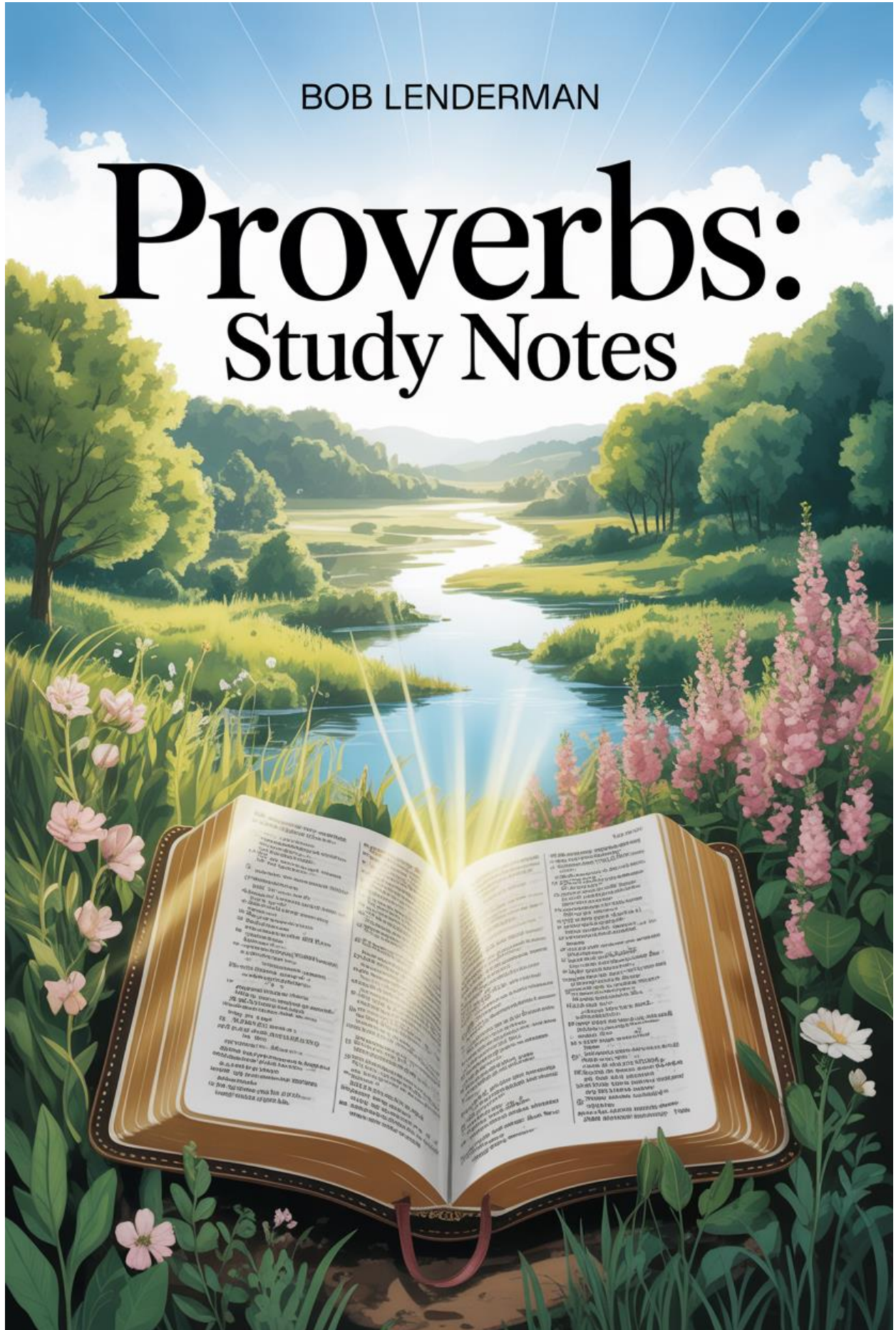


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# Proverbs: Study Notes



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# **PROVERBS: STUDY NOTES**

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# The Book of Proverbs: Study Notes

## 1. Q: What is the Book of Proverbs?

- **A:** The Book of Proverbs is a collection of ancient Hebrew wisdom sayings found in the Old Testament of the Bible. It's part of the "Wisdom Literature" (along with Job, Ecclesiastes, and some Psalms).
- It's not a story or a history book, but rather a guide for living a wise, God-honoring life. It offers practical advice on everyday matters.
- **Think of it like:** A manual for life, full of short, memorable pieces of advice from a parent to a child, or a teacher to a student.

## 2. Q: Who wrote the Book of Proverbs?

- **A:** While often associated with **King Solomon**, the book is a compilation from several sources:
  - **Solomon (Chapters 1-29):** He is credited with writing many of the proverbs, especially those focusing on wisdom, folly, and practical living. The Bible states he spoke 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32).
  - **The Sayings of the Wise (Chapters 22:17-24:34):** This section includes wisdom from unknown "wise men."
  - **Hezekiah's Men (Chapters 25-29):** King Hezekiah's scribes copied and compiled more of Solomon's proverbs centuries after Solomon.

- **Agur (Chapter 30):** A collection of sayings from a man named Agur.
- **King Lemuel (Chapter 31):** Sayings taught to King Lemuel by his mother.
- **Reference:** Proverbs 1:1, 10:1, 25:1, 30:1, 31:1.

### 3. Q: When was the Book of Proverbs written or compiled?

- **A:** The proverbs themselves were likely composed over a long period.
  - **Solomon's proverbs:** Date back to his reign (around **970-931 BC**).
  - **Compilation:** The book was likely compiled in stages, with the collection finished sometime after King Hezekiah's reign (around **715-686 BC**) and possibly much later, during or after the Babylonian exile (around 5th-4th century BC).
- **Key takeaway:** It's ancient wisdom, but its messages are timeless.

### 4. Q: What is the main purpose of the Book of Proverbs?

- **A:** Proverbs clearly states its purpose in the very first chapter:
  - "For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple,

knowledge and discretion to the young..."  
(Proverbs 1:2-4 NIV)

- **In simpler terms:**

1. **To teach wisdom:** How to live skillfully and intelligently.
2. **To develop character:** To learn self-control, righteousness, justice, and fairness.
3. **To guide the young and inexperienced:** To help them avoid pitfalls and make good choices.
4. **To deepen understanding:** For those who already have some knowledge, it helps them understand things on a deeper level.

- **Ultimately:** It aims to guide people into a life that honors God and leads to blessing.

**5. Q: What are the key themes or messages found in Proverbs?**

- **A:** Proverbs covers a wide range of topics, always rooted in a spiritual understanding:

1. **The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom:** This is the foundational theme. True wisdom starts with acknowledging and revering God. (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10)
2. **Wisdom vs. Folly:** Proverbs constantly contrasts the wise person (who listens, learns, and lives prudently) with the fool (who is arrogant, impulsive, and rejects instruction).

3. **Righteousness and Justice:** The book emphasizes living righteously, dealing fairly with others, and seeking justice for the oppressed.
4. **Speech and the Tongue:** Great emphasis is placed on the power of words – to build up or tear down, to bring life or death. (Proverbs 18:21, 12:18)
5. **Hard Work vs. Laziness:** It strongly commends diligence and condemns idleness, linking hard work to prosperity and laziness to poverty. (Proverbs 6:6-11, 24:30-34)
6. **Wealth and Poverty:** It discusses how wealth is gained (ethically or unethically) and how it should be used. It warns against loving money but also against the dangers of poverty.
7. **Friendships and Relationships:** Advice on choosing good friends, avoiding bad company, and the importance of loyalty.
8. **Marriage and Family:** Guidance on choosing a good spouse, raising children, and maintaining a harmonious home. (Proverbs 31:10-31 for the "excellent wife")
9. **Self-Control and Humility:** Encouragement to control one's temper, desires, and pride.
10. **Consequences of Choices:** A strong emphasis on the principle that actions have

consequences – good choices lead to good results, bad choices lead to trouble.

## 6. Q: How is wisdom described in Proverbs?

- **A:** Wisdom is not just intelligence; it's the skillful application of knowledge and understanding to life, guided by moral principles.
- **Personification:** In key chapters (e.g., Proverbs 8), Wisdom is personified as a female figure who calls out to people, offering life and understanding. She is described as being present with God at creation, highlighting her divine origin and importance.
- **Source:** True wisdom comes from God. It's a gift sought through prayer, study, and a willingness to learn.

## 7. Q: What is the "fear of the Lord" and why is it important in Proverbs?

- **A:** The "fear of the Lord" doesn't mean being terrified of God. Instead, it means:
  - **Reverence and respect:** A deep awe and honor for God's holiness, power, and authority.
  - **Obedience:** A desire to please God and follow His commands.
  - **Hatred of evil:** An understanding that God hates sin, and therefore, we should too.
- **Importance:** Proverbs states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7) and "The



fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

- It's the foundation because without acknowledging God as the ultimate source of truth and morality, any "wisdom" is hollow and self-centered. It provides the moral compass for all other advice.

## **8. Q: What are some practical life lessons taught in Proverbs?**

- **A:** Proverbs offers countless practical tips for daily living:
  - **Manage your money wisely:** Avoid debt, save for the future, be generous. (Proverbs 21:20)
  - **Choose your friends carefully:** Associate with wise people, not fools. (Proverbs 13:20)
  - **Control your tongue:** Think before you speak; avoid gossip, lying, and harsh words. (Proverbs 17:28)
  - **Work hard:** Be diligent and avoid laziness. (Proverbs 6:6-11)
  - **Be humble:** Pride leads to disgrace. (Proverbs 11:2)
  - **Listen to advice:** A wise person seeks and accepts correction. (Proverbs 12:15)
  - **Avoid anger:** A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict. (Proverbs 15:18)

- **Care for the poor and needy:** Show compassion and generosity. (Proverbs 19:17)

## 9. Q: How does Proverbs relate to Jesus Christ (from a Christian perspective)?

- **A:** Christians see Jesus as the ultimate embodiment of divine wisdom.
  - **Wisdom Incarnate:** In Proverbs 8, "Wisdom" is personified as being with God at creation. Christians believe Jesus is the "Word" (Logos) who was with God from the beginning and through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-17). He is the perfect expression of God's wisdom.
  - **Fulfiller of Wisdom:** Jesus perfectly lived out all the wisdom taught in Proverbs – He was just, humble, diligent, controlled His tongue, and always honored God.
  - **Source of True Wisdom:** Through faith in Christ, believers receive the Holy Spirit, who grants them wisdom to live according to God's will (1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 2:3).

## 10. Q: Why is the Book of Proverbs still relevant today?

- **A:** Proverbs remain incredibly relevant because:
  - **Human nature doesn't change:** The challenges and temptations of life (greed, pride, anger, laziness, relationships) are timeless.

- **Universal principles:** Its advice on ethics, character, and practical living applies across cultures and generations.
- **Foundation for a good life:** It provides a moral and spiritual framework for personal well-being, healthy relationships, and a well-ordered society.
- **God's unchanging truth:** The wisdom presented is rooted in God's character and His design for creation, making it eternally true.

## 11. Q: What is the general structure of the Book of Proverbs?

- **A:** The book can be broadly divided into several sections:
  - **Introduction and Theme (Chapters 1-9):** Long poems that introduce the concept of wisdom and folly, urging the "son" to choose wisdom. The personification of Wisdom is prominent here.
  - **Solomon's Proverbs (Chapters 10-22:16):** The largest section, containing hundreds of short, contrasting proverbs, usually in parallel lines (e.g., "A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother").
  - **Sayings of the Wise (Chapters 22:17-24:34):** A set of wise admonitions from unknown sages.
  - **More Proverbs of Solomon - Collected by Hezekiah's Men (Chapters 25-29):** Another

collection of Solomon's proverbs, often dealing with kings, leaders, and public life.

- **Words of Agur (Chapter 30):** Agur's reflections on God's greatness, humanity's limitations, and wise observations about different types of people.
- **Words of King Lemuel and the Excellent Wife (Chapter 31):** Lemuel's mother's advice on ruling justly and avoiding vices, followed by the famous description of a diligent and virtuous wife.