

## OUTLINE OF PROVERBS

CAUTION! These are study papers only. This material should not be considered as church doctrine or as the "officially accepted" or "standard" outline of the book of Proverbs.

This is merely background material with some kind of logical breakdown of the contents of the book of Proverbs. -- although it may not be the only one. But it does give you some guide by which you can study this book.

### Solomons Proverbs

Notice, that the wisdom contained in Proverbs is not man's wisdom. It is GOD'S wisdom.

In I Kings 3, we read how Solomon asked God to grant him wisdom to govern Israel. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (I Kings 3:9,12).

Later we read:

"And (God gave) Solomon wisdom and understanding EXCEEDING MUCH....And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt; For he was wiser than all men.

"And he spake THREE THOUSAND PROVERBS: and his songs were a thousand and five....and there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom" (I Kings 4:30-34).

Solomon compiled his proverbs in a book "And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon" (I Kings 11:41).

God caused the Book of Proverbs to be taken out of this "Acts of Solomon" and preserved it for us today! Read the whole of I Kings, the third chapter to see the infinite wisdom which God granted to Solomon. Other scriptures also assert to the great wisdom of Solomon. See I Kings 5:9; 10:1, 23; 11:41.

This book of Proverbs falls under the section of "wisdom literature." The Old Testament is divided into the law, prophets, and writings. This was recognized in the community of Israel. "Then they said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the LAW shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the WISE, nor the word from the PROPHET!" (Jeremiah 18:18).

It was then clearly recognized that the Old Testament was divided into three parts. And not only this but that a SPECIAL OFFICE and inspiration to fulfill that responsibility was required. The priest was given the authority from God to handle the law. The prophet was imbued with the inspiration to speak the direct word from God. Thirdly, THE WISE MAN was given a special inspiration to give counsel.

The Book of Proverbs falls into the last category.

### Division of the Book

The Book of Proverbs can be divided into seven parts. Here are the divisions in their order:

1. 1:1 Introduction.
2. 1:8 )  
9:18) General discourses and Wisdom personified.
3. 10:1-22:16 First body of Proverbs.
4. 22:17-24:34 Second body of Proverbs.
5. 25:1 -29:27 Third body of Proverbs copied out by Hezekiah.
6. 30:1-33 Prophecy of Agur.
7. 31:1-31 Prophecy of Lemuel which his mother taught him.

### Construction of the Proverbs

The Proverbs are short pithy sayings. They generally take on one of four designs. Each type is carefully constructed to take advantage of sound educational teaching principles.

1. Synonymous -- second clause REPEATS the thought of the first in different words. "The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous" (14:19).
2. Antithetic -- second clause presents a CONTRAST to the first. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones!" (17:22).
3. Synthetic -- the second thought FURTHER CONTINUES the thought of the first. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (19:11).
4. Comparative -- the use of a metaphor or simile to make the ABSTRACT PRINCIPLE CONCRETE. "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (10:26).

Notice, how Solomon used repetition, contrast, clarification, examples to teach. Understanding how the Proverbs are constructed, many times will answer some passages which seem to be obscure.

### Subjects in Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs can be divided into twelve more or less definite categories. Not that this is the ONLY or even best way to divide them. But this is A way in which they can be arranged to emphasize one subject.

By putting ALL THE PROVERBS on a given subject together a powerful punch is created. When you read scripture after scripture about "diligence" for example, you really GET the point!

Here are the twelve categories:

1. Seek knowledge, understanding, wisdom.
2. Listen to reproof.
3. Seek wise counsel.
4. Pick your class of companions.
5. Overcome pride.
6. Always be diligent.

7. Be patient, discreet, temperate -- Avoid quick anger.
8. Control your tongue.
9. Don't be a liar or flatterer.
10. The key to wealth and sound finances.
11. Sex and family relations.
12. Child rearing pointers.

These twelve break down into three divisions. The first four subjects all deal with OUTSIDE INFLUENCE. Do you seek wisdom which comes from above? Do you listen to reproof and counsel? That is, God and those in authority. Also, who are your friends? Whoever they are, they will influence you for bad or good.

In I Kings 12 we have the example of Jeroboam who listened to his companions, friends, or "the young men brought up with him." Solomon's son never got the point!

The next five categories deal with common problems we all face. Pride, laziness, uncontrolled anger, and tongue-flapping are perhaps the root of most sins. James said, if you can control the tongue you are strong enough to bridle the whole body. Lying and flattery are basic ingredients of human nature.

Thirdly, the last three categories deal with building the society. There are final instructions on what to avoid in riches and yet how to BE PROSPEROUS. How to find your life's occupation and get on the road to success. Who and when to marry and how to train the next generation.

Once you have the basis of instruction, have governed your body, have built a successful business without being enslaved to it -- the time has come to build a FAMILY. Solomon devotes more verses to SEX and marriage than to any other subject. Most of the introductory chapters deal with sex. The WHOLE BOOK is instruction to the young MAN (Prov. 1:4). In other words, God tells the man what to beware of in sex and what to expect in a wife (Prov. 31). However, the women can take this as instruction for themselves.

Finally, comes the section on developing THE NEXT GENERATION AND bringing up your children according to sound methods.

#### DILIGENCE

- 6:6 Ant has no guide -- yet she produces.  
6:7 The ant works without supervision.  
6:8-11 A sluggard refuses to work -- ends up as a pauper.  
8:34 Blessed is the man that is diligent in watching daily.  
10:4 The hand of the diligent makes him rich.  
10:5 He who gathers in summer -- he is a wise son.  
10:16 The diligent labor of the righteous tends toward life.  
10:26 A sluggard is like vinegar to the teeth of one who sends him.  
12:24 The hand of the diligent will bear rule.  
12:28 A diligent man is a rare treasure.  
13:4 A sluggard desires -- but he has nothing.  
13:11 Quick-gotten wealth dissipates: Gathered slowly it lasts.  
13:17 A faithful ambassador is health to the one who sends him.  
14:4 Much increase comes by hard labor.  
14:23 In all labor there is profit.  
15:19 The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns.

16:26 He takes and labors -- all for himself.  
17:2 A wise servant will rule over a foolish son.  
18:9 The slothful individual is brother to a great waster.  
19:15 The idle soul will suffer hunger.  
19:24 A slothful man won't even feed himself.  
20:4 A sluggard will not plow; he claims it is cold outside.  
20:13 Love is not sleep.  
21:5 The thoughts of the diligent tend toward plenteousness.  
21:17 He that loves pleasure will be a poor man.  
21:25 A slothful man refuses to work.  
22:13 The slothful man claims there is a lion in the streets.  
22:29 A diligent man will stand before kings -- not obscure men.  
23:5 Don't labor to be rich.  
23:21 Drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.  
24:27 Prepare your work outside -- then marry (Moffatt).  
24:30 The field of the slothful is grown over with thorns.  
25:13 A faithful messenger refreshes.  
25:19 Confidence in an unfaithful man is like a broken tooth.  
26:6 Sending a message by a fool is like cutting the hand off.  
26:13 Characteristics of a sluggard.  
27:12 A prudent man forsees the evil.  
27:23 Be diligent to know the state of your possessions.  
28:19 The man who tills his land will have plenty to eat.  
30:25 Ants have little strength -- but they prepare.  
30:28 The spider spins in a kings palace.