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*“Equipping believers for **growth** and **service** by encountering God through his word.”*

## The Bible for Today

August 26, 2009



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# Proverbs as Wisdom Literature

Proverbs (Hebrew) *maschal*—no direct English word, multiple meanings:

- a figure of speech that expresses truth;
- illuminating by comparison;
- a saying that stands the test of time;
- a saying which is true and should be accepted;
- an example of behavior which should be done or avoided.

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# Understanding Proverbs

Single proverbs do not contain everything about truth, but **point us to truth**; a small slice of truth that need others to help for fullest teaching.

## Interpretive Helps:

1. Proverbs are not legal guarantees from God; godly choices will **likely** lead to blessings, but “nowhere does Proverbs teach **automatic success.**” (Mt 5:45)

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# Understanding Proverbs:

## Interpretive Helps con't...

2. Proverbs must be read as a collection; one without the whole can lead us to make poor choices; understand them in light of all scripture.
3. Proverbs are worded for **memorization**, not full treatise; a principle.
4. Some Proverbs need to be **culturally translated** so that we might find the appropriate equivalency for our time.

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# The Outline of Proverbs

## I. Preamble and Prologue (how to read the collection):

### Chapters 1:1-9:18

- Discussion of the importance of wisdom
- The contrasts of seeking wisdom or living a life of folly
- The admonition to choose wisdom for all one's life

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# Outline of Proverbs con't...

## II. Proverbs of Solomon (oldest section of the collection)

### Chapters 10:1-22:16

- A total of 375 proverbs in this section
- No system of grouping them is discernable
- Most are practical observations concerning life

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# Outline of Proverbs con't...

## III. Words of the Wise

### Chapters 22:17-24:22

Consistent themes of regard for the poor, respect for the king, discipline of children, temperance, honor of parents, and chastity

Note: 22:17-23:11 are equal to Amenemopet

# Outline of Proverbs con't...

- IV. Additional sayings (24:23-34)
- V. Additional Proverbs of Solomon (25:1-29:27)
- VI. Words of Agur (30:1-33) [do not know this person's identity]
- VII. Words of Lemuel (31:1-9) warning of sexual excess
- VIII. Epilogue: Praise of the Virtuous Wife (31:10-31)

# Preamble and Prologue: Reading Proverbs

Preamble: (one long sentence in Hebrew)

Vs 1: Solomon, the son of David

Vs 2: wisdom, how to respond in the moment; instruction (*musar*)—two meanings--learn from wise teachers and disciplined living (successful self-control); understand, insight, discern (all from the same Hebrew root word) “the ability to discriminate between what is right and wrong, important and trivial, wise and foolish”

Vs 3: to attain a prudent life that is also righteous and just; an ethical and moral response (simple= ‘gullible;’ easily led astray)

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# Preamble of Proverbs

- Vs 4-5:** prudence= shrewdness (Mt 10: 16); an ability to plan ahead—plotting a course with forethought (can be good or bad); to listen (obey)
- Vs 6:** what the proverbs (*maschal*) contain; understanding of truths as well as behaviors to be avoided or done as one understands teachings
- Vs 7:** basic perspective and basic contrasts are spelled out (the foundation of the collection; practical, right conduct guided by the “fear of the Lord;” fools refuse to listen [obey] and it spills over into their conduct)

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# Preamble of Proverbs

## Vs 7: Fear of the Lord

- Not a starting point to move forward, but a **foundation** for a happy, good, prosperous life
- Two sides held together: 1) deep **reverence** and **awe** in recognition of God's holiness—otherness—beyond what we are or humanly create; 2) being **loyal and faithful** to God by obediently living his commandments (Mk 12:29-31)

*“The truly wise person has a foundation of faith and builds on it in a balanced way in relationship to God and humankind. A fool is unbalanced—focusing only on the world without regard for God or focusing on God without regard for humanity.”*

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# Prologue of Proverbs

Prologue: chapters 1:8-9:18

- Ten lessons of a father to a son
- The lessons are **admonition**: “*Cautionary advice or warning; counsel; gentle reproof*”
- Each lesson builds on the previous; climax of lessons in chapter 9—final appeals of wisdom and folly

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# The Bible for Today

- Proverbs can serve as an **instruction guide** for living a righteous life. **Counsel** to live the Great Commandment.
- **Be careful** to not teach or preach beyond what we have not personally experienced or live (Byrum).
- Teaching godly lessons to our children help them in **the moment of choice** to discern what is right and just; what is important and trivial.
- **Seek to actively** teach our children when they are open— “teachable moments” --when they are young-receptive to us. A gentleness of teaching—advice by ‘**speaking the truth in love.**’