

# THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS

PROVERBS 1:1-7

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*The Proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: (what is the purpose of the Proverbs...)<sup>2</sup> To learn wisdom and moral instruction, and to discern wise counsel.<sup>3</sup> To receive moral instruction in skillful living, in righteousness, justice, and equity.<sup>4</sup> To impart shrewdness to the morally naive, and a discerning plan to the young person.<sup>5</sup> (Let the wise also hear and gain instruction, and let the discerning acquire guidance!)<sup>6</sup> To discern the meaning of a proverb and a parable, the sayings of the wise and their riddles.<sup>7</sup> Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:1-7*

The Book of Proverbs says that every moment of our lives, we have a choice. It's our choice and no one else's. This choice is more important than the past, than money, than circumstances. We cannot control how people act or react to us, but no one can take this choice away from us.

What's this choice? This choice is whether to dwell on the human perspective of life or the divine perspective of life. Which perspective we pursue impacts everything. Carnegie said, "Two men looked out from prison bars. One saw mud, one saw stars."

Unfortunately, humanity remains willfully and stubbornly limited to their own perspective. Remember that the fool says, "I can be successful on my own. I know better than God" (12:15, 14:3, 14:16, 28:26). In the Book of Proverbs Solomon longs to unveil God's loving wisdom and perspective for anyone who has ears to hear.

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of five separate books:

1. Purpose of Proverbs (1:1-7)
2. Value of Wisdom according to Solomon (1:8-9:18)
3. Proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16)
4. Proverbs of Wise Men (22:17-24:34)
5. Proverbs of Solomon collected by Hezekiah's Men (25:1-29:27)
6. Wisdom of Agur (30:1-33)
7. Wisdom of Lemuel (31:1-31)

A proverb is a "truth tested by time," and these contain truths tested by time in Israel's experience with the living God (1:1). Hebrew poetry often utilizes couplets where the writer places two ideas side by side to compare, contrast, complete or describe a corresponding idea. It links statements together but keeps the two ideas distinct. Each statement can stand alone but together the couplet adds depth, color or clarity.

1. Contrast: A wise son accepts his father's discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke (13:1)
2. Completing an Idea: Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established (16:3)
3. Corresponding: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (9:10)
4. Comparative: It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman (25:24)

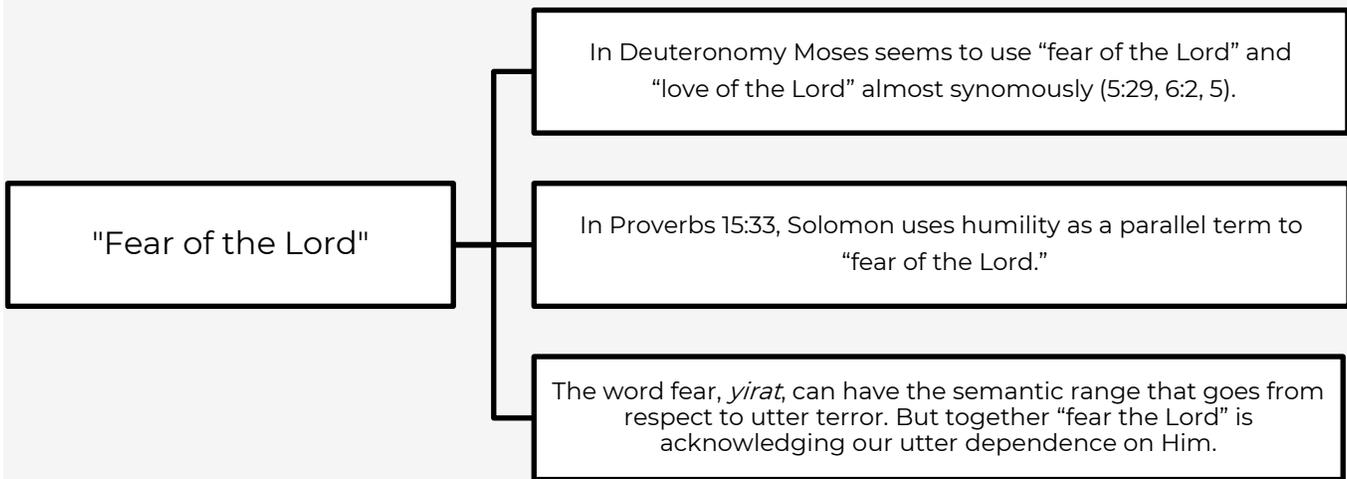
Western thinkers make a distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom; you can be wise and not act wisely. The Hebrew sage considered this nonsense. The Hebrew sage doesn't call anyone wise until they act wisely. Wisdom occurs when knowledge produces trusting obedience in the plan of the Living God.

The first seven verses of the Book of Proverbs describe its purpose and where wisdom begins and ends.

Solomon says the purpose of Proverbs is wisdom, moral instruction, to discern wise counsel (vs. 2), and to develop skillful living in what is right, just and fair (vs. 3). The chief aim of the book is to enable us to look at life through God's eyes. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can trust His eternal, all-knowing point of view and live accordingly.

lehabin (vs. 2)	lachat (vs. 3)
<p>Solomon says the purpose is to “discern” wise counsel. The Hebrew word <i>lehabin</i> means to “separate, to make distinct.”</p> <p>Discernment is the ability to look at a situation and clearly see all its moving parts, to think critically, distinguish truth from error and anticipate likely consequences of any given choice.</p>	<p>The Hebrew word <i>lachat</i> means to receive. It’s the idea of taking something along with you or hauling something in your journey. It’s skillful living in what is right, just and fair.</p> <p>Solomon says if you take moral instruction along with you, you will navigate the highways of life and you will know what is right, just and fair.</p>

Before long, the grind of a merely human viewpoint will slowly be replaced by the wisdom of God’s perspective under the power of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom begins and ends with Solomon’s thesis statement (1;7) - fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.



Solomon in the Book of Proverbs longs to unveil God’s loving wisdom and perspective for anyone who has ears to hear. The fools says, “I can do life on my own, I know better than God.” The wise says, “I can’t do life on my own, I do not know better than God.” Fearing the Lord is a reverence towards God where we humbly bow to God’s care of us, acknowledging everything is created and sustained by God.

As we celebrate the Lord’s Table this morning, Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters - we are not wise by human standards, we aren’t powerful, we aren’t the sons or daughters of important dignitaries.

Instead, God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise; God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing to set aside what is regarded as something.

We come to this table and there isn’t a single one of us who can boast.

Christ has become for us the wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. True wisdom isn’t found in the so called wise, strong and important of this world, but true wisdom is found in Jesus who is our righteousness, sanctification and redemption.