

OLD TESTAMENT POETRY: SOLOMON'S WORDS OF WISDOM

The book of Proverbs highly values wisdom and careful, deliberate decision-making. Written primarily by Solomon, who was granted vast wisdom by God, Proverbs sheds light on wise, thoughtful living. Proverbs are short, succinct sayings, and they typically contrast two ideas or ways of living. Many proverbs focus on wielding the power of words, surrounding oneself with good company and counsel, and valuing hard work over schemes or laziness.

It is important to read these proverbs as righteous advice rather than promises, laws, or prophecies from God. Although following the advice found within Proverbs is generally helpful, there is no guarantee of a particular outcome. In other words, God never promises that the wise will have fruitful and successful lives or that the righteous will prevail while the evil suffer. The book of Proverbs encourages wisdom, but it cannot serve as a simplistic formula for life's outcomes.

MAIN IDEAS: GUIDANCE FOR A FAITHFUL, FRUITFUL LIFE

- **God is the ultimate source of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.** (Proverbs 1:7, 2:6)
- **Practicing generosity leads to a richer, more content life than greed/selfishness.** (Proverbs 11:24-25)
- **Seeking the wisdom of advisors and counselors leads to successful decisions.** (Proverbs 11:14, 15:22)
- **We should apply God's wisdom and continually seek His guidance.** (Proverbs 18:15, 23:12)

EXAMPLE OF GOD'S CHARACTER: THE SOURCE OF WISDOM

Proverbs 2:6 describes God as the source of all wisdom, stating that from God's mouth come knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 9:10 teaches that wisdom begins with fear of the Lord. "Fear of the Lord" does not point to being afraid; instead, it refers to showing awe, respect, and reverence. Proverbs reflects on the idea that reverence and obedience to God are foundational to the gaining of true wisdom and discernment.

God does not withhold His wisdom from believers. James 1:5 states that whoever lacks wisdom and asks God for understanding, will receive it from Him generously. In many ways, God has provided access to His wisdom. Through the Bible, believers have access to the words of God and the teachings of Jesus. His wisdom is on every page! Many of God's instructions seem counterintuitive to culture, but Proverbs 3:5 instructs believers to trust in the Lord with all your heart rather than leaning on your own understanding. God's understanding is, and will always be, greater than our own.



JESUS IN PROVERBS: WISE TEACHER

Many of the proverbs are spoken in short stanzas that imitate short poems or riddles. These sayings often contain content and topics similar to the parables of Jesus. Like the wisdom of Solomon, many heard the teaching of Jesus but refused to follow or understand. The parables of Jesus and the wisdom of Proverbs share similar themes and lessons, such as the importance of kindness and loving your enemies, the fleeting nature of material wealth and pleasure, and the value of wisdom and righteousness.

Although Jesus ultimately served as the Savior and sacrifice for sin, He also played the important role of wise teacher during His earthly ministry. Proverbs 10:12 says that "love covers all offenses." Jesus, as the ultimate example of both love and wisdom, died to cover the offenses of humanity and provide access to eternal life.