
JESUS: WISDOM PERSONIFIED IN PROVERBS

Ray Stedman: Life is simply too big for us to handle by ourselves.

INTRODUCTION

“How To”

Thousands of books and TV shows are written every year with the words, “How to,” in the title. By taking in this information, we can learn how to do almost anything. **What was the last, “How to” book or TV show that you read or watched?** These books and TV shows offer wisdom—**specific skill** in an area of life. These lessons are important because we all need wisdom (skills) to live successfully (driving, bathing, reading, etc.). **Proverbs** specializes in wisdom. **Proverbs** teaches us how to get, use, and pass along godly wisdom (skills related to hearing and doing God’s Word).

John Piper: Wisdom must include a sensitive, mature judgment or discernment of how the fear of the Lord should work itself out in all the circumstances not specifically dealt with in the Bible. What are some life experiences that are not specifically dealt with in the Bible?

JESUS CHRIST

In **Proverbs 1-9**, Solomon personifies wisdom to help us understand wisdom. Personification is representing an **abstract** concept like wisdom as if it were a real **person**. In the New Testament, we see that **Jesus Christ** is the perfect fulfillment of Solomon’s personification of wisdom.

While Jesus Christ was the ultimate and perfect human example of the fruits of the spirit found in **Galatians 5:22b-23a** (**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**), He was also the perfect example of wisdom. In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul tries to get the Corinthians to be united around the crucifixion and baptism of Jesus Christ and in **1 Corinthians 1:24**, Paul states that **Christ . . . the wisdom of God**. Paul goes on to say in **1 Corinthians 1:30** that **Christ Jesus . . . became for us wisdom from God**. Therefore, during the incarnation (the in-flesh-ment of God in the person of Jesus Christ), Jesus Christ also became the wisdom of God. When we want to see a life lived wisely, we look to Jesus Christ.

Paul tells the Colossians that all wisdom is hid in Christ in **Colossians 2:2-3**: **For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**. So, not only is Jesus the wisdom of God, in Him is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. That sounds like something we should be looking for.

In this series, we will examine what **Proverbs** has to say about wisdom and then will look at Jesus’ life for specific instances of how He was the perfect example of skillful living—specifically in His

Words, His Way, His Work, and His Walk. Also during this series, there is optional reading homework for you to dig deeper into seeing the specific ways in which Jesus is the wisdom of God.

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WISE WRITINGS

MAJOR DIVISIONS OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 1:1-1:7: Purpose

Proverbs 10-29: Solomon's Proverbs (his 'proverbs' start in **Proverbs 10**)

Proverbs 1:8-9:1:

Discourses on **Wisdom/Folly**

Proverbs 30-31: Words of Agur & Lemuel

WHAT IS THE BOOK OF PROVERBS ABOUT?

The author places the purpose of the book of **Proverbs** at the very beginning in **Proverbs 1:1-7**.

Proverbs 1:1-7: 1 The proverbs [Hebrew word is *mashal* and it means a sentence of ethical wisdom (the root word means to rule or command over, so a proverb is a short bit of wisdom that shows a command/understanding of the way life works)] **of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom** [skill] **and instruction** [discipline and correction], **To perceive the words of understanding, 3 To receive** [taking with you—example is theft by taking] **the instruction** [discipline and correction] **of wisdom** [a different word—this one means consideration, comprehension], **Justice** [that which is right], **judgment** [deciding what is right], **and equity** [evenness, smoothness, straightness, equality, fairness]; **4 To give prudence** [craftiness] **to the simple** [naive, open-minded about everything], **To the young man knowledge** [understanding] **and discretion** [ability to devise a plan of action]—**5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain** [get by purchasing] **wise counsel** [direction, advice], **6 To understand a proverb and an enigma** [meaning behind the meaning], **The words of the wise and their riddles** [puzzles, questions]. **7 The fear** [broad Hebrew word meaning everything from terror to respect to reverence] **of the LORD is the beginning** [first, beginning, best part] **of knowledge** [understanding], **But fools despise** [hold in contempt, view as insignificant] **wisdom and instruction.**

The book of **Proverbs** is about **listening** to those that are wise (an understanding that I do not know it all), **learning** from those that are wise (surrounding yourself with those that have been there and done that), and **leading** those that are not yet wise (passing along the wisdom to the next generation).

Proverbs 1:7 reminds us that wisdom starts with **God**.

WHAT IS A PROVERB?

A proverb is a sentence of **ethical** wisdom. Proverbs expose and distill life experience. Proverbs teach, provoke thought, and force reflection because they do not always make sense at first.

The major difference between a Hebrew proverb and an American proverb is that Hebrew proverbs are two lines long and American proverbs are usually one line long. Hebrew poetry is based on semantics and not phonetics (similar meanings rhyme as opposed to similar sounds rhyme). The common theme around Hebrew poetry is parallelism—the relationship between the meaning of two lines of poetry.

There are many variations of Hebrew poetry, but the two main types are:

1. Synonymous parallelism: repeating the same thought

Example: **Proverbs 1:31: Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies.**

2. Antithetical parallelism: repeating the opposite thought

Example: **Proverbs 15:1: A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.**

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ACQUIRING WISDOM?

1. **Pray** to be wise. **James 1:5: If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

2. Come to **Jesus** to be wise. Jesus said He was greater than Solomon was, so go to the expert of experts. **Matthew 12:38-42: Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.**

John Piper: Others had spoken truth; He is the truth. Others had pointed the way to life; He is the way and the life (John 14:6). Others had given promises, but, "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Others had offered God's forgiveness; Jesus bought it by His death. Therefore, in Him are, "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

Do this, and eventually someone might say **Proverbs 18:4** about you (**The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook**).

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REVIEW

Wisdom is **specific skill** in an area of life. **Proverbs** specializes in wisdom. **Proverbs** teaches us how to get, use, and pass along godly wisdom.

In **Proverbs 1-9**, Solomon personifies wisdom to help us understand wisdom. Personification is representing an **abstract** concept like wisdom as if it were a real **person**. In the New Testament, we see that **Jesus Christ** is the perfect fulfillment of Solomon's personification of wisdom (**1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; Colossians 2:2-3**).

From **Proverbs 1:1-7** we gather that the book of **Proverbs** is about listening to those that are wise (an understanding that I do not know it all), learning from those that are wise (surrounding yourself with those that have been there and done that), and leading those that are not yet wise (passing along the wisdom to the next generation).

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In this series, we will examine what Proverbs has to say about wisdom and then will look at Jesus' life for specific instances of how He was the perfect example of skillful living—specifically in His Words, His Way, His Work, and His Walk. Also during this series, there is optional reading homework for you to dig deeper into seeing the specific ways in which Jesus is the wisdom of God.

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WISE WORDS

What is the wisest advice you have ever received?

WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF PROVERBS SAY ABOUT WISE WORDS?

Proverbs 8 is a speech that personified wisdom gives. Speeches are made up of words, so the entire chapter is what wise words actually say, but there are specific verses that refer to speech.

1 Does not wisdom cry out [call out, **invite**], **And understanding lift up her voice?** [Notice the personification]

3 She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city [Wisdom goes out to where the people are—and if you read through a Gospel, you will notice that Jesus regularly moved around be near people.]

Wisdom is speaking now . . . **6 Listen, for I will speak of excellent things** [literally, leader, ruler, captain, prince; wisdom is speaking about things that are needed at the **top**], **And from the opening of my lips will come right things** [the same Hebrew word is translated ‘equity’ in **Proverbs 1:3**—it means evenness, smoothness, straightness, equality, fairness; the word describes dedication to a path that does not **vary** (**Matthew 7:13-14**)]

How many of you have walls in your house that are not, ‘right’?

7 For my mouth will speak truth [Jesus could speak truth because He was Truth]; **Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.**

8 All the words of my mouth are with righteousness [The first recorded words of Jesus in **Matthew** are **Matthew 3:1-15** and they express His desire to be all about righteousness]; **Nothing crooked or perverse is in them.**

9 They are all plain to him who understands [**Matthew 13:10-17**], **And right to those who find knowledge.**

13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse [opposite of good, wrong **way**] **mouth I hate** [**Matthew 15:10**. The opposite of a wise mouth (a mouth used skillfully) is a mouth used for wrong—a mouth used for breaking down and not building up; a mouth used for insulting instead of praising; a mouth used for flattery instead of faithfulness; a mouth used for sin instead of a mouth that is set apart.].

32 “Now therefore, listen to me, my children [How many times did Jesus say, ‘**Listen**’?], **For blessed are those who keep my ways** [Anybody remember a recent study about being happy? Jesus said happy are those that kept his commandments (**Matthew 5:1-12**).].

Ray C. Stedman: Thank you, our Father, for this very practical book and for the admonition it gives our hearts to remember that life can never be understood, can never be handled, can never make sense until we approach it with trust in you and remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Our words should be **impactful** (**Proverbs 12:18; 25:15; Matthew 19:16-22**)
2. Our words should be **honest** (**Proverbs 12:22; Matthew 16:13-17**)
3. Our words should be **brief** (**Proverbs 10:19; Matthew 27:11-13**)
4. Our words should **not argue** (**Proverbs 17:14; Matthew 26:57-67**)

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WISE WAY

When was the last time you were lost and did not know the right way to go?

WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF PROVERBS SAY ABOUT A WISE WAY?

Proverbs 8 is a speech that personified wisdom gives. Wisdom calls out to the simple and implores him to go the right way. Open to the gospel of **Mark** and we will look at the places where Jesus fulfilled this example of skillfully going the right way and doing things the right way.

1 Does not wisdom cry out [call, **invite**], **And understanding lift up her voice?** [Personification]

2 She takes her stand on the top of the high hill [Jesus was tempted by Satan in **Mark 1:12-13** (the elevation is not apparent from **Mark 1:12-13**, but the other Gospels show Jesus and Satan interacting in high places)], **Beside the way, where the paths meet** [The paths (the Devil's way and Jesus' way) meet at several places—places of decision (two roads diverged). What directs our decisions? Jesus' way was directed by the **Spirit** (**Mark 1:12**).].

3 She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city [In **Mark 1:1-3**, John's job was to make the way straight for Jesus so that Jesus would be known. If you read the gospel of **Mark** this week, you will notice that Jesus was constantly traveling to cities (**Mark 6:6**). Notice how many times He goes to a place with a societal **outcast**—you might think the King of Kings would visit kings, but you would be wrong. He interacted with normal, broken, hurting, needy people.]

10 Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold [**Mark 6:7-13**: Jesus sent out the 12 and told them not to take money, but rather to take His instructions—most of us would rather have a Visa card, but the knowledge that Jesus gave them was enough.]

13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil [Hate, not avoid—**Mark 1:35-39**: to cast out a demon you have to be close to a demon—Jesus' way took Him face to face with evil. The right way is not necessarily the **easy** way. The right way does not deviate from the objective.]; **Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse** [corrupt] **mouth I hate** [**Mark 11:15-17**].

17 I love those who love me [**Mark 6:45-51**: He walked on water for those that He loved], **And those who seek me diligently will find me** [**Mark 10:46-52**].

20 I traverse the way of righteousness, In the midst of the paths of justice [**Mark 10:32a**: Jesus is the Way, but He also **led** the way; **Mark 6:30-44**: Jesus does not avoid trouble, but rather goes right through it—even though His disciples wanted to send the people away],

32 "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways [Does anyone remember a recent study in **Matthew 5** about being happy?].

34 Blessed is the man who listens to me [there is a direct relationship between our **obedience** and our **happiness**], **Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors.**

35 For whoever finds me finds life [Keep track as you read through the Gospels how many people Jesus heals—His way not only was life, it was filled with life and life oozed from it], **And obtains favor from the LORD** [If you read the Gospels, you will notice that Jesus regularly moved around be near people. If you read the Gospel of **Mark** this week, this will jump off every single page—He loved people and wanted to be around them (and He still does).];

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Our way should be **observant** (**Proverbs 23:26; Mark 16:14-20**)

2. Our way should be **purposeful** (**Proverbs 4:26; Mark 1:16-20**)

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WISE WORK

When was the last time you saw someone not skilled at his or her work?

WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF PROVERBS SAY ABOUT WISE WORK?

Proverbs 8 is a speech that personified wisdom gives. Wisdom calls out to the simple and instructs him to work the right way. Open to the gospel of **Luke** and we will look at the places where Jesus fulfilled this example of skillfully working (for Him it was teaching).

What was Jesus' job on earth? How did He make survive? **Luke 4:15, 31, 44**: He was a **rabbi** (teacher) in synagogues and was supported by many women that followed Him

What was the response when Jesus taught? **Luke 4:22, 28-30**: **Various**

What were His office hours? **Luke 4:31-40**: As **needed**

Did Jesus do everything Himself? **Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-2; 10:1**: **No**

1 Does not wisdom cry out [call out, **invite**], **And understanding lift up her voice** [Notice the personification—the making of the abstract into the real person—this helps us to understand wisdom more concretely (wisdom is fully fleshed out in Jesus Christ)]?

4 “To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men [Jesus came to seek and to save **sinners** (we all qualify): **Luke 5:27-31; 9:51-55; 19:1-9**].

5 O you simple [open-minded about everything—some are so open-minded their brains fall out] **ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart** [Jesus called people to understand **truth**: **Luke 9:37-42, 57-62; 10:25-37; 11:1-4**].

12 “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence [shrewdness, craftiness: Several times Jesus would heal or illustrate some truth and would tell people not to **talk** about it: **Luke 5:12-15; 8:26-39, 40-56; 9:18-22**], **And find out knowledge and discretion**.

17 I love those who love me [Do you believe that Jesus loves you? Do you believe that He desires you? Do you believe that He waits for you day after day? Do you believe that He longs to hear the sound of your voice? **We often make God in our own image and He turns out to be this fussy, rude, narrow-minded, legalistic, judgmental, unforgiving, and unloving as we are. . . . God is revealed by and in Jesus Christ and who this moment comes right to your seat and says, “I have a word for you. I know your whole life story. I know every skeleton in your closet. I know every moment of sin, shame, dishonesty, and degraded love that has darkened your past. Right now, I know your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life, your inconsistent discipleship, and My word is this: I dare you to trust that I love you just as you are and not as you should be—because you’re never gonna be as you should be.” Brennan Manning**], **And those who seek me diligently will find me** [**Luke 7:1-10; 18:35-42**].

32 “Now therefore, listen to me, my children [Jesus was constantly telling those around Him to **listen**: **Luke 8:8b, 18a; 11:35; 17:3; 21:8, 34**], **For blessed are those who keep my ways** [**Luke 6:20-23; 11:27-28**].

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Our work should be **committed** (**Proverbs 16:3; Luke 9:57-62**)
2. Our work should be **honest** (**Proverbs 16:11; Luke 20:21**)

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WISE WALK

Who has been the most faithful friend to you in your life?

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Proverbs 8 is a speech that personified wisdom gives. Wisdom calls out to the simple and instructs him to walk the right way in regards to friendship. Open to the gospel of **John** and we will look at the places where Jesus fulfilled this example of skillfully walking with His friends.

What were some ways in which Jesus showed friendship?

John 6:16-20: He **helped** those in need and was a **calming** influence

John 8:1-11: He was a friend to those that had **no** friends

5 O you simple [open-minded about everything and susceptible to the opinions of all—the disciples were simple men (for the most part)—they were not the best of the best; **John 1:29-42:** they were not rabbinical students that went from Bet Safar (House of the Book, ages 5/6-10/12) to Bet Talmud (House of Study, ages, 10/12-14/15) to Bet Midrash (House of Learning, ages 14/15-30)—Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen when Jesus called them. Jesus goes to the **not** good enough' and the 'not educated enough' and decides to use them—and He is still doing it today.] **ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart.**

14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength [**John 6:1-6:** Jesus pushed them to be better through **testing**. **Who are you pushing to be better? John 6:60-66:** Friends tell the truth even when it could end the relationship because the truth **matters** more.].

17 I love those who love me [Do you believe that Jesus loves you? Do you believe that He desires you? Do you believe that He waits for you day after day? Do you believe that He longs to hear the sound of your voice? **We often make God in our own image and He turns out to be this fussy, rude, narrow-minded, legalistic, judgmental, unforgiving, and unloving as we are. . . . God is revealed by and in Jesus Christ and who this moment comes right to your seat and says, "I have a word for you. I know your whole life story. I know every skeleton in your closet. I know every moment of sin, shame, dishonesty, and degraded love that has darkened your past. Right now, I know your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life, your inconsistent discipleship, and My word is this: I dare you to trust that I love you just as you are and not as you should be—because you're never gonna be as you should be." Brennan Manning], **And those who seek me diligently will find me.****

32 "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. [**John 13:17** sums up the **Beatitudes**]

34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. 35 For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from the LORD [The disciples found a friend to the **end** in Jesus (**John 13:1**) and Jesus put their **needs** in front of His own (**John 13:1-5**)]

If you have gone through this study and do not see that it is all about Jesus, look at what Jesus told His disciples on the road to Emmaus in **Luke 24:13-32**—the whole Old Testament is about Jesus, not just the wisdom in Proverbs. Watch this video: <http://tiny.cc/09u97>

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Our walk should be **friendly** (**Proverbs 18:24; John 15:11-15**)
2. Our walk should be **purposeful** (**Proverbs 12:26; John 1:43**)