

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WISDOM – *The Book of Proverbs*

Can you remember the first three years of your life? Probably not, those who think that they can remember anything at all, are, with all likelihood, only remembering what was told to them by others about that time of their life.

Those who have studied the life of children tell us that one's temperament and disposition is formed during the first five or six years of their life. It is true that during those early years of life, one is not learning "*intellectual*" knowledge, as much as habitude [*character*] being formed within the person. The caliber of mannerism and personality is developing during this early period of life. The principles of living and character development, that will guide one's whole life, are largely fashioned during the first few years of life.

God has so constructed mankind!

This does not mean that one cannot change, because, with *New Life* in Christ Jesus, one **can** change. However, the natural tendency of one's temperament is largely settled during those first five years of life.

Why?

As one reads Scripture he will see that God has committed a young life coming into the world into the care and keeping of parents, to nurture and to admonish during these early years of life.

"*What is basic training for any branch of the military service?*" The answer to that question is simply, "***The primary purpose of basic training of the military service is to build into a young man and woman discipline, mannerism and a whole new disposition toward those in command.***"

Is it really important that those in basic training make their beds perfect, that they receive such strict authoritarian discipline, or that they respond, "*Yes, sir!*" and "*No, sir!*" to every whim of their commanding officer? No, **except**, they are learning to respond immediately to commands, they are being trained to a whole new life of automatic responses.

A missionary, going into a new country, soon finds out that much which he learned from books was merely academic, and that the first few years of his new life is "*soaking*" up the culture and mannerism of a different life. He must learn to think like these whom he now lives among until his reactions become a natural instinct.

**This almost unconscious, reflex and reaction,
is what the book of Proverbs is all about!**

The Hebrew word, translated as "*wisdom*," throughout the book of Proverbs, means "*to make one strong*," or, "*to make one firm*." The "*wisdom*" spoken of means that through obtaining this wisdom one is made strong and sound in character.

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to brace, to fortify, to strengthen the believer's character. This book will vitalize, energize and rejuvenate the believer's walk with God. The believer will find as he reads, studies and applies the principles from the book of Proverbs that it

will, as the Hebrew word indicates, tone up, stiffen, and make firm his character.

Deuteronomy 8:2-5, state, "*Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that come from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.*"

This passage teaches that God lead Israel in the wilderness for forty years, and allowed them to hunger, and He chastised them, in order to show them that it was **their hearts** that should keep His commandments, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. They were to consider the "ways" of the Lord and **that is what the book of Proverbs will do!**

As one studies, and applies, the principles found in the book of Proverbs, God begins focusing on the believer's *character*, rather than on his mind, teaching him how to live, then enabling him *to live the Proverbs* by giving him inner strength.

The New Testament word for this process is, "*to edify.*"

HOW TO DISCERN GOOD FROM EVIL

At creation God set two ways before man. He gave man a choice between developing his "soul" powers by eating of the "*tree of knowledge of good and evil,*" or developing his "*spirit*" power by eating of the "*tree of life.*" You know how Adam and Eve choose!

Today, man has the same choice, he can develop his "*soul-power*" . . . [that is, his intellect, his emotions, and his volition powers] . . . or, he can develop his "*spirit-power*" - by feeding upon, and assimilating, the principles of God's Word - *principles which are found in the book of Proverbs!*

The principles found in the book of Proverbs enables one to discern between good and evil by the discerning of the spirit . . . and **not** *by experiences*. Learning "*good and evil*" by experience was never the learning method God intended for man. God original intention for man was never to know evil "*by experience,*" but, rather, he was to learn of good and evil only by the discerning of his "*spirit.*" This was the test God put man too in the very beginning. Learning "*good and evil*" by means of one's spirit-power in order to make proper judgments is what the book of Proverbs is all about!

The book of Proverbs begins with these words, "*The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young - let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance - for understanding proverbs and parables,*

the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the Lord is beginning of knowledge, but fools [one who is morally deficient] despise wisdom and discipline" [Proverbs 1:1-7]

The book of Proverbs is a "springboard" into God's wisdom

To understand the first seven verses of the book of Proverbs is to have a grasp of the purpose of the whole book.

The book of Proverbs is not a book which one can give an "*expository teaching*" . . . [that is, taking each verse, one-by-one, and explaining it in its context]. This cannot be done in the book of Proverbs, each student must read this book for himself to receive the rich blessing God has in it.

It will be my purpose in this study, to share the basic outline of the book of Proverbs, the purpose God has in mind, and the "*equity*" this book can ingrain within the believer's life. ["*Equity*" is knowing what to do when no laws exists.]

No book in the Bible contains more "*wisdom*" than does the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is **not** just theoretical, but, rather, in this book one will find down-to-earth, believable, workable wisdom. The book of Proverbs deals with experiences common to everyone. It will enable one to analyze a problem, solve it, by dealing with God given wisdom.

The book of Proverbs is not a book of "*theory*," but, rather, it shares principles **for living!** It is **NOT** just a collection of wise sayings, but, rather, it is divine rules from heaven to govern the believer's conduct.

As the book of Psalms instructs the believer how to have a harmonious fellowship with God, the book of Proverbs tells him how to have a harmonious relationship with his fellowman. The book of Proverbs is God's wisdom on a horizontal plane!

After the title, and author given in verse one, there is a series of parallel statements, five in number. These statements are the essence of the book of Proverbs, but they contain several "*technical terms*" that one needs to understand.

Proverbs 1:2

"For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight"

1. "*Attaining wisdom*" is the goal and subject of the book of Proverbs.

The Hebrew word which is translated as "*wisdom*" means "*that which controls or makes firm or fixed.*" This word has more to do with righteousness and justice, rather than just intelligence. It has the meaning of practical, *moral*, intelligence which produces strength of character, or, practical knowledge of how to fashion or control one's life.

This word, "*wisdom*," as used here, has the meaning of discovering God's mind on a matter, or "*seeing life as God sees it.*"

2. The Hebrew word which is translated as "*Discipline*" [translated as "*instruction*" in the King James Translation] refers to **the method**, or process, of attaining wisdom. It has the

meaning of "*obedience*." The instruction within the book of Proverbs will correct the believer and bring submission to the higher authority of God . . . "*moral discipline*."

3. The Hebrew phrase which is translated as "*to know*," (preceding "*wisdom*" and "*instruction*") in Proverbs 1:2 . . . [It is translated, "*for acquiring*" in the New International Version] . . . is an **active** word and includes the idea of, not just knowing with one's mind but the idea of one "**doing**" what is learned. It has the meaning of "*to discern, to be alert, to carry out a decision*" - acting out wisdom!
4. The Hebrew word which is translated as "*understanding*" comes from the Hebrew root word which means "*to be able to distinguish* [separate, or divide] *good from evil*."

Therefore, Proverbs 1:2 teaches that the goal of the book of Proverbs is, "**for attaining**. . . [for the purpose of '*doing*'] . . . **wisdom** . . . [moral intelligence which produces strength of character] . . . **and discipline** . . . [practical knowledge fashioning one's life-style] . . . **for understanding words of insight** . . . [distinguishing between right and wrong]."

Proverbs 1:3,

"For acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair."

In order to express precisely what is meant, the Holy Spirit, uses some very technical words. The King James Translation reads as if there were four entities which one receives by "*attaining wisdom*," however, in the oldest original, translations of the Hebrew [the Massoretic] the punctuation of the last three terms are "*adverbial accusatives*" - indicating the *manner* in which is wisdom is to be manifested, which is right, just and fair!

Proverbs 1:3 teaches that "**God-given wisdom**" will produce in the believer:

1. "**Justice**" - This word Hebrew "*justice*" which is translated as comes for the courtroom where the judge rules who is right and who is wrong in a dispute. It has the meaning of "*doing the right thing*."
2. "**Judgment**" - This Hebrew word which is translated as "*judgment*," is a legal term meaning "*doing what is just*."
3. "**Equity**" - This Hebrew word which is translated as "*equity*," has the meaning of "*doing what is fair*." The root meaning of this word is "*smooth, straight or being on the level*," and has the meaning of uprightness.

Therefore, Proverbs 1:2-3 teaches that as the principles of the book of Proverbs are studied and applied, they will give wisdom, moral character and discipline, as the believer actively pursues these principles. These precepts will enable the believer to see things from God's point of view and manifest themselves by enabling the believer to be **right, just and fair** in all of life's dealings.

Proverbs 1:4-5 tells *who* may learn from this book. These verses states:

1. "*For giving prudence to the simple . . .*"

The King James Translation translates the word "*prudence*," as "*subtlety*." This Hebrew word come from a root word meaning, "*to strip aside, to make naked, to get down to the basic* [to the bare facts]. What it refers to here is that the principles in the book of Proverbs will enable the believer to see beyond the surface of things, or to see between the lines.

The Hebrew word which is translated as "*simple*" means, "*the naive, someone who is open to deception, easily enticed, or gullible*," and refers to someone who accepts anything and everything that comes along, one with no insight.

2. Verse 4 continues, "*knowledge and discretion to the young*."

The Hebrew word which is translated as "*knowledge*" has the meaning of having insight into God's mind and action in carrying this insight out.

The Hebrew word which is translated as "*discretion*" has the meaning of "*something with purpose*." The principles of the book of Proverbs will give purpose of life to the young, that is, it will replace aimlessness with a "*goal*" in life. It will put the young on target!

3. Verse 5 states, "*Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance*." The believer gains wisdom by *continuing* to learn. The process of wisdom is not completed simply because one meditates on the principles of the book of Proverbs . . . [even though he incorporates these principles into his life] . . . he must **continue** to hear and **increase** still more learning.

4. Verse 6 states, "*for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise*."

The Hebrew word that is translated as "*understanding*," is also translated as "*perceive*" or "*discern*," and has the meaning of "*cultivating a keenness of mind, understanding these proverbs and figures, and these words of the wise and their riddles*."

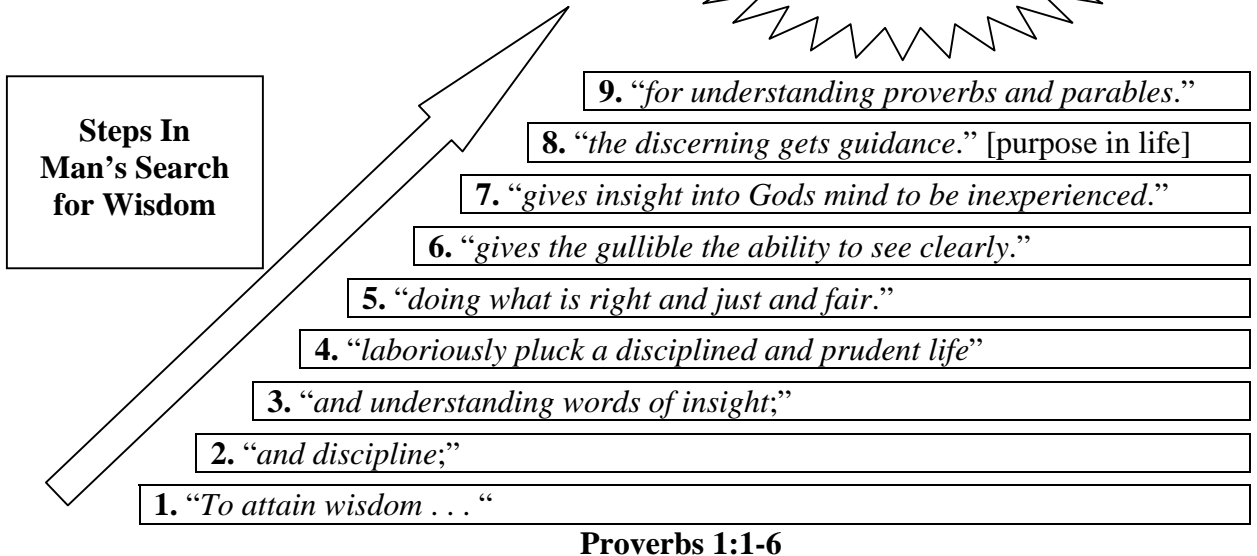
The person who reads, studies and applies the principles of the book of Proverbs will understand these proverbs, or figure of speech, their riddle and the point of what they mean.

Proverbs 1:7, "***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.***"

The Hebrew word which is translated as "*fear*" has nothing to do with a cowering apprehension, or frightened, but, rather, it refers to "*a deep **reverence**, a **respect**, or, an **awe**, of Almighty God.*"

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
IS TO TEACH A DEEP REVERENCE OF THE LORD

The diagrams on the next page is to give a picture illustration of what the first few verse of proverbs teaches



Proverbs 1:2	Know →	wisdom, instruction, and words of understanding
Proverbs 1:3	Receive →	a discipline, life, doing what is right, just and fair
Proverbs 1:4	Gives →	prudence to the gullible and purpose in life to the youth

Following these concepts will
lead the seeking individual
into

GODLY WISDOM

The believer will meet many situations in life that he cannot solve because they are beyond his ability to work them out. There will be many times when there is not a clear answer as to what is "right" or what is "wrong," however he can learn "equity." That is what the book of Proverbs teaches - what to do when there is no law . . .

PRINCIPLES FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH

The book of Proverbs gives "*principles for living*" which appears to be like "*scattered seed*." The various subjects that it deals with are sprinkled throughout the book, seemingly disconnected, often it appears to have no association to the declaration given just previous, or the following truth stated.

The reader runs across a proverb on *child rearing*, and the very next breath is a proverb on a completely different subject, such as *gossip* or *riches*. Why is this?

It seems, at times, as if Solomon dropped his manuscript and the pages got shuffled when he put them back together!

There are those who hesitant to get too excited over the book of Proverbs because of this

sprinkled style of presenting truth. This seems to be a common aversion in studying what appears to be very difficult to comprehend.

However, as one begins to apply himself to what he reads in the book of Proverbs, he will find that, instead of spending time on the outskirts of his problems, and not being able to come to grips with them, the book of Proverbs will give him ability to strip aside the obvious and come to the heart of the matter more quickly.

The book of Proverbs is not like neat rows of corn growing in straight, tall, lines for one to walk through and pick its fruit. No, it is more like walking through a treasured "*gift shop*," where every item one picks up is different . . . a priceless, beautiful *treasure*! There is a surprise waiting anyone as each item is inspected and every time one turns around, there is something new and different to examine.

The book of Proverbs deals with practical wisdom, however, it is more "*heart*" wisdom, than it is "*head*" knowledge. The principles for living contained in the book of Proverbs are something which is more "*caught*," than "*taught*."

Many, even though they have their doctrine straight have trouble with living what Galatians 5:22-23 refers to as "*the fruit of the Spirit*" . . . [*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control*] . . . Their systematic theology stands in straight, tall, lines and scribbled titles, however, their ability to cope with crises in everyday living has, somehow, gone wrong. Herein is the beauty of the book of Proverbs - it works in *every area* of life, Monday through Sunday, with amazing efficiency!

The reason for the arrangement of the book of Proverbs is because God is presenting wisdom as the supreme treasure to the diligent seeker. God is not speaking of any one subject in life, but, rather He is stating that *wisdom* is to be in all of life's experiences.

The "*wisdom*" given in the book of Proverbs, permeates every category of life. All facets of wisdom is set forth. All shade into one another, and any one of them can be used to represent the whole. Here, in the book of Proverbs, God's "*moral-presentation*" is given, dealing with God's "*righteousness, justice, and equity*," enabling the believer to do what is right just and fair! No matter what the subject, difficult situation, or problem one faces, a principle given here, is always there to meet the need, whatever it might be.

In this book of Proverbs the believer can receive ability and power to project "*eternal*" goals and proper direction, which in some cases is toward a goal, and in other cases, it is to turn away from a certain crisis or situation.

However, as the student gives diligent attention to the book of Proverbs he will discover far more order than there seemed to be when he first began studying this book. There are *narrative* forms, such as, in the first nine chapters, one finds a section about the father's advice to his son.

An example of areas of "*wisdom*" found in the book of Proverbs:

The sovereign on the throne	8:15-16; 16:10-13; 21:1; 25:2-5; 28:16; 29:14; 31:1-9
The principles of national	11:14; 14:34; 24:6; 28:2

prosperity or decay are laid open	
The rich are warned of their besetting temptation	18:11; 23:4-5; 28:20 & 22
The poor are cheered in their worldly humiliation	15:16-17; 17:1; 29:1,22; 28:6
Wisdom is given for self-control	4:23-27; 16:32; 23:1-3
Wisdom bridles the tongue	4:24; 10:31; 17:20; 25:23; 26:20-26
...corrects the wanton eye	5:20-21; 6:25-29; 23:26-27
...ties the unjust hand in chains	18:5; 28:8
... prevents laziness	6:6-11; 12:27; 13:4; 19:24; 20:4; 24:30-34
...chastises all unclean desires	21:25-26
... teaches clean living	4:14-15; 6:1-5; 14:8, 15, & 18; 22:3; 25:6-10
...raises men's courage	28:1
...represents self-control & purity in such a manner as to produce a deep respect and high regard of reverence for God and man	5:15-19 together with 23:29-35
The blessing or curse of the marriage ordinance is vividly portrayed	18:22; 29:14; 31:10 with 12:4; 19:13; 21:9 with 19
Sound principles of family order and discipline are inculcated	13:24; 14:1; 19:18; 22:6; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17, 19, and 21
Domestic economy is displayed in handling money properly	27:23-27; 31:10-27
Even the minute courtesies of daily life are regulated	23:6-8; 25:17
Self-denying consideration of others	3:27-28
Providing liberty for all men	11:24; 22:9
Principles of <u>true</u> godliness	31:10 and verse 30

From the moment one rises in the morning until he goes to sleep at night, his life is one continuing series of decisions and, the book of Proverbs, can able him to make decisions which are **right**, **just** and **fair**.

God promises "*wisdom*," not to the causal seeker, but, rather, to those who "*seek after*

wisdom as one would seek after silver." These riches, offered in the book of Proverbs, are not lying on the surface, one must dig, as one seeks after gold, in the depths of the earth. The surface may seem barren, because the mine, which bears inexhaustible riches is beneath the surface? Its riches are held out only to the diligent *digger*. [Proverbs 2:4]

Remember, the meaning of the Hebrew word for "*wisdom*" is the word that means "*strong, or firm*." The meaning is obvious, when one receives wisdom, it will make him strong and sound in character - and this is the purpose of the book of Proverbs.

God does not promise one will "*get smart*" by diligent study of the book of Proverbs, but, rather, God does promise that one will receive "*justice, judgment and equity*."

Wisdom, then, is affirming God's right to define righteousness, it is to let God's decision stand and this, of course, will produce a strong and sound character. Wisdom is "*seeing life from God's point of view*" and this will, certainly, make one strong in character.

We have already learned in this study that the Hebrew word which is translated as "*understanding*," when it is used in conjunction with the word "*wisdom*," has a far deeper meaning that just "*head-knowledge*," it has the explicit meaning of "***carrying out a decision between good and evil***." This Hebrew word "*understanding*" has the meaning to "*stand under*," by acting on what God says, and, in doing so, it activates wisdom. The word "*understanding*" has the meaning of *responding* to life's situation, *as* God would act.

Another word, closely associated with wisdom, is the Hebrew word which is translated as "*knowledge*" in our Bibles. This Hebrew word, "*knowledge*," has the meaning of, after one accepts God's decision as final, and has acted on God's decision, (this process of "*understanding*") then, after one has this "*understanding*," he is given "*knowledge*," or, deep insight into Godly living.

Out of "*wisdom*" and "*understanding*" comes "*knowledge*." As one seeks God's mind as to what is ***right, just*** and ***fair*** - (and has acted on what God says) - then God gives insight into Godly living, that brings favor with both God and man.

Proverbs 1:2 – these proverbs will give one wisdom, which brings discipline and the ability to carry wisdom out.

Proverbs 1:3 – one must laboriously, with discipline, seek wisdom and the product will be the ability do what is ***right, just*** and ***fair***.

Proverbs 1:4 – this wisdom from the book of Proverbs will enable one to strip aside the obvious and get to the heart and core of a matter, and not to be "*gullible*."

Proverbs 1:5 – One gains Godly wisdom by *continuing* to learn and *retaining* what he learns!

Proverbs 1:6 – these proverbs will cultivate a keenness of mind to grasp the puzzles of life, and give the ability to carry out this wisdom.

Proverbs 1:7 – finally, the purpose of these Proverbs is to produce a deep reverence, or respect, of God that will enable one to take God seriously and to know Him intimately.

God exhorted the believer to **pursue** wisdom contained within the book of Proverbs, and, when one seeks the wisdom found in Proverbs, God promises success in their lives. The book of Proverbs will give one "*equity*," which is to "*know what to do when there is no certain law pertaining to a situation.*"

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is **not** to give specific laws to govern one's life, but, rather, it is to give underlying patterns and principles that is to be constant in the course of human living. The book of Proverbs gives certain guidelines, which gives direction in living a successful and productive life.

Searching diligently for the wisdom that is found in the book of Proverbs will be a lifetime search because the believer no one can ever exhaust the applications found in this book. However, one will find that, as he faces situations in dealing with different types of people, that, a principle of this book of wisdom will come to mind and he will be given wisdom, thereby avoiding many problems of life.

"Seek wisdom as for silver and search for her as for hidden treasures . . . Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can be compared to her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed . . . Wisdom is supreme, therefore get wisdom, through it cost all you have, get understanding." [Proverbs 2:4; 3:13-18; 4:7]

There is an interesting truth found in Proverbs 1:6, which states that the wisdom of Proverbs will help "*to understand a proverb, and the interpretation,*" and yet, there isn't a section of the book of Proverbs that actually explains *how* to understand a proverb!

How can this be?

Simply, because one does not, by mere reading, or even diligent study alone, understand these proverbs, but, rather, what is called for is "*learning by doing*" that develops strength of character! God enables one to discern accurately the works encountered in day-to-day living, as he puts into practice what he has learned.

A proverb is realized as one discerns by pondering **and practicing**, just as one learns to walk by walking.

God promised Solomon, "*Ask for **whatever** you will and I will give it to you.*" [The story is found in 1 Kings 3:5-4:34] Rather than power, money or fame, Solomon asked for "*wisdom.*" And God granted his request and the book of Proverbs is the result!

Solomon was given "*wisdom*" as God had promised. [Solomon was probably the only man who ever received this wisdom, *without* having to demonstrate it in his life.] Solomon did show wisdom by his writings, by building the Temple, by maintaining peace in Israel, and by stimulating commerce throughout the land of Israel, however, it must be noted, that he did some very *unwise* things. He certainly did not maintain the "*fear of the Lord*" all of his life.

God promised Solomon to "*give him wisdom*" . . . [that is, *divine wisdom*] . . . and God did just that. No one, apart from Jesus Christ, has ever showed the wisdom in dealing with people as Solomon did. However, for everyone else, wisdom . . . [*divine wisdom that produces strength of character*] . . . comes only by **doing**. The actions and attitudes of the one who applies the principles of the book of Proverbs are always **just**, **right** and **fair** in all his dealings with everyone.

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and the book of Proverbs is the result of that God-given wisdom. Here is wisdom given by God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, passed down to us. **It is wisdom from God!**

Paul's prayer was, "*that we be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*"

If the believer desires his life to prosper . . . [God's idea of spiritual prosperity, that is] . . . then he should "*mediate*" on God's Word.

*"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. **Whatever he does prospers.**"*
[Psalms 1:1-3]

*"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then **you will be prosperous and successful.**"*
[Joshua 1:8]

Never put the book of Proverbs on the same level with other so called proverbs of brief striking expressions of man's wit and wisdom. The book of Proverbs is **NOT** just a book of pithy sayings, or a collections of short sentences that gives wise advice, but, rather, it is a book of ***God's wisdom to man!***

Here, in the book of Proverbs, God shares with man the principles of life. One will find that the book of Proverbs is jam packed with advice about every day details of life.

One finds situations in life which are beyond his ability to find a solution and, at times, there is no clear cut law telling him how to solve the situation. At times like that, one needs to know what to do to work out the situation. He needs "*equity*" - [knowing what principle to use when no law exists]. The book of Proverbs gives "*principles from heaven for life on earth!*"

Before one reads from the book of Proverbs, he needs to pray something like this, "*God, here are the decisions I must make and here are the circumstances I am confronted with. Please would You guide me in my reading and give me insight in those principles that will apply to my particular situation?"*

Reading the book of Proverbs with this attitude, one will find that each time he reads it

will be like a new book to him. He will never exhaust its applications and, more and more, he will find that when he faces any situation, or when he has to deal with all types of people, a verse from the book of Proverbs will come to mind, and he will be given wisdom that will guide his way, causing him to avoid many, many problems he would otherwise encounter. The book of Proverbs will indeed make one wise and provide strength and soundness of character.

This is the purpose for which God gave the book of Proverbs!

As mentioned before, it is very difficult to try and put the book of Proverbs into any kind of order, because of its scattered manner of presenting principles of truth, however, in order to get a bird's eye view on the book of Proverbs and give an idea of an outline, I will supply the following:

AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

TITLE, INTRODUCTION AND MOTTO [1:1-7]

1:1 = The title

1:2-6 = The introduction; the benefits of the book

1:7 = The motto

I THE FATHER'S PRAISE OF WISDOM [1:8 to 9:18]

1:8-19 = "If sinners entice thee . . . "

1:20-33 = Wisdom's impassioned appeal

2:1-22 = Wisdom as treasure and safeguard

3:1-35 = The whole-hearted disciple

4:1-27 = The lifelong pilgrimage

5:1-23 = Wisdom about marriage

6:1-35 = Pitfalls for the unwary

7:1-27 = Simpleton and seductress

8:1-36 = Wisdom apologia

9:1-18 = The rival feasts

II PROVERBS OF SOLOMON [10:1 to 11:16]

III WORDS OF WISE MEN [22:17 to 24:34]

IV HEZEKIAH'S COLLECTION
OF PROVERBS OF SOLOMON [25:1 to 29:27]

V WORDS OF AGUR [30:1-33]

VI WORDS OF LEMUEL [31:1-9]

VII AN ALPHABET OF WIFELY EXCELLENCE {31:10-31}

Let's take a look at the various parts of the book of Proverbs. From the opening to the close of the ninth chapter, is chiefly confined to the conduct of the early life. The attention of the

student is directed to the distinctive character of the dangers that most easily beset the young. The purpose of this section seems to be to give the principles of virtue and piety to the young and fix him in a steady pursuit of wisdom. Youth are called upon to "*fear God and reverence His law.*" This portion is expressly to heed the youth, to take him by the hand, set up way-marks to warn against coming danger and imminent temptations. [Note especially, 1:10-15; 2:10-19; 5:1-13; 7:1-27.] Here wisdom allures the youth into the ways of God by the most engaging motives [3:1-18; 8:17]. This passage fortifies the youth with sound principles when they are on their own (out from parental care) in a world of temptation. That this invaluable passage impressed upon their lives is of utmost important. These principles, listed here, must be deep-seated in the hearts of young people.

Each young person's responsibility of conduct - (in every area of life) - is dependent upon putting the principles found here into reality in his own life. There is always the danger of trifling deviations "*for expediency's sake.*"

There needs to be self-discipline.

It is imperative that young people develop the habit of bringing everything to the Word of God - the duty of weighing in a "*just*" balance - all activities of heart and soul. They are deciding the momentous choices between what are the everlasting treasures of life, and, what are the "*toys*" of this earth.

The second part of the book of Proverbs commences at the opening of the 10th chapter, as seems obvious from the introductory clause. The style and manner of this second part is as different as possible from that of the first section. This section seems designed for the use of persons advanced from the state of youth to that of adult-hood. Here, the richest ornaments of fancy are presented to captivate their attention, and allure them to Godly practices. All is business and activity, brevity, continuity and terseness or abruptness. Every thought is highly polished, but compressed, thoroughly aware of the value of every moment of time at this important period of one's life. Complete series of short rules of life are laid down. Wisdom concentrates the most momentous precepts into the narrowest compass.

While the first section appealed to the imagination, here, in this second section, wisdom appeals to judgment. The first sections exhibits all the genius of poetry, while this second section, exhibits all the art of composition and hence, one is rendered as attractive as the other.

The section of the book of Proverbs [10:1 to 24:34] is written to the mature - and the maturing! The object in this second and third sections, because it seems to be for the more mature person, is to enforce a moral principle in words so few they may be easily learned and, yet, so curiously selected and arranged, that they will strike and fix the attention instantaneously. In this passage, wisdom prevents the mind from becoming fatigued by a series of detached sentences. They are perpetually diversified by the changes of style and figure. At times the style rendered is striking by its peculiar simplicity, at other times, by its familiarity of an illustration, at other times, by the grandeur and loftiness of the simile employed, or, at times, an obscure riddle to arouse the curiosity and still, at other times, a catchy antithesis.

The next, and final, section under study, comprises the last seven chapters, the first five written by Solomon, and edited by Hezekiah.

To understand something of the correspondence of the lines in the book of Proverbs, is greatly helpful if one understands what a "*parallelism*" is. A "*parallelism*" is a pair of statements laid along side one another.

Sometimes one and one is more than two. By bringing two ideas together in a parallelism, the book of Proverbs communicates more than the mere sum of two ideas. The position of two statements at times create a puzzle. One must understand how the two ideas relate to one another, whether by contrast, comparison or some other relationship is suggested. In a "*synonymous parallelism*," the message gets fuller expression by being stated twice, while in an "*antithetical parallelism*," both the message and its converse are displayed.

Let's me explain!

1. SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM - (synonymous meaning "*alike*")

In a synonymous parallelism two ideas are brought together saying the same thing in different words. The second line often repeats the first line in an altered form, in order to express the lesson of the proverb with maximum clarity.

These are also referred to as "*comparative couplets*." A "*couplet*" being two lines joined together.

The key link between two statements is "*better than*," "*like*," or "*so*." The two statements introduce two kinds of circumstances, or choices, showing one to be preferable.

[Examples would be Proverbs 15:16; 25:24-15]

It may not have a conjunction, as in Proverbs 18:20. At times part of the idea may be omitted, because it is implied by the other idea, as in Proverbs 14:19 (The verb is omitted from the second line, but implied that the "*wicked will bow down at the gate of the righteous*." Note Proverbs 18:18 the subject is omitted.

2. ANTITHETICAL PARALLELISM - (antithetical meaning "*opposite*")

In a antithetical parallelism two ideas are contrasted with one another.

These are also referred to as "*contractive couplets*" - Two parts differing from one another laid along side each other in order to penetrate both sides of a problem. Each should be given careful thought.

Antithetical parallelism usually are connected with the conjunction "*but*," such as in Proverbs 10:1, 5, 29; 19:16; 13:1 and 18.

3. SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM - (synthetic meaning "*complete*")

In a synthetic parallelism parts are put together to form a whole.

These are also referred to as "*completive couplets*." The link between the two statements is usually "*and*," or "*so*," as in Proverbs 14:10, 13; and 16:3. - [Other

examples would be Proverbs 15:31; 17:6; 19:26.]

It sometimes argues from the lesser to the greater, as in Proverbs 11:31, or from the greater to the less as in Proverbs 19:10 or 21:27.

Sometimes a synthetic parallelism shows "*one thing better than another*" as in Proverbs 16:16; 21:9, 19; or 17:1.

Sometimes the first line of a synthetic parallelism is the statement and the second line, the consequence, as in Proverbs 20:4; or 20:19.

4. EMBLEMATIC PARALLELISM - (emblematic meaning "a type")

In an emblematic parallelism, the first line is an emblem, illustration, type, or example drawn from nature or daily life.

Often a riddle is posed by an emblematic parallelism, as in Proverbs 27:15; 25:18-19, 23, 27; 10:26.

Sometimes a synonymous parallelism is emblematic as well.

The first line illustrates the second line, much like a political cartoon in the newspaper. The first line serves as the picture, while the second line serves as the caption.

An example is found in Proverbs 25:13.

Sometimes the comparison may not be stated, as in Proverbs 25:14. To understand this proverb, think of yourself as a farmer, with seed in the ground, and "*clouds and wind*," however, the clouds and wind are, "*without rain*." Imagine the disappointment! It is the same way with a man who raises hopes of profit and advantage, when he boasts of his gifts, and, then, like the farmer, hope is dashed, when the boaster does not follow through with his promise of giving.

[Other examples of "*emblematic parallelism*" are Proverbs 27:15 and 17]

In understanding an "*emblematic parallelism*" he should ask questions like, "*If 'A' is like 'B,' then how is 'A' like 'B'?*"

An example would be Proverbs 25:11, which states, "*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver*." One should ask, "*How is a 'word aptly spoken' like 'apples of gold in settings of silver'?*" [The answer, "*Words, aptly spoken, adorns, attracts attention like an intricate, skillfully executed piece of jewelry*."

In Proverbs 25:18 it states, "*Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is the man who gives false testimony against his neighbor*." The question would be, "*How is a man that gives false testimony against his neighbor like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow?*" [The answer, "*Both are like waging war*."

What is the Scriptural manner one can obtain wisdom?

The ultimate purpose of the believer's life is to glorify God, that is, to reflect Godly characteristics in every situation of life! The question naturally then is, "*How does one get the wisdom to accomplish this?*"

WISDOM IS GAINED BY THOSE WHO SEEK FOR IT

Proverbs 8:17 states, "*I [that is, wisdom] love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.*"

Where does one find wisdom, and how does one look for it? This wisdom, spoken of here ...(that is, wisdom which is "*seeking life from God's point of view*)...is obtained from God alone!

Proverbs 2:6 states, "*For the LORD gives wisdom, and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.*"

This wisdom is not given to just anyone, even if they know where it comes from, but, rather, it is granted only to those who value it enough to pursue after it.

Proverbs 2:4-5 states, "*If you look for it [wisdom] as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*"

If this "*treasure*" is to be mined, the seeking must be done properly! There are two fundamental aspects of one's search for this "*wisdom*" → **ATTITUDE** and **APPROACH!**

1. ONE'S ATTITUDE MUST REFLECT HIS AWARENESS THAT NO MAN, INCLUDING HIMSELF, IS NATURALLY WISE IN HIMSELF

Proverbs 3:7 states, "*Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.*"

If one is ever to gain this Godly wisdom, it must come from some other source outside of himself.

One's attitude must mirror his conviction that the ultimate source of this wisdom is from God **alone!**

Accordingly, God grants wisdom to those who manifest certain spiritual characteristics, namely . . .

REVERENCE - Proverbs 9:10 teaches, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*"

HUMILITY - Proverbs 11:2 teaches, "*When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*"

Proverbs 15:33 teaches, "*The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.*"

TEACHABLE - Proverbs 9:9 teaches, "*Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*"

Proverbs 15:31, "*He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home*

among the wise."

Proverbs 19:20 teaches, "*Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.*"

DILIGENCE - Proverbs 8:17 teaches, "*I [wisdom] love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.* (Also see 2:4-5)

UPRIGHTNESS - Proverbs 2:7 teaches, "*He [the Lord] holds victory in store for the upright, He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless.*"

FAITH - James 1:5-8 teaches, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*"

2. IN ONE'S PURSUIT OF GODLY WISDOM, NOT ONLY IS ONE TO HAVE A RIGHT ATTITUDE, HE MUST ADOPT A PROPER APPROACH

A RIGHT APPROACH WOULD BE:

(A) Ask God for wisdom!

One, in his search for wisdom, or course, will research, study, inquiry, and reflection, however, the process must not be strictly *academic*. God gives wisdom through His Word, and He also gives wisdom through one's ability to see the situations of life from God's perspective and to recognize these circumstance's potential-value in God's ultimate purpose for the believer. [God's *ultimate* purpose being, "*to conform the believer into the image of Jesus Christ!*"]

A careful examination of James 1 would be helpful here!

James' counsel found in James 1:5-6, is that God will generously give wisdom to the one who asks for it in faith. The promise is straightforward, however, the implications merit careful thought!

The promise is not that God will give instant omniscience, nor that God will divinely inject "*intervene sly*" this wisdom . . . apart from a regular diet of God's revealed wisdom - **that is, His Word!**

James 1:5 . . . which states, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him*" . . . is **NOT** a promise of instant solutions to every problem! No, this promise is given in answer to a question in the opening sentences of this chapter. James is challenging all believers to accept their trials with joy *because of the character development that would result!*

The process of the believer's Christ-like development seemed so "*unnatural*" to

those James was writing and impossible for anyone to live, the question was, "*How can I develop a proper perspective toward my trials? How can I know how to respond in a way that will produce these Christ-like-characteristics in my life?*" James answer is, "*Ask God for wisdom!*"

So, then, in the contest of James 1:5-6, this God-given wisdom was to see life's situations from God's perspective and recognize their potential value.

(B) It is "in God's Word" that one seeks wisdom

Psalms 119:97-100 state, "*Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on Your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey Your precepts.*"

[Also see Psalm 19:7; 2 Timothy 2:7; 3:15-17 and 2 Peter 1:19]

(C) God uses outside research in one's search for Godly wisdom

Proverbs stresses the value of "*wise counselors.*"

Proverbs 11:14 states, "*For lack of guidance a nation falls but many advisers make victory sure.*"

Proverbs 13:20 states, "*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*"

Proverbs 15:22 states, "*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*"

In seeking counselors, one should always seek those of deep spiritual insight. A question that could be asked, for instance, would be, "*Are you aware of any Biblical principles that would be of help here?*" or, perhaps, if speaking to someone who has gone through a relevant, similar experience, the question might be, "*When you went through a similar experience, did you gain any insight that would be of value to me?*"

(D) Another source of wisdom is life itself!

Proverbs 30:24-28, "*Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer; coney are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the craggs; locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks; a lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces.*"

This passage is just one illustration from the Word of God to show that God built His wisdom into nature and men would do well to reflect on the practical lessons God gives us through life itself.

Note that Hebrews 5:12-14 speaks of wisdom that is gained by *experiential application* of learned truth, the product of in-depth Bible study and conscientious obedience of God's Word.

Hebrews 5:12-14 states, *"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."*

Practice of truth expands the believer's capacity for greater depth in wisdom.

In one's search for wisdom, he must understand that God's will has different aspects. There is:

1. GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL

It is not fatalism to recognize that God has an area of fulfilling His *sovereign* will! God does have a predetermined plan in the universe, however, He will never violate the believer's responsibility because He never works contrary to the believer's nature, nor force one's free will. God works within the believer's will and in harmony with the believer's nature to bring about His determined end.

2. GOD'S MORAL WILL

God's *moral* will, given to the believer in Scripture, concerns not only the believer's actions, but, rather, touches every aspect of the believer's life - his goals and attitudes - which is to be the expression of God's character. If believers confine their life just to external behavior, then God's *moral* law becomes nothing more than legislation governing and this is never God's intent. God desires that His law, written in His Word, become the believer's heart's desire, written in his heart.

3. GOD GIVEN AREA OF FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

The believer must choose and make his decisions within God's moral will for his life. He determines what would best expedite and promote the revealed will and purposes of God.

THIS IS "SEEKING GODLY WISDOM"

Words like . . .

"Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind..." [Romans 14:5]

"...we thought it best..." [1 Thessalonians 3:1],

"I thought it necessary..."[Philippians 2:25]

"...if it seems advisable..."[1 Corinthians 16:4]

"It is not desirable..."[Acts 6:3]

"it seemed good..."[Acts 15:28]

. . . show an area of freedom of choose which God has given to the believer.

These Scripture above and many, many, more teach there is an area God gives to the believer that is the privilege of choice, or, the dignity of accountability!

With the above in mind, let look again at ***Proverbs 3:5-6***, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*"

Hebrew lexicons and commentaries agree that the correct translation in verse 6 is, "*and He shall make your paths straight, (or) smooth, (or) successful.*"

The noun "*path*" is frequently employed in the Psalms and Proverbs to describe the general course or fortunes of life. [See Proverbs 4:18-19; 15:19, etc.] When the verb "*make straight, make smooth*" is connected with the noun "*path*", the meaning of the statement is "*He shall make the course of your life successful.*" this meaning is clearly indicated in Proverbs 11:5, where it states, "*The righteousness of the blameless will **smooth his way**, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.*" This verse contrasts the righteous man who experiences true success in life with the wicked man who brings trouble upon himself by his own devious behavior. This is a common theme in Proverbs [See Proverbs 4:18-19; 15:19; and 22:17-21].

The teaching of Proverbs 3:5-6 is that those who trust God, and trust in His wisdom . . . rather than trusting in their own worldly understanding . . . and acknowledge God in every area of their life, will reap a life that is successful by God's standards.

This concept fits the context of Proverbs 3 exactly. Each couplet from verse 1 through verse 10 describes the internal, or external, blessings which come to the person who acknowledges God.

Proverbs 3:1-2 - "*Keep My commandments and have long days and peace.*"

Proverbs 3:3-4, "*Keep kindness and truth and find favor and good repute.*"

Proverbs 3:5-6, "*Trust in the Lord and He will make the course of your life successful.*"

Proverbs 3:7-6, "*Fear the Lord and it will bring healing to your body.*"

Proverbs 3:9-10, "*Honor the Lord with your wealth and your barns will be filled with
plenty.*"

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There is another concept that I want to share before I close this study on the book of Proverbs. I believe it will help a great deal in understanding other Biblical concepts. It is this:

*"One's understanding of the Biblical words 'DEATH' and 'LIFE,' as they are used, especially throughout the book of Proverbs, will certainly have a great influence on his interpretation of passages containing these words.*

Among the many promises of "*life*" and the warnings of "*death*" in the book of Proverbs, some are to be taken in the narrow sense of meaning just *physical* life or "*physical* death. However, most times these terms, in the context in which they are found, show that the "*life*," and "*death*," are to be understood qualitatively. The "*life*" promised throughout Proverbs is far more than a goal beyond the grave, but, rather, it is "***life in its fullness***" here and now! It extends into eternity, however, God promises this "*fullness of life*" now, before the believer quits this earth!

The literal meaning of the word "*death*," comes from an original Hebrew word which means "*separation*." The reason we refer to physical death as "*death*," is because at that time man's soul is separated from his body, however, Scripture refers to other kinds of "*death*" as

well.

It is stated that Adam "*died*" the **day** that he ate of the forbidden fruit, however, what "*death*" meant, in this incident, was that he was "*spiritually*" separated from God.

Another Scripture which makes this concept clear is Romans 8:6 which states, "*To be carnally minded is **death**; but to be spiritual minded is **life** . . .*" Could this verse be teaching that everyone who has a "*carnal*" thought dies "*physically*"? Of course, not, however they are "*separated*" from the spiritual potential God desires for them.

Whenever one is *separated* from the "*life*" which God intended for him to live, Scripture often refers to this as "*death*." Death does **NOT** always refer to physical death, nor does it always refer to eternal death . . . [that is *separation from God eternally*].

Proverbs uses the words "*death*" and "*die*" some twenty to thirty times, which, by the very context, could not possibly mean **physical death**, or even **hell**. It is impossible to limit the meaning of the death mentioned in Proverbs to literal, physical, death - as most would understand the word in this day and age.

The places in Proverbs where this word is found are referring to, "*missing **true** life*"!

God does not only want to take the believer to heaven when he dies . . . [that is, when he dies physically], but, rather, God desires to bring heaven into the believer **NOW**, while he is still physically alive.

*"For who findeth me [wisdom] findeth life,  
and shall obtain favor [acceptance] of the Lord."  
[Proverbs 8:35].*