

Proverbs – A Study of Some Key Passages

Week 1 – Chapters 1-3: The Foundation of Wisdom

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References in red and chapter subtitles: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, You are the source of all wisdom and knowledge. Send Your Holy Spirit to teach us through Your Word. Lead us to fear, love, and trust in You above all things, and help us grow in wisdom through our faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Background to Proverbs

Author: The *Lutheran Study Bible* notes that most of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon, the son of David and king of Israel.

- God granted Solomon extraordinary wisdom. **1 Kings 4:29** “Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.”
- Many of Solomon's sayings were later collected and arranged into the book we now have.

Date: Most of the material dates to Solomon's reign (approximately 970–930 B.C.), though later collections were added during the days of King Hezekiah (approximately 715–686 B.C.).

Purpose: Proverbs teach God's people how to live wisely in everyday life.

The book addresses many topics:

- ♦ Relationships, ♦ Speech, ♦ Family ♦ life, ♦ Work,
- ♦ Finances, ♦ Leadership, ♦ Self-control,
- ♦ Humility, and ♦ Fear of the Lord

Theme Verse: **Proverbs 1:7** “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” // That verse serves as the foundation of the entire book.

Chapter Summary: **1-7: Father** – knowledge; **8-10: Son** – wisdom; **11-31: Holy Spirit** – understanding

Key Passage #1 – The Fear of the Lord: **Proverbs 1:7** “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Teaching: The “fear of the LORD” is not terror that causes us to run away from God. Rather, it is: ♦ Reverence, ♦ Awe, ♦ Trust, ♦ Submission, and ♦ Faith.

The person who fears the Lord recognizes: ♦ God is Creator, ♦ God is holy, ♦ God knows all things, and ♦ God's Word is true.

According to Proverbs, wisdom begins when we stop trusting ourselves and begin trusting God.

Discussion:

1. Wisdom [wikipedia] is the ability to apply accumulated knowledge, experience, and insight to make sound, ethical, and practical judgments. How does the Bible's definition of wisdom differ from the wikipedia definition?
2. Why do many intelligent people still act foolishly?
3. Why is the fear of the Lord the starting point of wisdom?

Key Passage #2 – Wisdom Calls Out: **Proverbs 1:20–23** “Wisdom shouts in the street, She [NET, 110] raises her voice in the public square; At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she declares her sayings: ‘How long, you naive ones, will you love simplistic thinking? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? Turn to my rebuke, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you [strong words follow, vv. 24-29].’”

Teaching:

- Wisdom is not hidden. God continually calls people through: ♦ His Word,

- ✦Parents, ✦Pastors, ✦Teachers, and
- ✦Christian friends.

- The problem is not that wisdom is unavailable. The problem is that sinners naturally reject God's instruction.

Gospel Connection: Jesus Himself is the Wisdom of God. **1 Corinthians 1:24** "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." // Rejecting wisdom ultimately means rejecting Christ. Receiving wisdom begins with receiving Christ by grace through faith.

Key Passage #3 – Trust in the Lord: Proverbs 3:5–6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."

Teaching: Notice the contrast:

Human Way	God's Way
Lean on your understanding	Trust in the Lord
Follow your heart	Follow God's Word
Depend on yourself	Depend on God

Our sinful nature continually wants independence. Faith continually returns to dependence upon God.

Discussion:

1. Can you give an example of leaning on your own understanding?
2. Why is trusting God difficult? When we trust in God, we go against our _____!
3. Why should we be compelled to trust in God and His word? _____

Key Passage #4 – The Blessings of Wisdom: Proverbs 3:13–18 "Blessed is a person who finds wisdom, And one who obtains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver, And her produce better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, And nothing you desire compares with 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 take hold of her, And happy are those who hold on to her."

Teaching: Proverbs repeatedly teaches that wisdom is more valuable than wealth. Many people spend years pursuing: ✦Money, ✦Popularity, ✦Success, and ✦Pleasure. Yet neglect wisdom. God says wisdom is worth more than all of them!

Discussion:

1. Today, what things do people value more than wisdom? _____
2. Why is wisdom more valuable than money? _____
3. What blessings come from living according to God's Word? _____

Law and Gospel

Law: Proverbs exposes our foolishness. We have: ✦Trusted ourselves instead of God, ✦Spoken carelessly, ✦Ignored wise instruction, and ✦Pursued earthly treasures above heavenly wisdom. Do we deserve God's judgment? Y N

Gospel: Jesus is God's wisdom in human flesh. He ✦perfectly obeyed the Father, ✦died for our foolishness, and ✦rose again to forgive our sins. Through faith in Christ we receive: ✦Forgiveness, ✦Wisdom, ✦New life, and ✦The Holy Spirit. What is your plan going forward? _____

Application Each Day This Week:

1. Read one chapter of Proverbs.
2. Identify one example of wisdom.
3. Pray for God's help to apply it.
4. Write down one practical action step.

Memory Verse: Proverbs 3:5–6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."

Week 2 Preparation: Read **Proverbs 4–9**