

The Book of

Proverbs

God's Book of Wisdom

BOOK I : PROVERBS 1 – 15

Kevin Swanson



Generations
PASSING ON THE FAITH

Copyright © 2017 by Kevin Swanson

Sixth Printing, 2017

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-0-9826298-0-2

Production Management: Joshua Schwisow

Cover Design & Typography: Winslow Robbins & Rei Suzuki

Layout & Design: Winslow Robbins

Published by:

Generations

19039 Plaza Dr. Ste. 210

Parker, Colorado 80134

www.generations.org

For more information on this and
other titles from Generations,
visit www.generations.org or call 888-389-9080.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1	PROVERBS 5	
		Beware of the Temptress!	41
PROVERBS 1		How to Resist Temptation	43
Introduction	6	God's Plan for Intimacy	45
The Foundation of All Knowledge	7		
The Law of Your Mother	8	PROVERBS 6	
Evil Companions	9	Business and Friendship	47
A Person Called Wisdom	11	The Sluggard	49
Those Who Reject Wisdom	12	The Rebellious Teenager	50
		The Seven Abominations	51
PROVERBS 2		The Way of Life	53
How to Find Knowledge	13	The Whorish Woman	55
Where Wisdom Comes From	15		
How We Are Preserved in		PROVERBS 7	
the Way	16	The Temptation	57
The Loose Woman	17	The Morning After	60
The End of the Righteous			
and Wicked	18	PROVERBS 8	
		The Cry of Wisdom	62
PROVERBS 3		How You Would Recognize	
How to Curry Favor	19	Wisdom	63
Direction for Your Life	20	The Likes and Dislikes of	
A Recipe for Physical Blessings	22	Wisdom	66
A Relationship with God	23	The High Honor of Wisdom	67
The Inestimable Blessing of		The Wisdom of Yahweh	69
Wisdom	24	Wisdom's Counsel to Children	71
What God Does with His			
Wisdom	25	PROVERBS 9	
Invincible	26	An Invitation to Wisdom	72
Love Your Neighbor	28	Who to Reprove	74
Three Sins	29	Do YOU Fear God?	76
Two Kinds of People	31	One More Warning About	
		That Woman	78
PROVERBS 4			
Sharing a Father's Heart	32	PROVERBS 10	
The First Priority in Life	33	The Value of Wealth and How	
The Protection of Wisdom	35	to Get It	80
The Two Paths	36	Contrasting the Wicked with the	
Keep Your Heart!	38	Righteous	83
Double Ditches	39	Love and Hate	85

True Riches in the Way of Life	87	Training Sons	161
Sins of the Tongue	89		
Blessings for the Righteous	92	PROVERBS 14	
Future Expectations	94	Two Different Homes	163
PROVERBS 11		Making a Mess of Things	166
What Turns God's Stomach	96	The Wise Fool	168
Saved by Righteousness	99	The Gospel and the Way of Life	170
Destruction or Exaltation	100	The Intense Feelings of	
How to Get Along with Others	102	Your Heart	173
The Good Life	104	Your Way or God's Way?	176
Godly Economics	107	Confident, Angry, and	
Blessings for the Righteous	109	Gullible Fools	179
Wise and Godly Shepherding	111	Rewards for the Righteous	182
		Loving the Poor	183
PROVERBS 12		The Blessings of Wisdom and	
Teenagers Acting Like Cows	114	Righteousness	185
The Insidious Deception of		True Security in the Fear of God	188
the Wicked	117	How Nations Fall	191
Humility and Honor	119	God's Heart for the Poor	195
Honest Work	122	Righteous Nations	198
The Power of the Tongue	124	PROVERBS 15	
Introducing the Fool	126	The Soft Answer	201
Speaking the Truth	127	God Is Watching You	203
Sad Liars	130	When the Wicked Obtain	
Wisdom in Hand and Mouth	132	Riches	206
The Way You Walk	135	God Hates Everything About the	
PROVERBS 13		Wicked	208
Wise Communication	138	Forsaking the Way	210
The Life of the Righteous	140	The Healthy, Merry Heart	213
Real Wealth	143	Ethical Priorities	216
Why People Fight	146	Peacemakers and Peace Breakers	219
Fountains and Trees of Life	149	A Truly Happy Life	222
Prudent Men and Faithful		The Judgment of God	224
Messengers	152	The Righteous and the Wicked	228
Taking Instruction from		Healthy Bones	231
the Wise	155	True Wisdom	233
Biblical Economics	159		

Introduction

When my wife and I set out to educate our children at home, we were confused by the hundreds of theories on the education of children that were presented at homeschool conventions. Parents who love their children really want to find the best *paideia*, or education, for their children, and we were no exception to that rule. So it was always with some frustration that we would attend the next seminar on another philosophy or technique of education. Eventually, we turned back to the Word of God.

Our first assumption, of course, is that God is very smart. Assuming that it is He Who is behind the marvelous design we call the “human being,”—and anyone who can create things like human beings has to be, well, *smart*—we turned to His Word. Thankfully, He didn’t leave us without operating instructions. But, like most fathers who try to assemble a toy on a child’s birthday and usually turn to the manufacturer’s instructions as a last resort, most people do the same thing when trying to figure out how to operate a human being. Finally, I picked up the Word of God and looked up the word “education” in the concordance. Naturally, the Bible doesn’t have much to say about things like schools and education. But I broadened my search to “knowledge,” “understanding,” and “wisdom,” and found that God has actually dedicated an entire book of the Bible to the subject of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, and understanding to a child. This is Education/Knowledge/Wisdom 101, authored by God and conveyed by Solomon, who was endowed with supernatural wisdom by God Himself. This gives us both the method and the content of a child’s education. It is a textbook for young men (and young women), providing the basic corpus of knowledge God requires of young people.

Now one of the things that takes many educators by surprise is that the Book of Proverbs does not have a great deal to say about geography, geometry, or geology. So why would the Creator of the Universe—Who, as I mentioned, is very smart—neglect something as important as the Pythagorean Theorem in His textbook? I submit

2 *≈ The Book of Proverbs*

that it is because geometry, in the grand scheme of things, is not all that important. When it comes to the education of a child, faith and character are primary in God's estimation. These are the warp and the woof of the *paideia* of a child if we are speaking of the Lord's nurture and admonition (Eph. 6:4). They constitute the foundation, studs, and drywall in the "construction of a child." And geometry, geography, and geology are only the wallpaper. To attempt to teach geometry apart from character is akin to trying to place wallpaper on walls that do not exist, which would be a prime example of "an exercise in futility."

As you read this book, you will learn God's basic truths, addressing the classical philosophical divisions of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. You will grapple with the tensions of determinism and human responsibility. You will find an entire system of priorities for life's ethics and purposes. You will find the basic constituents of a biblical social system as well as principles for sound economics, government, and general business management. The book gives insight into the proper views of theology, anthropology, and human psychology. Any education program will give you a categorical system by which you can understand life, history, truth, ethics, and reality. Some systems have a semblance of truth, but all will fundamentally be compromised if they do not begin with the Book of Proverbs and the fear of God (Prov. 1:7).

Having taught in public and private schools, and seeing myself as an academic of sorts, I was at first uncomfortable with the Book of Proverbs. A pastor once told me that there are those who teach the fear of God, faith, and character, and then there are those who teach reading, writing, and arithmetic; according to his viewpoint, those who teach the Book of Proverbs are not the same as those who teach chemistry and mathematics. But as time went on, I became convinced that Christians must not tolerate this dualism. This separation of the fear of God from the chemistry class has produced an ungodly, secular science. It is destroying science, and employing technology to ungodly ends! The separation of the fear of God from social studies and political science has undermined the Christian foundations of this country and created tyranny (Prov. 28:2, Neh. 5:15). I place the blame for the failure of the Christian faith in the West, the widespread apostasy, and the breakdown of our Christian institutions at the feet of

those who separate the knowledge of chemistry and political science from the fear of God. Christian teachers who teach chemistry should be less interested in their students learning chemistry than they are in their students *learning the fear of God through chemistry* (Prov. 1:7, Prov. 23:17). Thus, we will refuse to separate discipleship from education, and the fear of God from “academic subjects.” The same principle applies to Christian parents.

The Book of Proverbs is presented by “Solomon the son of David, king of Israel. . . to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion” (Prov. 1:1–4). Therefore, every teaching college in America—and certainly every Christian college—should require its students to memorize the Book of Proverbs because it is God’s book on education for every young person. It is God’s theory on education, presenting both content and methodology in living color. If teaching colleges took up this theory, they would effectively be training future fathers and mothers to teach their children the lessons of life. When reading through the Book of Proverbs, you can hear the writer’s exhortations, warnings, and instructions filled with urgency, tenderness, severity, passion, and love. It may not fit in well with the professional teaching methodology you will learn in teaching colleges, but those theories have incorporated more from men like Dewey, Rousseau, and Plato than they have from the Christian God.

THE CORE CURRICULUM

As I considered these things, I became deeply convicted that my children were better educated in Saxon Math and the laws of grammar than they were in the Book of Proverbs. They did not know the many lessons found in the book of Proverbs. So, over a period of ten years, I set about the task of expositing, illustrating, and applying every verse in the Book of Proverbs four times through. I assembled those lessons in this Family Bible Study Guide on the Proverbs with the hope that others might benefit from my efforts.

In our education program for our children, this Book of Wisdom is the very core of it. It sets the stage for all other academic subjects they will pursue. It will prepare them well for any and all of their economic and “career” pursuits. But it will give them far more than

4 *∞* *The Book of Proverbs*

this. It will prepare them for their own family discipleship program, for relationships within the church, and for a living, vital walk with God. By the time my children leave my home, I would like them to be familiar with every verse of this book.

GOD'S BOOK ON LIFE IS FOR EVERYONE

Genesis is God's history book of the world, the Book of Psalms is God's book on worship, the Gospels are God's autobiography of the Savior, and the Book of Proverbs is God's book on life. Every child raised in a Christian family should be thoroughly versed in this book before leaving home. But also, when discipling any person into the Christian church for the first time, after teaching them the Gospel of Matthew and the Book of Genesis, I would recommend a complete study of the Book of Proverbs for the 'disciple'. The Great Commission requires teaching others to observe and practically apply every command of Christ to their lives. God's book of wisdom and life must never be neglected in this task.

USING THIS STUDY GUIDE

This Study Guide includes modern-day applications and illustrations to help illuminate the meaning of the text. It also provides helpful family discussion questions to open up more shepherding opportunities for Dad and Mom. Of all of the books of the Bible, the Book of Proverbs will lead to the most family discussions on the application of God's truth to everyday situations and problems.

I recommend reading the Bible text in unison as a family before Dad or Mom reads the exposition and application questions. It is also a good idea to end each lesson with another reading of the text, so everybody will remember the lesson. Each proverb is packed with weighty considerations and is worthy of careful thought and meditation throughout the day.

You may also wish to memorize the verse together, as our family does. First, we repeat the verse three times together. Then, each person has an opportunity to say the verse, with Dad or Mom correcting as he goes. Each time a new family member recites the verse, the others should be

encouraged to recite it silently in their minds. By the time everybody has recited the verse, everyone should be able to say it together in unison, without error. We have used this method of memorization since we first learned it from Pastor Henry Reyenga about five years ago, and it has worked marvelously for our family.

For the biblical text I have used the classic King James Version with only minor changes, replacing “thee” and “thou” with “you” and “your,” and changing the older verb forms, such as “seeketh” to “seek.”

Part 1 ~ Introduction

PROVERBS 1:1-6

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

The purpose of this book is to help a young man to know wisdom, instruction, justice, judgment, and equity. Gaining the wisdom found in Proverbs will help you to make good, just, and right decisions in your life.

A person who is wise will listen to others. He is quick to hear and slow to speak, and when he listens to others, he increases his knowledge. Much of education is a waste of time because the people listening are not interested in what is being said, and their hearts are not humbled to receive the words. So the character of the person who is being educated is important if he is going to be taught.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What is the purpose of this book?
2. What is the definition of a wise man?
3. Do you listen to the teaching at church and during family devotions when your father teaches you the Word of God? Are you interested in increasing your knowledge and gaining wisdom?

Part 2 ~ The Foundation of All Knowledge

PROVERBS 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The foundation, or starting point, of all knowledge is the fear of God. We will not have a right understanding of anything without first learning the fear of God. Before we can think correctly about the American Civil War, amoebas, marriage, gravity, mental illness, abortion, or even proving the existence of God, we must first fear God.

The idea of fearing God may bother some people because it does not sound much like love. But it should make sense that a father be both respected and loved at the same time. In a similar way, the perspectives of love and fear towards God are not contradictory but complementary. Moreover, there is no way that anyone will love God for the love He demonstrated at the cross of Christ unless he has first come face-to-face with the magnitude of his own sins against God. It was our sin that drove those nails into the hands and feet of God's only begotten Son. Even the atonement of Christ is meaningless to anyone who does not first fear the God Who brings severe punishment upon those who violate His law. If one does not first fear God, he will never love God.

If the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is the fear of God, then one should never teach something without either clearly expressing or assuming this foundational truth. What, then, would constitute a good science class, for example? Picture the instructor describing the order, the beauty, the complexity, the expanse, and the glory of the universe, the human body, or the animal kingdom. Then, he lifts his arms and says in a whisper to the class, "Silence for a moment! All of you, stand in awe of Him! Stand in awe of Him! Let us worship the God who made this!"

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What is the first thing you must have to begin to know anything?

2. What happens to people who have received an education over twenty years—from preschool through university training, complete with 1,200 textbooks and 250,000 pages of science, history, and literature—none of which emphasized the fear of God, or assumed that God is real?

Part 3 ~ The Law of Your Mother

PROVERBS 1:8–9

My son, hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother:

For they shall be an ornament of grace unto your head, and chains about your neck.

The Book of Proverbs assumes that a young man's primary teachers will be his father and mother. This is basic to a biblical theory of the education of a child, opposed to the humanist education proposed by men such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Plato. Considered by many as the father of modern, publicly mandated, institutionalized education, Rousseau wrote a book on the education of a child in the 1760s. He “wanted a system of public instruction by the state.” He prescribed “many years with an unmarried tutor who would withdraw the child as much as possible from parents and relatives.”¹ Plato proposed a world of guardians, where no father would know his son, and no son would know his father!

The Proverbs often refer to the “commandments” of your father and the “law” of your mother. Do these references point to the law of God or to some other specific teaching provided by a mother and father? Certainly, parents are responsible for teaching the law of God to their children, but they do this in the form of their own applications. Take, for example, the command, “Honor your father and mother.” When a mother tells her son to tuck in his shirt or reminds him to say, “Yes, ma’am,” she is giving him her own cultural applications by which he may express the honor and respect that God requires of him in the

1. Will and Ariel Durant, *Rousseau and Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 179.