

Proverbs 2025 Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 26, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

KEY – It is my purpose today to lay a broad foundation for a new multi-part series on the Book of Proverbs. The Book of Proverbs is among the most beloved and practically-beneficial writings in the whole of Scripture, leading many to consider it their favorite biblical work. Thus said, I can think of no better way to continue into 2025 than by considering its sacred contents. What is the best place to start our new series. At the beginning!

Proverbs 1:1–6 (NIV)

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

- 2 for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
- 3 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
- 4 for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
- 5 let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—
- 6 for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Q. What do we begin to glean from the opening of this timeless and timely text?

AUTHORSHIP PT. 1

NOTE 1 – To begin, we come to learn something of the authorship of this biblical work. Consider again verse 1:

Proverbs 1:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 The proverbs of **Solomon** son of David, king of Israel:

Q. What do we know of Solomon?

- A1.** We know that he was the son of David (v. 1).
- A2.** We know that Solomon, like David, was king of Israel (v.1).
- A3.** More broadly we know that he was blessed with extraordinary wisdom!

Q. How did Solomon come to be blessed with such wisdom? Let us consider the following selection in reply:

1 Kings 3:5–15

5 At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

6 Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. 7 Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. 8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 11 So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, 12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. 13 Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. 14 And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” 15 Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

NOTE 2 – We come to see the fulfillment of His divine promise and the manifestation of wisdom as we read on:

1 Kings 3:16–28

16 Now two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. 17 One of them said, “Pardon me, my lord. This woman and I live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was there with me. 18 The third day after my child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there was no one in the house but the two of us. 19 During the night this woman’s son died because she lay on him. 20 So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I your servant was asleep. She put him by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. 21 The next morning, I got up to nurse my son—and he was dead! But when I looked at him closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn’t the son I had borne.”

22 The other woman said, “No! The living one is my son; the dead one is yours.” But the first one insisted, “No! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine.” And so they argued before the king.

23 The king said, “This one says, ‘My son is alive and your son is dead,’ while that one says, ‘No! Your son is dead and mine is alive.’” 24 Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword for the king. 25 He then gave an order: “Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.”

26 The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, “Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!” But the other said, “Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!” 27 Then the king gave his ruling: “Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.” 28 When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

Q. How wise was Solomon?

1 Kings 4:29–34

29 God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. 30 Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33 He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. 34 From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

NOTE 3 – It is no surprise that Solomon came to pen the work which most centers upon the theme of wisdom!

AUTHORSHIP PT. 2

NOTE 1 – It should be noted, albeit quickly, that Solomon incorporated the wisdom of other men in his work. Beyond Solomon, who is noted ongoingly throughout the work (10:1; 25:1), other sages are posited. Consider:

1) The “Wise Men”

NOTE 2 – Proverbs 22:17–24:34 contain thirty sayings or proverbs attributed to “the wise.” Though we do not know who these figures were, Scripture is clear in recording that they were individuals of particular insight into godly life and living.

2) Agur

NOTE 3 – The thirtieth chapter is attributed to a figure named Agur. His identity is unknown, though his name means “collector” or “gatherer.” He seems to have been a man of humility (v. 2–4) with an observant and inquisitive nature (5–33).

3) Lemuel

NOTE 4 – The final author, Lemuel, posited Proverbs 31. This name means “dedicated to God.” We know that this figure was a king (cf. 31:1). It is speculated that this may indicate Lemuel was a reference to Solomon, but most scholars treat him as a different character entirely. There is an interesting note concerning this particular author. Consider:

Proverbs 31:1

1 The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him. . . .

Q. What is the significance of this passage?

A. Lemuel may have been the one to posit the wisdom of Proverbs 31, but it came from his mother. Impacting!

PURPOSE OF THE WORK

Q. What is the purpose of the Book of Proverbs?

A. The impartation of wisdom unto all who would receive it:

Proverbs 1:1–6

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 for gaining wisdom and instruction;

for understanding words of insight;

3 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,

doing what is right and just and fair;

4 for giving prudence to those who are simple,

knowledge and discretion to the young—

5 let the wise listen and add to their learning,

and let the discerning get guidance—

6 for understanding proverbs and parables,

the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Q. Are you looking for wisdom?

A. Then this is the Book of the Bible for you!

WISDOM DEFINED

KEY – Of course, this leads to a rather obvious question:

Q. What is wisdom?

A1. Generally speaking, wisdom is defined as *insight* or *understanding*.

A2. Specifically, it is insight into or understanding of two critical elements:

1) Insight Into and Understanding of the Nature and Working of the Lord

NOTE 1 – Those who are wise properly regard the person, character and purpose of the Lord in the earth. Such individuals rightly perceive His nature (e.g., love, mercy and grace, holiness, justice, power, sovereignty) and their place before Him in kind. Such understanding and insight provide the foundation upon which we are to live and operate.

2) Insight Into and Understanding of Godly Life and Living

NOTE 2 – Wisdom is insight into how to properly live before God and among men, in a manner that is both pleasing and healthful. It is understanding how to navigate life and living in a spiritually-informed yet deeply practical manner. Therefore, wisdom is not the domain of the intellectual and the philosopher (i.e., Greek), but all who seek to live life well.

THE IMPARTATION OF WISDOM

KEY – The next query might be among the most significant for the sake of this particular series. Let us consider:

Q. How did Solomon, the author of the Book of Proverbs, work to effectively impart wisdom within the text?

KEY – This is an interesting question, as the means through which Solomon worked to impart wisdom is almost as significant as the wisdom itself. We have much to note herein, so let us begin with the most obvious answer:

1) Via the Use of Proverb(s)

NOTE 1 – Most obviously, Solomon worked to convey wisdom through the use and utilization of proverbs. The Book of Proverbs is a compilation of individual proverbs, truisms or adages, meant to convey insight on a dizzying array of topics. Beginning with chapter 10, the reader is faced with a myriad of short and simple, yet profound statements, meant to convey some special lesson or truth (leading the readership unto wisdom).

NOTE 2 – The ancients loved this style of teaching. Particularly, this was a common mode of communication employed by teachers of the East and Far East, including Christ Himself. Proverbs are an enduring form of communication because they are short, easy to convey, memorable, and possess seeming limitless application!

NOTE 3 – Of course, our own culture uses proverb(s) as well. You may not realize it, but these are all proverbs:

- a) “The early bird gets the worm” – a proverb stressing the need for industry and maximizing opportunity
- b) “A penny saved is a penny earned” – a proverb affirming the need for both saving and frugality
- c) “Look before you leap” – a proverb that serves to express caution in making decision(s)

Q. What are some of the more famous proverbs within the Book of Proverbs?

Proverbs 1:7

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 3:5–6

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 12:1

1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but whoever hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 13:20

20 Walk with the wise and become wise,
for a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverbs 14:12

12 There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:34

34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin condemns any people.

Proverbs 15:1

1 A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 16:18

18 Pride goes before destruction,
a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 18:21

21 The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 21:9

9 Better to live on a corner of the roof
than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

Proverbs 22:6

6 Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Proverbs 27:17

17 As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 31:30

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

2) Via the Fatherly Tone

NOTE 4 – Beyond the use of the proverb, Solomon also utilized an impacting literary technique whereby he assumes a fatherly tone, addressing the reader as though he were a father speaking to his beloved children. Solomon is not trafficking in condescension herein or talking down to us! Rather, he is employing a technique meant to arrest our attention and soften our hearts, that we might listen and be inclined to receive the wisdom of the Lord given through him. This means of impartation is evident in the opening chapters (i.e., 1–7):

Proverbs 1:8–9 (Emphasis Mine)

- 8 Listen, **my son**, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
- 9 They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.

Proverbs 1:10–19 (Emphasis Mine)

- 10 **My son**, if sinful men entice you,
do not give in to them.
- 11 If they say, "Come along with us;
let's lie in wait for innocent blood,
let's ambush some harmless soul;
- 12 let's swallow them alive, like the grave,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
- 13 we will get all sorts of valuable things
and fill our houses with plunder;
- 14 cast lots with us;
we will all share the loot"—
- 15 **my son**, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths;
- 16 for their feet rush into evil,
they are swift to shed blood.
- 17 How useless to spread a net
where every bird can see it!
- 18 These men lie in wait for their own blood;
they ambush only themselves!
- 19 Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the life of those who get it.

Proverbs 2:1–8 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 **My son**, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
- 2 turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
- 3 indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
- 4 and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
- 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
- 6 For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
- 7 He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
- 8 for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Proverbs 3:1–4 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 **My son**, do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
2 for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you peace and prosperity.
3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.

Proverbs 3:11–12 (Emphasis Mine)

- 11 **My son**, do not despise the Lord's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,
12 because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.

Proverbs 3:21–26 (Emphasis Mine)

- 21 **My son**, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight,
preserve sound judgment and discretion;
22 they will be life for you,
an ornament to grace your neck.
23 Then you will go on your way in safety,
and your foot will not stumble.
24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
25 Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
26 for the Lord will be at your side
and will keep your foot from being snared.

Proverbs 4:1–9 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 Listen, **my sons**, to a father's instruction;
pay attention and gain understanding.
- 2 I give you sound learning,
so do not forsake my teaching.
- 3 For I too was a son to my father,
still tender, and cherished by my mother.
- 4 Then he taught me, and he said to me,
"Take hold of my words with all your heart;
keep my commands, and you will live.
- 5 Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or turn away from them.
- 6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.
- 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
- 8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you;
embrace her, and she will honor you.
- 9 She will give you a garland to grace your head
and present you with a glorious crown."

Proverbs 4:10–17 (Emphasis Mine)

- 10 Listen, **my son**, accept what I say,
and the years of your life will be many.
- 11 I instruct you in the way of wisdom
and lead you along straight paths.
- 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;
when you run, you will not stumble.
- 13 Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;
guard it well, for it is your life.
- 14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked
or walk in the way of evildoers.
- 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it;
turn from it and go on your way.
- 16 For they cannot rest until they do evil;
they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble.
- 17 They eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.

Proverbs 4:20–27 (Emphasis Mine)

- 20 **My son**, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.
- 21 Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
- 22 for they are life to those who find them
and health to one's whole body.
- 23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.
- 24 Keep your mouth free of perversity;
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead;
fix your gaze directly before you.
- 26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet
and be steadfast in all your ways.
- 27 Do not turn to the right or the left;
keep your foot from evil.

Proverbs 5:1–6 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 **My son**, pay attention to my wisdom,
turn your ear to my words of insight,
- 2 that you may maintain discretion
and your lips may preserve knowledge.
- 3 For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
- 4 but in the end she is bitter as gall,
sharp as a double-edged sword.
- 5 Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.
- 6 She gives no thought to the way of life;
her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not know it.

Proverbs 5:7–14 (Emphasis Mine)

- 7 Now then, **my sons**, listen to me;
do not turn aside from what I say.
- 8 Keep to a path far from her [i.e., the adulterous woman],
do not go near the door of her house,
- 9 lest you lose your honor to others
and your dignity to one who is cruel,
- 10 lest strangers feast on your wealth
and your toil enrich the house of another.
- 11 At the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are spent.
- 12 You will say, “How I hated discipline!
How my heart spurned correction!”
- 13 I would not obey my teachers
or turn my ear to my instructors.
- 14 And I was soon in serious trouble
in the assembly of God’s people.”

Proverbs 6:20–24 (Emphasis Mine)

- 20 **My son**, keep your father’s command
and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.
- 21 Bind them always on your heart;
fasten them around your neck.
- 22 When you walk, they will guide you;
when you sleep, they will watch over you;
when you awake, they will speak to you.
- 23 For this command is a lamp,
this teaching is a light,
and correction and instruction
are the way to life,
- 24 keeping you from your neighbor’s wife,
from the smooth talk of a wayward woman.

Proverbs 7:1–5 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 **My son**, keep my words
and store up my commands within you.
- 2 Keep my commands and you will live;
guard my teachings as the apple of your eye.
- 3 Bind them on your fingers;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
- 4 Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,”
and to insight, “You are my relative.”
- 5 They will keep you from the adulterous woman,
from the wayward woman with her seductive words.

Proverbs 7:24–27 (Emphasis Mine)

24 Now then, **my sons**, listen to me;
pay attention to what I say.

25 Do not let your heart turn to her ways [i.e., adulterous woman]
or stray into her paths.

26 Many are the victims she has brought down;
her slain are a mighty throng.

27 Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of death.

3) Via Personification

NOTE 5 – What I am about to say sets the stage for next Sunday. Though I will recap much of what I am about to say next week, for repetition is the best of teachers, allow me to move to a close with the following! Namely, Solomon works to expertly impart wisdom via a literary or poetic device called *personification*. Consider:

Q. What is personification?

Q. Who is ready for a HS review?

A. Personification is the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.

NOTE 6 – I realize personification is a word we do not often use, and the definition may not be of imm. aid, but we will dig deeply into this topic in the days to come. As I close, Solomon conveys principles regarding the nature and operation of wisdom and more in a series of recurring characters who illustrate abiding truths: **a)** Lady Wisdom; **b)** Lady Folly (Adulterous Woman); **c)** the Wise; **d)** the Simple; **e)** the Fool; and **f)** the Mocker!

NOTE 7 – Each represents abiding precepts that we must contend with as we seek to live before God wisely. For homework, begin to review the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs, looking in particular for what we shall call Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly (i.e., the Adulterous and/or Wayward Woman). There is much within!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – I would call you to worship through your giving. Please give online and/or in person.

NOTE 2 – Check out the website for upcoming events and more (www.NewLifeBarre.org).

NOTE 3 – Men’s Ministry on February 15, and our Women’s Ministry on February 11.

2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.