

PROVERBS

GOD STATEMENT FOR PROVERBS: THE GOD WHO REVEALS _____ (a)

At first glance, Proverbs may seem to be an unusual book to be included in the Bible. It doesn't say too many things that appear to emphasize the "_____(b)" aspect of life. Unlike the Psalms, no one would claim that Proverbs aids us in our _____ (c) life.

So, what's Proverbs doing in the Bible? What is its purpose? In a nutshell, the book of Proverbs is meant to give us _____ (d) in our daily life. God cares about us. He wants us to thrive and flourish. He wants us to succeed in _____ (e) life. If the book of Psalms is designed to aid our _____ (f) life, Proverbs is designed to aid our _____ (g) life.

We all want to "_____(h)" at life. That is, everyone, even Christians, want to _____ (i) in everyday life. Driven by this desire to succeed, people frantically search books, magazine, and the internet, for tips from the "experts." Every generation has their "experts" they look to for perspective on life topics. Well, the "Expert of experts"—that is, God Himself—has given us this book to learn how to "win" at life. By this book we can learn the principles that can determine _____ (j) or _____ (k) in the major arenas of human activity—business, personal finance, parenting, marriage, family life, personal relationships, and community life.

AUTHORSHIP

Most of the content of Proverbs comes from _____ (l) (Prov 1:1), just as most of the Psalms comes from his father, David. Early in his rule, Solomon was granted great wisdom by God: "*Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men . . . and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations*" (1 Kings 4:29-31). And the text goes on to say, "*He also spoke 3,000 proverbs*" (1 Kings 4:32).

The bulk of Proverbs, then, began to take shape about _____(m) B.C. Chapters 25-29 constitutes a separate book within Proverbs, and was compiled and edited by scribes of King _____(n) (715-686 B.C.). This means that the book of Proverbs as we know it today wasn't completed until the time of Hezekiah (around 700 B.C.). There were also two _____(o) authors (or collectors) who contributed to Proverbs. A man named Agur is responsible for Chapter 30, and King Lemuel is the responsible for Chapter 31. Nothing is known about the identities of the two men. It was probably Solomon who was guided by the Holy Spirit to incorporate these two chapters into his book. So, ultimately, God delivered the words of all the Proverbs (Prov 30:5-6).

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM

The word “_____ (p)” permeates the book of Proverbs. It's found 161 times in the Old Testament and 42 times in Proverbs. That means _____%(q) of the references to “wisdom” in the Old Testament is found in Proverbs.

And what is “wisdom”? It refers to developing the _____(r) to negotiate the _____(s) of life. It's the ability to put together the _____(t) of life. It's finding the _____(u) concealed in the created order. Wisdom occupies itself with discovering God order in life and then learning to _____(v) that order successfully. In short, it's _____(w) life by learning to live it God's way.

The most common and easiest excuse for doing wrong and falling into trouble is _____(x) (“I didn't know better”). That excuse is rejected in the Proverbs because wisdom is not hidden in the earth or on top of a mountain. Instead, it's roaming the streets looking for someone to _____(y) (Prov 1:20-23), and it _____(z) to bless those who will listen (Prov 1:33).

The value of wisdom of beyond anything this world offers, so we need to _____(aa) it like we would a hidden _____(bb) (Prov 2:4). It yields a better return on investment than any worldly investment. It never fails to _____(cc) interest (Prov 3:14). Wisdom “is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares to her” (Prov 3:15). When it comes to wisdom, “long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor” (Prov 3:16). These are pictures of wisdom holding bounty in both hands which intensifies the idea that wisdom gives _____(dd) to her _____(ee).

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

The term “the _____ (ff) of the _____ (gg)” frames everything in Proverbs. It first appears in the Prologue (Prov 1:2-7) which challenges us to commit ourselves to the _____ (hh) of the book: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). It’s like brackets; everything else is held together by this concept. And it’s this concept—“the fear of the Lord”—that distinguishes Proverbs from _____ (ii) wisdom.

It’s one of the most repeated phrases in Proverbs (Prov 1:29; 2:5; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17). “The fear of the Lord” is the prerequisite for gaining wisdom. It’s the starting point of the educational process. In order to be truly wise, you must first seek godliness.

In Proverbs, the phrase “the fear of the Lord” refers to more than just reverent _____ (jj). It refers to a total life _____ (kk) to God. It’s a dedication of your whole life to the devotion of the Lord. We’ve got to get our relationship with God right through Jesus if we really want to get right with others and the world around us. No matter how diligently a person seeks wisdom, they can’t acquire it by themselves; it is a _____ (ll) of God (Prov 2:6) that is given to those who are wholly committed to Him.

STRUCTURE OF PROVERBS

It’s generally agreed that the book of Proverbs is made up of a number of sections. I’ll suggest three sections:

Instructional and Interlude Poems (Chapters 1-9)

In the first nine chapters of Proverbs there are ten “_____ (mm) poems” and five “_____ (nn) poems” on “_____ (oo) Wisdom.” The “instructional poems” are lectures to a son. Many passages in Proverbs imply that wisdom is a _____ (pp) matter. It frequently addresses the reader as “my son” (Prov 1:8, 10; 2:1; 3:1; 4:10, 20; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1) or “sons” (4:1; 8:32), and it urges him to adhere to the teaching of mom and dad (1:8). Family was the first place of wisdom in the Israelite culture. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit a great deal of family wisdom has been incorporated into the text of Proverbs. These lectures to the son generally have three parts: (1) an _____ (qq) to listen, (2) an offer of _____ (rr) to embrace wisdom and avoid folly, and (3) motivational appeals to _____ (ss) the son of the benefits of obedience and consequences of disobedience.

The “interlude poems” is when “Woman Wisdom” speaks. In these poems, wisdom is _____ (tt) as a woman (“she” speaks): “Wisdom shouts in the streets, she lifts her voice in the square . . . at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings” (Prov 1:20-21). If you’ll turn to her for wisdom, you’ll receive _____ (uu) instruction. On the other hand, if you _____ (vv) her, you’ll suffer the consequences (Prov 1:23-32). Of course, behind the voice of “Woman Wisdom” is the authoritative voice of God.

A Collection of Pithy Sayings (Chapters 10-29)

In this section, each proverb is an _____ (ww) unit that can stand alone and still have meaning. Context isn’t necessary for interpretation. These _____ (xx) sayings contrast good and evil, right and wrong, impart advice on child rearing, money matters, and speech. While many of these sayings are _____ (yy) in nature, many are directed toward the king and those who deal with him. They are useful for those who are _____ (zz) or aspire to be leaders in any area of life—at home, at church, at school, in the government, and on the job.

An Appendix of Sayings (Chapters 30-31)

The last two chapters of Proverbs act almost as an appendix of sayings by two men mentioned earlier—Agur and King Lemuel. In Chapter 30, Agur advises two of his disciples in clusters of _____ (aaa) proverbs: “*Two things I asked of You . . . There are **three** things that will not be satisfied . . . There are **three** things which are too wonderful for me . . .*” (Prov 30:7, 15, 18). In Chapter 31—the last chapter of Proverbs—wisdom is passed on from a wise _____ (bbb) to her son, King Lemuel. In the first part, the mom advises her son on how to be a good _____ (ccc) (Prov 31:2-9). In the rest of the chapter, she asks the question, “An excellent wife, who can find?” (Prov 31:10), and then she proceeds to advise him on what to look for in a good _____ (ddd).

PROVERBS, NOT PROMISES

An important thing to remember when reading the Proverbs is that it’s a book of _____ (eee), not a book of _____ (fff). We should never quote a proverb as though it’s a promise from God. A proverb is something that is _____ (ggg) true but it’s not an ironclad guarantee. In other words, it’s _____ (hhh) true, but not always true. Let me illustrate. Here’s a modern-day American proverb: “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” The meaning of that proverb is that healthy eating leads to good health. So, is that true? Does a healthy diet

contribute to good health? Sure it does. Is it always true? Of course not. It's a proverb, not a promise.

Thinking that proverbs are promises has produced a lot of crushing guilt in people. For instance, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Prov 22:6). When taken as a promise, parents with rebellious adult children ask, "Where did *we* go wrong? We blew it. We obviously didn't train up our child right." Take heart, this is a proverb, not a promise (another example are the proverbs that say wise living will lead to long life (e.g., Prov 3:16).

LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

- Knowing _____ (iii) is the key to wisdom. Remember, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When your relationship with God is right, you'll gladly _____ (jjj) to His counsel.
- God wants us to succeed in this _____ (kkk) as well as the next. The very presence of the book of Proverbs in the canon of Scripture is proof that God wants us to _____ (lll) in this life.
- Choose your _____ (mmm) carefully (Prov 18:24; 22:24-25). They are a reflection of you, and they will affect your character.
- Discipline—that is, _____ (nnn)—gives you a huge advantage in life (Prov 15:18; 16:32; 25:28). Those who keep their emotions in check are not as vulnerable as those who can't.
- Trust God—He _____ (ooo) more than we do (Prov 14:12; 16:33), and He's in ultimate _____ (ppp) (Prov 16:25).
- Being able to accept _____ (qqq) is a mark of wisdom (Prov 13:1)

KEY PASSAGES FROM PROVERBS

- Proverbs 1:7
- Proverbs 3:5
- Proverbs 13:1
- Proverbs 15:1
- Proverbs 16:25, 33
- Proverbs 21:20
- Proverbs 28:13
- Proverbs 30:5-6, 7-9

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] WISDOM	[tt] personified
[b] spiritual	[uu] life-giving
[c] devotional	[vv] ignore
[d] direction	[ww] independent
[e] everyday	[xx] short
[f] devotional	[yy] general
[g] daily	[zz] leaders
[h] win	[aaa] numerical
[i] succeed	[bbb] mother
[j] success	[ccc] king
[k] failure	[ddd] wife
[l] Solomon	[eee] proverbs
[m] 950	[fff] promises
[n] Hezekiah	[ggg] generally
[o] foreign	[hhh] usually
[p] wisdom	[iii] God
[q] 25	[jjj] submit
[r] expertise	[kkk] life
[s] complexities	[lll] flourish
[t] puzzle	[mmm] friends
[u] truth	[nnn] self-control
[v] apply	[ooo] knows
[w] mastering	[ppp] control
[x] ignorance	[qqq] correction
[y] instruct	
[z] promises	
[aa] seek	
[bb] treasure	
[cc] pay	
[dd] gifts	
[ee] followers	
[ff] fear	
[gg] Lord	
[hh] mastery	
[ii] secular	
[jj] worship	
[kk] commitment	
[ll] gift	
[mm] instructional	
[nn] interlude	
[oo] Woman	
[pp] family	
[qq] appeal	
[rr] advice	
[ss] persuade	