

Introduction: Wisdom is the God-given ability to always act according to The Word of God. God is holy and just and expects His people who know Him to also be holy and just in all they do in life. The Wisdom Books of The Bible emphasize that the human will in every event of life must always be submitted to God and His will. The Wisdom Books are: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. *** Today we begin a summer series in the Wisdom Books with the introduction to Proverbs. *** Arthur Herbert, a mid-twentieth century author from Great Britain, wrote a book called, *The Parable in the Old Testament*. In it he wrote the purpose of a proverb is to distinguish what is real from what is wished; and, to compel the hearer or reader to judge himself, his situation, and his conduct ... [Proverbs] comes to its finest expression in the parables of Jesus. *** The final verse of the introduction to Proverbs transitions to Jesus' parable of two men who build houses: one on rock, the other on earth ('sand'). The apostle Paul said all the treasures of wisdom are hidden (stored up) in (Jesus) Christ (Colossians 2:2b-3). *** Furthermore, the fear of Yahweh produces faith. When the Israelites saw the great power of Yahweh in all He did to the Egyptians in the ten plagues, and in drowning them in the Red Sea, they feared Him and believed Him (Exodus 14:31, KJV). Experiencing the awesomeness of God IN Jesus leads to faith IN Jesus and His work for all people on The Cross and in The Empty Tomb. *** With this in mind, let's look together at our texts.

I. Proverbs give knowledge of wisdom and discipline to act wisely and be righteous; youth are given discretion, increase in learning, and understand words of the wise. (Proverbs 1:1-6)

A. The purpose of proverbs: to know wisdom and discipline, to act wisely and be righteous. (Verses 1-3)

1. The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel ... (Verse 1)

Solomon: At the beginning of his reign, when he was twenty years old, Solomon asked God to give him a hearing heart in order to judge God's people. God said He had given (Solomon) a wise and understanding heart, more than any before or after him (1 Kings 3:3-12). However, just before this (verse 1), Solomon took the daughter of the king of Egypt in a political alliance! Eventually he had seven hundred (foreign) wives of royal birth who led him to the worship of foreign 'gods' and the practice of idolatry. As a result, Yahweh was very angry with him and said He would take all but one tribe from his kingdom and the kingdom of his sons (1 Kings 11:1-13).

Proverbs: The proverbs of Solomon were the practical application of God's instruction given through Moses in Deuteronomy to real life situations for the people of Solomon's day. The principles are still applicable in our more technological age.

2. ... for (people) to know: wisdom, discipline (and) to understand words of understanding. (Verse 2)

Knowledge: More than knowing through instruction, this knowing involves the senses and experience.

Discernment: Wisdom and understanding lead to discernment and the ability to lead a disciplined life.

3. (And) to receive discipline to act wisely (in): righteousness, justice and uprightness. (Verse 3)

To act wisely: The purpose of proverbs is to give people the discipline to act according to three godly virtues in every part of their lives.

Character triad: People who by God's grace are becoming righteous as God is righteous; who always act according to God's justice; and, who are upright as God is upright – these people will act wisely at all times.

B. Also, proverbs give youth knowledge and discretion, so they increase in learning and take counsel from understanding words of the wise. (Verses 4-6)

1. To give to (the) simple prudence, to (the) youth knowledge and purpose. (Verse 4)

For simple youth: Proverbs also give benefits to children and young people who have not had adult experiences and so still have a simple understanding of life.

Basic triad: Prudence is the ability to discern from Scripture the difference between right and wrong in the real world, and then to act rightly. We have already discussed knowledge. Purpose is what gives life meaning for all people. It is especially important for young people to discern God's purpose for them, with the help of their parents and other adults in their community of faith.

2. The wise one will hear and increase in learning, and the one being made to understand will obtain wise counsel. (Verse 5)

Growth of wise people: Proverbs will help people of wisdom to grow in learning and to receive more and more understanding from God concerning what He has instructed in His Torah.

Act on wise counsel: The result will be God will give wisdom to translate what the mind knows of God's ways into actions in the real world that are righteous according to His Word.

Application: Over the next three weeks we must all seek to be wise through what proverbs teach, and to be in awe of God's great righteousness, in order to always act righteously according to God's Word.

The fear of Yahweh produces right living

3. To understand a proverb and enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles. (Verse 6)

Understand enigma: Wisdom does not come easily! Enigma also carries the sense of taunting satire.

What do we do with this? The next phrase helps us.

Riddles: Riddles are often difficult questions put to people about life and the decisions all people must make.

Haddon Robinson preached a memorable sermon on Proverbs when I was in seminary. He said they are God's original 'word puzzles'. As fathers taught their sons how to be farmers, shepherds or craftsmen, they would take a different proverb each day and discuss all the possibilities of the words God gave them, while doing repetitive tasks. The same happened with mothers and daughters. He said that translators have softened God's intention for proverbs by giving their (singular) interpretation. Starting today, I intend to try to restore some of the original enigmas God put in Proverbs.

II. Knowledge starts with fearing Yahweh to build life on the 'rock' of Jesus; but, fools despise discipline and build on the 'sand' of self. (*Proverbs 1:7; Luke 6:47-49*)

A. Knowledge starts with knowing Yahweh; but, fools despise discipline. (*Proverbs 1:7*)

1. The fear of Yahweh (The Covenant God) the beginning of knowledge (*Verse 7a*)

Fear is faith: This adds to what I said about reverential fear of the all powerful God is faith IN God, as it says that reverential faith IN God is the beginning of experiential knowledge of God. Psalm 106 (verses 8-12) poetically describes how God's miraculous deliverance of His people from Egypt caused them to believe His Words to them. His mighty power was made known to them at the Red Sea when he saved them by walking on dry ground through parted waters, but the Egyptians drowned when the waters covered them. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many Jews believed IN Him (John 11:40-45). All who have this reverential fear of God will live righteously in Him.

The fear of Yahweh produces right living

2. ... wisdom and discipline, fools have despised. (*Verse 7b*)

Stern warning: This is a very stern warning to all who do not believe in The God of the Bible and think the words in The Bible do not apply to our more modern and sophisticated age. These are the people God calls fools because they despise His discipline intended to make them wise so they can please Him by living according to His ways as revealed in The Bible and IN His Son, Jesus Christ – The Savior-King!

First contrast in book: This is the first of many contrasting proverbs in this book of Proverbs. Those with reverential faith IN The Three-IN-One Covenant God will grow in knowledge of Him through Jesus Christ (The Solid Rock); but, those who despise Him because they are offended He would dare to confront their self-centeredness are on shaky ground and will eventually be destroyed by their inflated, selfish egos.

Build on The Rock of Jesus, not the 'sand' of self

B. Wise people build on the 'rock' (of the wisdom) of Jesus Christ; but, fools build on the 'sand' of self. (*Luke 6:47-49*)

1. [Jesus said:] Each one coming to Me, and hearing My Words, and doing them, I will make known to y'all to whom he is being like: (*Verse 47*)

Parable: Jesus will now tell a parable, what Herbert called the finest expression of Proverbs, that expounds upon the last verse of the introduction to Proverbs we just considered. It first describes the fate of all who continually come to Him and are hearing and doing His Words.

2. Like nature he is being to a man building a house, who determinedly dug, and he went deep, and he laid foundation on 'rock'; but, the flood having come, the river burst upon that house; and, not it was able to shake it, because rightly it had been built. (*Verse 48*)

Built on rock: Jesus is the 'rock' in this parable. All who build their lives upon Him, as The One in whom is hidden (found) all wisdom, are rightly living their lives by reverential faith IN Him.

Application: We must all have our faith IN Jesus Christ and His Gospel strengthened to always build our lives on Him so we live rightly.

The fear of Yahweh produces right living

3. But, the one having heard and not having done, like he is being to a man having built house on the earth ('sand') without foundation; which (house) the river burst upon, and at once (immediately) it collapsed; and it was, the destruction of that house, great! (*Verse 48*)

'Sand' of self: Compared to the 'rock' of Jesus, the earth is as useless as the 'sand' on a beach which is easily eroded. Anyone living without reverential faith in the awesome miracle working and righteous God will eventually collapse and be destroyed by the calamities, both natural and man-made, in this life in this world.

Application: We must all be mindful of the warning from God concerning fools who despise His discipline, so our lives will not be destroyed because they are built on the earth ('sand') of self.

Build on The Rock of Jesus, not the 'sand' of self

The Holy Spirit: All who are IN Jesus have received The Holy Spirit. It is The Spirit of Jesus who enables and empowers all who are IN Jesus by reverential faith to act righteously in wisdom.

Conclusion: Proverbs give people knowledge of wisdom and the discipline to act wisely and be righteous. Young people are given discretion through proverbs to increase in learning and understand the words of the wise. Knowledge and wisdom start with the fear of The Covenant God so people may build their lives on the 'rock' of Christ Jesus to live rightly; but, fools despise discipline and build their lives on the sand of self.

The fear of Yahweh produces right living