

## Discussion Guide for Proverbs

The book of Proverbs, like Psalms, is a collection of different proverbs written at different times in history. Most are the Proverbs of Solomon. Others are simply attributed to “sayings of the wise,” Agur, and King Lemuel. Since it states that some are copied by the men of Hezekiah it seems that the book itself was compiled at that time, 715 – 686 BC.

Proverbs is included in what is called “wisdom literature.” They are in the form of poetry, making heavy use of simile, metaphor, and personification. They are most often two lines long and make their point by means of comparison and contrast. They are often very direct and earthy as they seek to instruct especially the youth and steer the hearer away from sin.

The over all theme of Proverbs is “Wisdom.” The essence of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. It is practical theology, emphasizing what one will do in response to God’s love and forgiveness. Proverbs must be understood in the context of Scripture, namely keeping in mind that Christ is the center of Scripture. If we don’t view them in the context of Scripture our teaching or use of them will degenerate into moralizing (do these things because it is the right thing to do, or to earn God’s favor, instead of out of love for God because of what he has done for you).

Consider the proverbs as illustrations and instructions regarding the Commandments.

Commandments 1-3: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, putting God first.  
1:7, 10, 29; 2:6; 3:11, 12, 25, 26; 4:7; 5:21; 8:13, 35, 36; 14:12; 15:3,8; 16:2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 33;  
18:10; 19:21; 20:27; 21:2

The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment:

- Parenting/Discipline 1:8, 9; 5:11-14; 12:1; 13:1, 13, 24; 15:5, 32; 19:18; 20:20; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17; 30:17
- Government 14:34; 16:12; 17:15; 20:28; 24:21; 25:6-7; 28:12, 16, 28; 29:4, 14; 31:4-5

The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment: 12:16; 17:17; 20:1; 23:20, 29-35; 24:11-12; 25:21-22; 29:11; 31:8

The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment: 2:16-19; 5:3-6, 15-20; 6:23-35; 7:21-27; 11:22; 12:4; 21:9, 19; 27:8, 15; 31:10-31

The 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment: 3:9-10; 6:6-11; 10:2, 4, 26; 11:1, 24-28; 12:11, 24; 13:11; 14:23, 31; 15:16-17; 19:15, 17; 20:4, 14; 21:5, 17; 22:9, 13; 24:27, 30-34; 26:13-16; 27:1;

The 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment: 10:11, 18-19; 11:12-13; 12:18, 22; 13:3; 18:2, 8; 19:5; 20:19; 21:23; 22:1; 25:11; 29:11;

The 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments: 16:18, 25; 19:21; 20:9; 22:4; 23:4-5; 24:19-20; 30:7-9

**Chapter 1:**

- What does Solomon say is the purpose of Proverbs?
- What do sinners use to entice you to join them? Why not join them?
- How does Wisdom still call aloud in the streets?
- How does understanding the definition of wisdom help you understand v 29-33?

**Chapter 2:**

- Where is it that we can search for and find wisdom?
- How is marriage described in v 17?

**Chapter 3:**

- How would you summarize v 5-7 in your own words?
- How is v 9-10 opposite to what most people think? (cf. Malachi 3)

**Chapter 4:**

- When are we to begin instructing children in true wisdom?
- How important is true wisdom?

**Chapter 5:**

- What will be the result of a profligate life? (v 11-14)
- Of what does the writer remind all of us? (v 21)

**Chapter 6:**

- What do v 1-5 have to say about debt?
- What is a Sluggard? What can he learn from the ant?
- What things are detestable to the Lord?
- Which of the three uses of the Law is described in v 23-24?
- From a worldly point of view how is adultery worse than theft?

**Chapter 7:**

- Who is more at fault in this scenario, the youth who lacked judgment or the adulterous wife?

**Chapter 8:**

- How does v 13 help us understand what it means to fear the Lord?
- According to this chapter, if you accept Evolution what do you lack?

**Chapter 9:**

- Who are the two “women” depicted in this chapter?
- How are they similar? How are they different?

**Chapter 10:** (From chapters 10 to 22 there are 375 individual two-line proverbs organized in no particular order)

- What is the definition of integrity (v 9)?
- This chapter has many proverbs about the use of our lips. Which one made the biggest impression on you?

**Chapter 11:**

- What are the deceptive wages a wicked man earns?
- What does Solomon say about generosity? (v 24-26)

**Chapter 12:**

- What are some common examples of “chasing fantasies” today?
- This chapter also has many proverbs about the use of our lips. Which one made the biggest impression on you?

**Chapter 13:**

- Why would someone pretend to be rich, or pretend to be poor?
- What good advice is found in v 20?
- How do we practice v 24 in a society where physical discipline may get you put in jail?

**Chapter 14:**

- What “way” seems right to sinful man, but can only lead to eternal death?
- What would Solomon say to this statement: “I care for the poor by paying my taxes”?
- How does righteousness exalt a nation?

**Chapter 15:**

- Why does the Lord detest the sacrifice of the wicked, at least they were offering a sacrifice? (cf. v 3)
- Several verses in this chapter (verses 10,12,31,32) refer to the ways a person reacts to correction. Summarize what they say.

**Chapter 16:** (most of the proverbs in chapters 10-15 were in the form of antithetic Hebrew poetry, most of the proverbs in 16-22 are in the form of synthetic poetry)

- What do v. 2, 3, 4, 9, 33 teach us about planning and decision making?
- Apply v 25 to people in these situations: Someone contemplating divorce, a teen pregnancy, someone who works for a big company with lax security.

**Chapter 17:**

- What advice does Solomon give for living at peace with family and neighbors? (4, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 26, 27, 28)

**Chapter 18:**

- What do v 2, 13, 17 remind us to do?
- Why does Solomon call the name of the LORD at strong tower? (Ex 34:6-7)

**Chapter 19:**

- How was the apostle Paul an example of zeal without knowledge early in his life? Can you think of similar examples today?
- How are v 13, 14, 15 good verses for young people looking for a spouse?
- Agree/Disagree: People today don’t understand v 18.

**Chapter 20:**

- What is pictured in v 14?
- How did v 25 come true for Jephthah (Judges 11) and King Herod (Matthew 14)?

**Chapter 21:**

- What makes a sacrifice acceptable or unacceptable to the Lord? (v 3, 27, Cain and Abel)
- What financial advice does v 20 give us?

**Chapter 22:**

- What is the point of v 2?
- Is v 6 a promise of God or a general rule? What difference does it make?

**Chapter 23:**

- What is the goal of Christian discipline? What two things are necessary to accomplish this goal? (v 13-16)
- What is the writer trying to do in v 29-35?

**Chapter 24:**

- Give examples of times when people were being “led away to death” while others claimed that “we knew nothing about this.” (verses 11,12) What threat is made against those who dishonestly claim ignorance?
- What danger does the writer warn about in v 1, 17, 19, 20?

**Chapter 25:**

- How does v 27 summarize many of the proverbs in this chapter?
- Which sections of this chapter are quoted or referred to in the New Testament?

**Chapter 26:**

- How do you harmonize v 4 and 5?
- What are some things that make a person a “sluggard”?

**Chapter 27:**

- Does v 1 mean that we should not make plans for the future? (James 4:13-16)
- Put v 5-6 in your own words.
- How does v 17 apply to Bible Class?

**Chapter 28:**

- Why does the wicked man flee though no one pursues him? What is the solution to his problem? (v 1, 13, 17)
- List some of the things this chapter has to say about proper and improper views of money and material possessions.

**Chapter 29:**

- What is to be the special concern of the king (government) and the righteous? (v 4, 7, 14, 26)
- How does v 15 apply to our society today?

**Chapter 30:**

- How does Agur answer the question he poses in 2-4?
- Why does he ask God to give him neither poverty nor riches?
- Comment: v 20 is a very common statement in our world today.

**Chapter 31:** (v 10-31 are an acrostic poem)

- What good advice did King Lemuel’s mother give him?
- What is the most important attribute of this woman of noble character?