

# Getting Wisdom: How to read and study Proverbs wisely

## Introduction

### a. Words written principally to a son

- Wisdom for a young man approaching adult life
- But wisdom is also from (& therefore for) women!  
(NB 1:8; 4:3; 6:20; 10:; 23:22 etc; and Ch 31)

### b. Wisdom comes from those who can be trusted

- Listen to Lady wisdom not Madam folly (5:1-3; Ch 9)

### c. Proverbs are proverbs – parables – not precepts

- To instruct by stimulating thinking, not woodenly

## 4 Keys to understanding the wisdom of Proverbs

### 1. Its wisdom is about Righteousness

- 10:1-2; 21, 27 etc

### 2. Its wisdom begins with Revelation

- ‘The Fear of the LORD (YHWH)’ 1:7; 9:10; 31:30 (18x in all)

### 3. Its wisdom is chiefly about Relationships

- wisdom is life to relationships; folly is lethal. Cf James 3:13ff  
Hence so much about words, and acts towards others

### 4. Its wisdom can't be understood without reference to Resurrection

- ‘length of days’/prolonged life – *forever!* cf Is53:10; Ps23:6; 21:4-5 etc
- NB ‘the end’/‘future’ of the righteous/wicked (5:4,11; 14:12-13; 16:25; 19:20; 20:21; 23:18,32; 24:14,20; 25:8; 29:21; also 2:21-22; 10:2; 12:28)

*‘The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn which shines brighter and brighter until full day’ (4:18)...‘in its pathway there is no death’ (12:28)*

# Proverbs: Fruitful Wisdom in the Perception of Life

## I. Introduction (Proverbs 1-9)

Fatherly exhortation to the young to walk in wisdom’s way

- 10 passages commending wisdom  
(1:1-7; 1:8-9; 1:10-19; 2:1-22; 3:1-12; 3:21-25; 4:1-4; 4:10-19; 4:20-27; 6:1-19)
- 5 Passages personifying wisdom  
(1:20-23; 3:13-20; 4:5-9; 8:1-36; 9:1-18)
- 5 Passages warning against the adulterous woman  
(2:16-22; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18)

NB 2 special threats to a young man in this section:

- his propensity to *violence* – and the lure of the gang (1:10-19; 4:14-19)
- his powerful *virility* – and the lure of forbidden sex (the adulteress)

## II. The Proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16)

Pithy sayings observing life: the ordinary & odd, the delights & dangers

- 10-15 most proverbs have a *contrast*: (148 with contrast; 36 without)  
*characteristics and consequences of the wise/righteous and the fool/wicked*
- 16-22:16 most proverbs *without* a contrast (155 without contrast; 34 with)  
*many proverbs where poetic parallelism advances the thought in the couplet*

## III. The Words of the Wise (22:17-24:34)

More fatherly exhortation from 2 groups of wise men

Similar focus, but a particular emphasis on

- trusting God in the face of apparently prevailing evil (eg 23:17-18; 24:14,20)
- compassion and love even to enemies (eg 24:11-12, 17-18, 29)

## IV. More Proverbs of Solomon – Hezekian arrangement (25-29)

- More obvious ordering and clusters of themes:  
eg Kings (25:2-7), fools (26:1-12), sluggards (26:13-16), the mischievous (26:17-28)
- Particular focus in 25 & 27 on relationships: friends, neighbours, family
- Marked emphasis on rulers (esp 28 & 29)

## V. The Words of Agur, another Wise Man (30)

- Humble meditations on the Creator and the idiosyncrasies of his creatures

## VI. The Words and Works of Wise Women (31)

- A vehement exhortation: instruction from a godly mother (1-9)
- A virtuous example: observation of a godly wife (10-31)