

Long Story Short: Proverbs



The Big Picture:

- ◆ 1-9 Speeches: (1–7 from Father to Son, 8–9 from Lady Wisdom)
- ◆ 10–22:16 Proverbs of Solomon
- ◆ 22:17–24:22 Sayings of the Wise
- ◆ 24:23–34 More Sayings of the Wise
- ◆ 25–29 Proverbs collected during Hezekiah’s time
- ◆ 30 Sayings of Agur
- ◆ 31 Sayings of Lemuel

Main Themes in Proverbs:

1. Creation: God has “wired” morality into the universe; life works according certain patterns of justice and recompense – Proverbs 1:20-33; ch. 8
2. Wisdom is rooted in the “fear of Yahweh” – 1:7, 9:10, 14:26–27, 19:23
 - o “Fear” = healthy respect, awe, reverence that motivates obedience and makes disobedience undesirable.
 - o The prerequisite of wisdom is the acknowledgment that God will uphold and enforce the moral nature of the universe.
 - o Wise people seek out and live by these principles: 1:2–6
3. Justice and Retribution
 - o The Righteous/wise are those who live in harmony with God, others, and the world (even animals! Prov 12:10)
 - o The Wicked/foolish are those who disrupt that harmony on all levels of relationships.
4. Proverbs are by nature general and about probabilities: they present truth, but not the whole truth at once. **Proverbs are not promises!**
 - o The application of Proverbs always depends on the situation.
 - Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.*
 - Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes. Prov 26:4–5*
 - o They are reflections on how life usually works out . . . but not always. Proverbs may sometimes seem naïve, but they are presenting how life generally works in God’s moral universe.
 - o We need the other wisdom books to gain a holistic perspective on life in our broken world: sometimes wisdom does not lead to success... (see Job and Ecclesiastes).