates (Pr. 8:34). Blessing is for the individual who loves wisdom, is focused on wisdom, seeks wisdom. This comes by an intimate relationship with God's Word. The blessed man is the man that hears God's Word, watches daily in Bible reading and study and meditation, waits on God's Spirit to give understanding.

### PROVERBS 9 WISDOM CALLS TO MEN

This chapter describes the two voices that are calling to mankind: wisdom (Pr. 9:1-12) and folly (Pr. 9:13-18), God and Satan, truth and lies, righteousness and unrighteousness.

As we have seen, Wisdom calling sinners is a major theme of the first chapters of Proverbs. It is emphasized by repetition. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets ... saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof..." (Pr. 1:20-23). "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? ... Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart" (Pr. 8:1-5).

#### Wisdom invites men to her banquet (Pr. 9:1-12).

This is a lovely picture of how God has prepared salvation and calls men to partake of it. It reminds us of Jesus' Parable of the Supper in Luke 14:16-24.

## 1. Wisdom has prepared her house and her feast (Pr. 9:1-2).

- Wisdom has **built her house** (Pr. 9:1). Her house in the Old Testament was the Jewish temple. In the New Testament it is the church. See 1 Ti. 3:15, which calls the church the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth. **Wisdom's house is a strong house with seven pillars.** This is the number of completion and perfection. God's salvation is complete. He has done everything for us. He has provided the perfect atonement for our sin through the blood of Jesus Christ and He has provided all blessings in Christ. The pillars speak of strength and stability. Nothing can destroy the true church of Jesus Christ. He promised, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18).

- Wisdom has **furnished her table** (Pr. 9:2). Salvation is described as a feast, and what a feast it is!

- Wisdom has **killed her beasts** (Pr. 9:2), which speaks of the blood sacrifices that were offered throughout the Old Testament, beginning with Abel's lamb (Ge. 4:4; Heb. 11:4). These sacrifices pointed to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (Joh. 1:29). Through Christ's death and shed blood the believer's sins are cleansed and he has eternal life (Ro. 3:24-25).

- Wisdom has also **mingled her wine**, which depicts the joy and delights of eternal redemption. It also speaks of the real wine that Jesus said that He will drink with the saints in the kingdom of God (Mt. 26:29). The believer has joy in Christ in this present world through the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Pe. 1:8), but this is just the beginning. There will be great rejoicing at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Re. 19:7) and in the New Jerusalem God shall wipe away all tears and there will be joy unspeakable throughout eternity (Re. 21:4).

## 2. Wisdom has sent forth her maidens to give the invitation (Pr. 9:3-12). What love Wisdom has for mankind!

- Wisdom cries through her maidens. New Testament believers are wisdom's "maidens" in this present dispensation. They are ambassadors for Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God (2 Co. 5:20). Pr. 9:3 says, "she crieth" meaning that she is crying through the maidens. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Co. 5:20).

- Wisdom cries upon the highest places of the city (Pr. 9:3). Jesus commanded that the gospel be preached to every creature in every nation (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Ac. 1:8). Paul preached the gospel in the market places of the cities and on Mars Hill in Athens. The Bible says that God wants all men to be saved and He has provided a ransom for all who will come (1 Ti. 2:4-6).

- Wisdom calls the simple (Pr. 9:4). Salvation is for sinners. "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mr. 2:17).

- Wisdom invites them to come (Pr. 9:5). Though God loves all men and has provided a perfect ransom for all (Joh. 3:16; 1 Ti. 2:3-6), all men are not automatically saved. Sinners must respond to God's gracious invitation in repentance and faith (Ac. 20:21).

- Wisdom exhorts the simple to forsake the foolish and to go in the way of understanding (Pr. 9:6). This is repentance, and there is no salvation without it. Repentance means to submit oneself to God, to surrender oneself to Jesus Christ as Lord. It is a change of mind that results in a change of life. John the Baptist preached repentance (Mt. 3:1-2). Jesus preached it (Lu. 13:3, 5). Peter preached it (Ac. 2:38). Paul preached it (Ac. 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Preaching repentance is an essential part of obeying Christ's Great Commission (Lu. 24:47).

places are commonly owned by wickedness rather than Wisdom. This will not be the case in Christ's kingdom.

4. She calls "passengers who go right on their ways" (Pr. 9:15).

- The voice of foolishness is not content to allow people to go in the right way. It does everything possible to tempt people into her way. This is a great danger for young people growing up in good homes and churches. The foolish woman is aggressive and persistent in her proselytizing. Every person who grows up in a Christian home finds this out. The world, the flesh, and the devil try earnestly to pull the soul out of the way of truth, and these enemies have many clever, enticing gimmicks that they employ to this end. They use friends and entertainment and education and many other sources of temptation. This is why it is so important for the believer to walk in fellowship with Christ and to stay immersed in the Scriptures and in prayer and in faithful fellowship with a sound Bible-believing church.

5. She promises that "stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant" (Pr. 9:17).

- She entices through the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jo. 2:16). She lies, as Satan did to Eve, promising that the forbidden fruit would be sweet. The Hollywoods and Bollywoods (movie and television) and Nashvilles (music) and New Yorks and Parises (fashion and art) of this world are her willing instruments.

6. She ignores the consequences of sin ("But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; *and that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell," Pr. 9:18).

- She emphasizes that stolen waters are sweet, that sin is a delight, but she does not talk about the consequences of sin, about judgment and eternal hell. When she tantalizes through "the pleasures of sin," she fails to say that this pleasure is but for a season (Heb. 11:25). If she talks about God, it is a God of "love" only and not a God of holiness and judgment.

- She therefore attracts through lies. She is of the devil, the father of lies (Joh. 8:44).

### Topical Studies

Proverbs 9 concludes the introduction to the book. In Proverbs 10-31, there are hundreds of individual Proverbs dealing with a wide variety of themes.

In this section we will study nine of these, as follows:

Child Discipline

Counsel

The Fool

Friendship

The Poor

The Sluggard

The Talebearer

The Tongue

Wine

### CHILD DISCIPLINE

The book of Proverbs is God's child discipline manual. We have seen that it is the father addressing "my son" and "my children." It contains vast instruction to help parents educate

children. There is more sound education on child training in the little book of Proverbs than in all of the child psychology books that have ever been written.

For Christians to learn biblical child discipline is a fundamental thing. Without it, we cannot have the right kind of homes and churches. Failure to follow the Bible's teaching about child training produces bad fruit in the home, in the church, and in society. The next generation is very important to the cause of Christ, and each generation must be properly trained. Children belong to God, and they are given to parents to be fashioned as sharp arrows and sent out into the world to engage in spiritual warfare as pilgrims and ambassadors of Christ (Ps. 127:3-5).

The teaching on child training in Proverbs is great wisdom, but it is also simple wisdom. Anyone of normal intelligence can understand these things.

Both married and unmarried believers need to learn about child training. It is better to learn about it before marriage and enter into marriage informed and forearmed than it is to try to begin learning it after children have arrived.

### **The Necessity of Child Discipline**

Discipline is necessary because of the child's fallen nature. Sound child training philosophy and methodology begins with a right understanding of the child's basic nature. Modern child psychology is founded on the idea that human beings are basically good and seeks to develop and manipulate that inherent goodness. The Bible begins with the principle that human beings are fallen by nature and seeks to bring them to repentance and faith through the instrumentality of the law of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Ti. 3:15).

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child" (Pr. 22:15).

- "Foolishness" is the Hebrew *iwwelet*, which refers to sin. "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness" (Ps. 38:5). "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee" (Ps. 69:5). The child has a sinful nature that naturally disobeys authority and goes in the way of folly rather than wisdom. This refers to the fallen nature that we inherit from Adam. See Ps. 58:3; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Ro. 3:10-18, 23.

- Note that foolishness is "bound in the heart." It is not a little foolishness. It is not something that can be easily removed. It is not something that the child will grow out of on his own. It will not be driven away by talking and reasoning. It requires "the rod of correction."

- Note that it is the "rod of correction" that will drive it far from him. The foolishness will not be driven away by talking and reasoning, by bribing, by distracting the child from his foolishness, by an accepting environment, by building up his self-esteem, or by education.

### **The Promise of Child Discipline**

There are three special promises in Proverbs, but these promises are only for those who practice sound biblical discipline, and this is no small thing.

***Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."***

First of all, the child must be trained “in the way he should go.” This is a very big thing. It encompasses every aspect of biblical child training: the biblical education of the parents, the parents operating in harmony, a godly husband-wife relationship, a godly parent-child relationship, the right use of the rod, training the child in the Bible, etc. Few parents do these things well, even in good churches.

This means that the child must be trained to go in God’s way, not his own way. The child cannot be allowed to go his natural way. Some popular educational programs are designed to encourage children to pursue their own natural inclinations, to help them along in their own way, but this assumes that the child knows the right way naturally.

The promise of God is that if a child is so trained, he will not depart from that training when he is old.

This doesn’t mean that a child so trained will never rebel against his training and never go astray. It means that if he does rebel, he will repent and return to wisdom “when he is old.” It means that eventually he will go in the way he is trained.

Bruce Lackey observed, “The fact is that all young people rebel against righteousness; some to a greater degree, some not so much. When the young man walks in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes (Ecc. 11:9), he is sinning, because the verse ends by saying, ‘for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.’ Every young person rebels! Some do it outwardly and brazenly; others keep it inside. When the rebellion shows itself, many parents think they are failures, or that the Bible verse is not true, or is not for our dispensation, or that scriptural training did no good, or some other such depressing reaction. To the contrary, when we see the rebellion, or learn later that it existed in the heart, we should realize that this simply proves the Bible!” (*God’s Promise about Children*, c. 1975).

When is one “old,” by a biblical definition? Bruce Lackey said, “In many cases today, people think that after children become teenagers you cannot do anything with them. Yet, ask a twenty-one year old man if he considers himself to be old and see what he says. Ask a thirty-year-old woman if she is old! Both common sense and Scripture teach us that old does not mean the teenage years. Solomon is a good example. He was taught by his father and mother, according to Proverbs 4:1-5 and chapter 31, but he rebelled in many ways. When he repented, he wrote Ecclesiastes to record his confession and repentance. Solomon was trained right, but rebelled in his youth. Then, when he was old, he did exactly what Proverbs 22:6 promises: he did not depart from the training of his early days. Another example is Manasseh, the son of godly king Hezekiah. Hezekiah was certainly not perfect, but he was a praying man (read Isaiah 37 & 38), and a humble man (2 Ch. 32:26). Most of us would like to get answers to our prayers in the spectacular way that he did! He must have trained Manasseh correctly, besides giving him some good examples to follow, because we read that even though Manasseh committed some awful sins when he was young (2 Ch. 33:1-10), he did repent when he was old (2 Ch. 33:11-19).”

Proverbs 22:6 also doesn’t mean that every child so trained will be a fervent servant of Christ. One’s level of dedication to Christ is a matter of personal choice. “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Mt. 13:23).