

Proverbs

I. Introduction to the book of Proverbs

1. Reading the book of Proverbs is one of the most profitable uses of a Christian's time.
 - A. I have been reading a chapter of Proverbs each day for about 13 years.
 - B. I recommend that you do the same thing.
 - C. Proverbs has 31 chapters and most months have 30-31 days, so I recommend reading the chapter of Proverbs that corresponds to the day of the month everyday.
2. The purpose of the book is to give the reader understanding, knowledge, wisdom, judgment, subtility, and discretion (**Pro 1:2-4**).
3. It is written from a Father to a son (Solomon to his son, and God to us) (**Pro 3:1; Pro 3:21; Pro 4:1; Pro 4:20; Pro 5:1; Pro 7:1**).
4. The layout of the book
 - A. The first nine chapters of Proverbs exhort the reader of the necessity and benefits of getting wisdom.
 - B. After making a thorough and compelling case for getting wisdom in the first third of the book, Solomon begins the actual proverbs in chapter 10 (**Pro 10:1**).
5. What is a proverb?
 - A. Proverb *n.* - 1. a. A short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all; an adage, a wise saw.
 - B. In other words, a proverb is a short saying based on observation and experience.
 - C. A proverb by its nature is not necessarily a promise or an infallible decree from God.
 - i. Proverbs by definition are common sayings about things that generally and normally hold true, but *all of them* do not *always* hold true.
 - ii. For example, Jesus Christ's ways *always* pleased the Lord (**Joh 8:29**), but His enemies were *not* always at peace with Him (**Pro 16:7**).
 - D. Usually, though, the wisdom contained in the Proverbs will hold true in life.
6. The themes of the book
 - A. Wisdom
 - i. The foremost theme in the book of Proverbs is to "get wisdom" (**Pro 4:5; Pro 4:7; Pro 16:16**), which is "the principal thing" (**Pro 4:7**).
 - a. Wisdom *n.* - 1. a. Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgement in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, esp. in practical affairs: opp. to *folly*.
 - b. Principal - *adj.* 1. First or highest in rank or importance; that is at the head of all the rest; of the greatest account or value; foremost: = *chief*
 - ii. *Wisdom* and its cognates *wise*, *wiser*, and *wisely* are used 125 times in the book of Proverbs.
 - B. Knowledge
 - i. The book of Proverbs tells us to receive knowledge (**Pro 8:10**).
 - ii. In order to judge rightly in matters relating to life and conduct, a man must first have the pertinent facts in his mind, which is *knowledge*.

- iii. Knowledge *n.* - II. Senses derived from the verb know, in its later uses. 5. a. The fact of knowing a thing, state, etc., or (in general sense) a person; acquaintance; familiarity gained by experience. 8. a. Acquaintance with a fact; perception, or certain information of, a fact or matter; state of being aware or informed; consciousness (of anything).
 - iv. *Knowledge* and its cognates *know*, *knoweth*, *knowest*, and *known* are found 66 times in Proverbs.
- C. Understanding
- i. The book of Proverbs exhorts us to get understanding (**Pro 4:5**).
 - ii. In order to have knowledge, a man must have the intellectual ability to perceive and acquire facts and reason with them, which is *understanding*.
 - iii. Understanding *n.* - 1. a. (Without article.) Power or ability to understand; intellect, intelligence. b. *of understanding*, intelligent, capable of judging with knowledge. Similarly *of some*, *of no*, *understanding*. c. With *the*: The faculty of comprehending and reasoning; the intellect.
 - iv. *Understanding* and its cognates *understand* and *understandeth* are used 66 times in the book of Proverbs.
- D. How understanding, knowledge, and wisdom relate to each other
- i. Putting it together, in order to be wise, which should be the ultimate goal of a Christian, a man must have the facts (*knowledge*), and the faculty of intellect, reason, and judgment (*understanding*), in order to consider the facts and apply correct thinking to judge rightly and choose the best means and ends in his life and conduct, which is *wisdom*.
 - ii. God gives all three of these virtues to humble children of God who earnestly seek after them (**Pro 2:1-6**).
- E. Discretion
- i. Discretion *n.* - 1. The action of separating or distinguishing, or condition of being distinguished or disjunct; separation, disjunction, distinction. III. [Cf. discreet.] 6. Ability to discern or distinguish what is right, befitting, or advisable, esp. as regards one's own conduct or action; the quality of being discreet; discernment; prudence, sagacity, circumspection, sound judgement.
 - ii. *Discretion*, which is found six times in Proverbs.
 - iii. Our modern politically correct world vilifies judgment and discrimination.
 - iv. But God's word magnifies and encourages it, with this caveat: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (**Joh 7:24**).
 - v. To be able to have wisdom, we must know how to judge between right and wrong, and discriminate between good and bad.
- F. Prudence
- i. Prudence *n.* - 1. Ability to discern the most suitable, politic, or profitable course of action, esp. as regards conduct; practical wisdom, discretion.
 - ii. *Prudence* and its cognate *prudent* appear 13 times in Proverbs.
 - iii. The *prudent* man:
 - a. dwells with wisdom (**Pro 8:12**)
 - b. covers shame (**Pro 12:16**)
 - c. gets, conceals, and deals with knowledge (**Pro 18:15; Pro 12:23; Pro 13:16**)

- d. understands his way (**Pro 14:8**)
- e. looks well to his going (**Pro 14:15**)
- f. is crowned with knowledge (**Pro 14:18**)
- g. regards reproof (**Pro 15:5**)
- h. foresees evil and hides himself from it (**Pro 22:3; Pro 27:12**)

G. Foolishness

- i. Foolishness *n.* - 1. The quality or condition of being foolish.
- ii. Foolish *adj.* - 1. Fool-like, wanting in sense or judgement.
- iii. Fool *n.* - I. 1. a. One deficient in judgement or sense, one who acts or behaves stupidly, a silly person, a simpleton. (In Biblical use applied to vicious or impious persons.) The word has in mod.Eng. a much stronger sense than it had at an earlier period; it has now an implication of insulting contempt which does not in the same degree belong to any of its synonyms, or to the derivative *foolish*.
- iv. These definitions make clear that he who exhibits the attribute of *foolishness* lacks judgment, acts stupidly, and is worthy of contempt.
- v. *Foolishness* and its cognates *fool* and *fools* are used a 84 times in Proverbs.

H. Folly

- i. Folly *n.* - 1. a. The quality or state of being foolish or deficient in understanding; want of good sense, weakness or derangement of mind; also, unwise conduct.
- ii. *Folly* is used 13 times in Proverbs.

II. Interpreting a Proverb

1. There are two things to keep in mind when interpreting a proverb: 1) the general rules of Bible interpretation, and 2) the identification of the type of structure of the proverb.
2. The rules of Bible interpretation
 - A. There are no contradictions in the scriptures.
 - i. No verse of scripture can be privately (separated from the rest of the body of scripture) interpreted (**2Pe 1:20**).
 - ii. Private - Withdrawn or separated from the public body
 - iii. The public body in context is the scripture.
 - iv. Therefore, no interpretation (explanation) of a prophecy (divinely inspired utterance or discourse) of the scripture can be withdrawn or separated from the rest of the body of the scripture, for to do so would create contradictions.
 - B. Words should normally be defined with primary meanings.
 - i. When interpreting a verse, the words should be read distinctly (in a distinct or separate manner; separately, individually, severally) and the sense should be given (**Neh 8:8**).
 - ii. Sense - The meaning or signification of a word or phrase; also, any one of the different meanings of a word, or that which it bears in a particular collocation or context.
 - iii. *The meaning* (the primary meaning) of a word should be used by default unless to do so creates a contradiction or an absurdity, or the particular collocation or context of the passage makes it obvious that a secondary meaning is being used.
 - C. Scripture should be compared with scripture to understand scripture.

- i. The Bible is written so that the information on a given topic is scattered "here a little, and there a little" all through the scriptures (**Isa 28:9-10**).
 - ii. This is how God organized the Bible to teach us doctrine (**Isa 28:9**).
 - iii. All the information on a given topic is not given in one verse, so almost always one verse must be compared with other verses to get all the information.
 - iv. This is how the Holy Ghost teaches, and so ought we (**1Co 2:13**).
 - D. Reference texts must be distinguished from proof texts.
 - i. A proof text expressly states a point of doctrine.
 - a. An example of a proof text would be **Joh 5:24**.
 - b. Joh 5:24 states that a person who presently believes the gospel presently has everlasting life and his passing from death unto life happened prior to that (*is passed* is present perfect tense - something that happened in the past and continues into the present).
 - ii. A reference text refers to a point of doctrine but does not expressly define it. The point must be proved elsewhere.
 - a. An example of a reference text would be **Rom 10:13**.
 - b. Rom 10:13 states that a person who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Since the Bible speaks of more than one type of salvation, the question then needs to be asked, "Saved from what?".
 - c. The text doesn't say what type of salvation is being spoken of; it merely *refers* to a salvation.
 - d. Therefore, it would need to be compared with other texts to define what salvation is under consideration.
 - E. Pay attention to the context of the verse in question.
 - i. Text without context is pretext.
 - ii. Consider to whom the book or epistle was written.
 - iii. Was it written to an individual, a church, or the entire human race?
 - iv. Example: **1Co 12:27**
 - a. Don't read 1Co 12:27 and conclude that the entire human race is the body of Christ.
 - b. Don't conclude that "all believers" collectively the body of Christ.
 - c. The epistle was written to the church at Corinth (**1Co 1:2**), and therefore the text is stating that their local church was the body of Christ.
 - d. Then it can be deduced that each local church is the body of Christ.
 - v. Always read at least ten verses around the verse in question before beginning to interpret it.
3. The structures of proverbs
- A. Solomon's proverbs are usually comprised of two parts which are joined together by a colon, a semicolon, or a comma, and generally involve a comparison between two statements.
 - B. The two clauses of a proverb are often linked together by conjunctives such as *and*, *but*, and *so*.
 - C. Occasionally, a proverb will be only a statement of truth that contains no comparison.

- D. In order to properly interpret a proverb, it is first necessary to identify its configuration.
- E. There are four basic configurations found in the book of Proverbs, which are:
- i. Contrasting - The clauses of the proverb are joined by a colon, semicolon, or comma followed by the word *but*.
 - a. The meaning of such a proverb can be understood by contrasting the two clauses and focusing on their difference.
 - b. The second clause will often explain the first by showing its opposite.
 - c. The contrasting configuration is the most common form used in the book of Proverbs. Examples of such proverbs are:
 - (i) "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death." - **Pro 10:2**
 - (ii) "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." - **Pro 11:18**
 - d. Occasionally, the *contrasting* configuration is brought about by the use of the conjunctive *so*, as in the following:
 - e. "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." - **Pro 11:19**
 - ii. Comparison - The clauses of the proverb are joined by a colon, semicolon, or comma followed by the word *and*.
 - a. The meaning of such a proverb can be understood by comparing the two clauses and focusing on their similarity.
 - b. The second clause will tend to elaborate on the first. Examples of comparative proverbs are:
 - (i) "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting." - **Pro 11:10**
 - (ii) "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated." - **Pro 14:17**
 - c. The *comparing* configuration is also sometimes accomplished by use of the conjunctive *so*, such as in the following proverbs:
 - (i) "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." - **Pro 10:26**
 - (ii) "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion." - **Pro 11:22**
 - iii. No conjunction - The clauses of the proverb are joined by a colon, semicolon, or comma, but no conjunction is used.
 - a. This configuration can be used with a comparative or a contrasting proverb.
 - b. The following are examples of such:
 - (i) "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul." - **Pro 16:17**
 - (ii) "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." - **Pro 13:7**
 - iv. Statement of truth - Some proverbs do not follow the two-clause model, but are simply a statement of truth with no comparison or contrast.

- a. An instance of such is:
- b. "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." - **Pro 14:7**
- c. Sometimes a *statement of truth* configuration will also contain a comparative concept, such as in the following proverbs:
 - (i) "He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread." - **Pro 12:9**
 - (ii) "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." - **Pro 13:14**
- F. Recognizing these distinctions in the proverbs will aid us in properly interpreting them.

III. Chapter 1

1. **Pro 1:1** - "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;"
 - A. Solomon is identified as the author of the book of Proverbs.
 - B. Proverb *n.* - 1. a. A short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all; an adage, a wise saw.
 - C. In that a proverb is a short *wise* saying, the author of it must therefore be wise.
 - D. There was no man more qualified to write Proverbs than Solomon.
 - i. He asked for an understanding heart rather than long life, riches, or the lives of his enemies (**1Ki 3:9-11**).
 - ii. Because of that, God gave him a wise and understanding heart that had never, nor would ever, be equaled (**1Ki 3:12; 1Ki 4:29-31**).
 - iii. There was only one man who was wiser than Solomon: the Lord Jesus Christ (**Luk 11:31**).
 - E. Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs (**1Ki 4:32**).
 - F. Considering that there are 915 verses in the book of Proverbs, and the actual proverbs begin in chapter 10 (**Pro 10:1**), Solomon spoke well over three times as many proverbs as are recorded in the book of Proverbs.
2. **Pro 1:2** - "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;"
 - A. **Pro 1:2-4** gives Solomon's purpose for writing the book of Proverbs.
 - B. The primary purpose of the Proverbs is to *know* certain things.
 - i. Know - I. 1. a. *trans.* To perceive (a thing or person) as identical with one perceived before, or of which one has a previous notion; to recognize; to identify.
 - ii. Therefore, the human mind is capable of *knowing things*.
 - iii. This may seem obvious, but this simple fact has escaped many so-called great minds, both of the ancient Sophists of Socrates' day, and their philosophical grandchildren of the Enlightenment, who "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (**Rom 1:22**) and declared that a man cannot know anything for certain.
 - a. This, of course, is self-refuting nonsense.

- a. Firstly, it tells us that the instruction of wisdom is *available* for the taking.
 - b. Secondly, it lets us know that for a man to acquire the instruction of wisdom he must first desire it and be willing to accept it from another who is prepared to impart it to him.
 - c. Thirdly, for the instruction of wisdom to be received the recipient must exert mental effort by listening, attending, and giving heed to what he is being taught.
- B. Another purpose of the Proverbs is also to receive the instruction of *justice*, *judgment*, and *equity*.
- i. Justice *n.* - 1. The quality of being (morally) just or righteous; the principle of just dealing; the exhibition of this quality or principle in action; just conduct; integrity, rectitude.
 - a. *Justice* is an integral ingredient for a happy and tranquil life, both personal and societal.
 - b. Many people clamor for justice in the courts, but they themselves are not just and righteous in their personal lives.
 - c. Is it any wonder that justice has been turned on its head in the United States when judgment has not first begun in the house of God (**1Pe 4:17**)?
 - d. If God's people would judge themselves, they would not be judged by being given leaders who pervert justice (**1Co 11:31**).
 - e. Justice will not be found in a society devoid of wisdom.
 - f. By wisdom kings are supposed to reign and princes decree justice (**Pro 8:15**), which is why the *instruction of wisdom* must be first received, and *justice* will follow (**Pro 1:3**).
 - ii. Judgment *n.* - 1. a. The action of trying a cause in a court of justice; trial. 8.
 - a. The faculty of judging; ability to form an opinion; that function of the mind whereby it arrives at a notion of anything; the critical faculty; discernment.
 - a. *Judgment* and *justice* go hand-in-hand.
 - b. These two virtues are essential in a good leader, as the Lord told David, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (**2Sa 23:3**).
 - c. God chose to us Abraham because he would "do justice and judgment" (**Gen 18:19**).
 - d. Every father would do well to follow Abraham's example.
 - e. The great king David "executed judgment and justice unto all his people" (**2Sa 8:15**).
 - f. God made Solomon king for the same purpose (**1Ki 10:9**).
 - g. O that leaders today would rule in the fear of God and do justice and judgment!
 - h. But men can't expect their leaders to execute justice and judgment if they themselves live morally reprehensible lives.

- i. Some men reason that getting religious will make up for their lack of principle and integrity, but the scripture says that "to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" (**Pro 21:3**).
 - iii. Equity *n.* - 1. The quality of being equal or fair; fairness, impartiality; evenhanded dealing.
 - a. Even children have a sense of fairness, at least when it comes to how *they* are treated.
 - (i) A common chorus in every home with young children is "that's not fair!"
 - (ii) While nearly all men know that they should be treated fairly, and quickly recognize when they have not been, many of them have a memory lapse when it comes to their dealing rightly with others.
 - (iii) Hence the importance of reading the book of Proverbs, to "receive the instruction of . . . equity" (**Pro 1:3**).
 - b. Our country resembles Israel of old when it comes to a lack of equity (**Isa 59:14; Mic 3:9**).
 - (i) The wealthy pay a much higher percentage of their income in taxes than do lower income people.
 - (ii) Certain classes of people are accepted into universities and offered jobs based on their skin color, sexual preference, or protected status.
 - (iii) The ultra-rich and famous get off with short, cushy jail sentences for crimes that a normal man would not, such as billionaire Jeffery Epstein who served a 13 month sentence in a private wing of a county jail with work-release and immunity from further prosecution in the future for molesting young girls.
 - c. Dealing equitably with people is especially important for pastors (**1Ti 5:21**) and all Christians alike (**Jam 2:1**).
 - d. The Lord Jesus Christ is the model of a man who was just and fair in His dealing with men (**Isa 11:1-5; Mat 22:16**).

4. **Pro 1:4** - "To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."

A. This verse gives the final reasons that Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs.

B. *To give subtilty to the simple.*

- i. Subtlety *n.* - 1. Of persons, the mind, its faculties or operations: Acuteness, sagacity, penetration: in modern use chiefly with implication of delicate or keen perception of fine distinctions or nice points.
- ii. A man endowed with subtilty has a mind that is sharp and keen which can penetrate through complex and convoluted ideas and perceive fine distinctions which are key to discerning the truth of the matter.
- iii. Simple *n.* - 1. a. As *pl.* Persons in a humble or ordinary condition of life. 2. a. As *pl.* Those who are unlearned, ignorant, easily misled, unsuspecting, etc.

1611 Bible Ps. cxix. 130 The entrance of thy wordes+giueth vnderstanding vnto the simple. b. As *sing.* An ignorant or foolish person.

- iv. To "know wisdom" and "perceive the words of understanding" (**Pro 1:2**) requires that the mind be subtle, able to sort through false and extraneous information to find the truth hidden therein.
 - v. The simple-minded have no such ability (**Pro 17:24**).
 - vi. The simple don't have a focused mind capable of penetration and keen perception.
 - a. They are instead scatter-brained, chasing every thought that skips across their feeble mind.
 - b. The average person today truly *thinks* very little, if at all.
 - vii. How can the simple man rectify his problem and become wise?
 - viii. The solution *is simple*: read the Proverbs and meditate therein (**Jos 1:8; Psa 1:2**).
 - ix. God's word gives understanding to, and makes wise, *the simple* (**Psa 19:7; Psa 119:130**).
- C. *To give...to the young man knowledge and discretion.*
- i. Man is born with a problem: *stupidity* (**Pro 22:15**).
 - ii. Man's default intellectual state is *ignorance*, which is why the scriptures exhort parents to "train up a child in the way he should go" (**Pro 22:6**), and fathers to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (**Eph 6:4**).
 - a. Parents must do their part to educate their children when they are young, but every young man is himself responsible to "get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (**Pro 4:7**).
 - b. Where should the young man look to find knowledge and wisdom? -- the word of God (**Psa 119:9**).
 - c. Reading the proverbs, which are part of God's word, will give the young man "more understanding than all [his] teachers" when they are his meditation, and cause him to "understand more than the ancients" when he keeps them (**Psa 119:99-100**).
 - iii. Along with lacking knowledge, the young man also naturally lacks *discretion*.
 - a. Discretion *n.* - I. 1. The action of separating or distinguishing, or condition of being distinguished or disjunct; separation, disjunction, distinction. II. 2. The action of discerning or judging; judgement; decision, discrimination. III. 6. Ability to discern or distinguish what is right, befitting, or advisable, esp. as regards one's own conduct or action; the quality of being discreet; discernment; prudence, sagacity, circumspection, sound judgement.
 - b. A short survey of the decisions and actions of youth thoroughly proves that young men lack discretion.
 - c. One need only consider the friends, lovers, food, and entertainment chosen by the average youth, uninfluenced by his parents and the word of God, to consent wholeheartedly to this truth.
 - d. The solution to this problem is reading and studying the book of Proverbs which will give young people discretion to save them from the harmful influences of the world (**Pro 2:1-6, 10-11**).

5. **Pro 1:5** - "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:"

A. *A wise man will hear.*

i. There is hearing and then there is *hearing*.

a. Hear v. - 1. a. *intr.* To perceive, or have the sensation of, sound; to possess or exercise the faculty of audition, of which the specific organ is the ear.

(i) This type of hearing is done by wise and foolish alike.

(ii) The Pharisees heard Christ's words in the physical sense which was evidenced by the fact that they wanted to kill Him for what he said (**Joh 8:37-38**).

b. Hear v. - 4. To exercise the auditory function intentionally; to give ear, hearken, listen.

(i) This type of hearing is unique to the wise.

(ii) The Pharisees could not hear Christ's words with understanding because 1) they were not of God, and 2) they were fools and didn't want to (**Joh 8:43-47**).

ii. The result of the second type of hearing is that the wise man will *increase learning*.

a. In order to increase learning, we must listen *intentionally*.

b. We must bow down our ears to hear the words of the wise (**Pro 22:17**).

c. In order to hear and increase learning, a man has to listen more than he talks (**Jam 1:19; Ecc 5:1**).

B. *A man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.*

i. A wise man has enough sense to know that he doesn't know everything.

ii. There are two ways to be wise: either know information personally, or know where to find it when needed.

a. A man of understanding realizes that he doesn't need to be an expert in every discipline, but need only know someone who is.

b. When he needs to increase his learning, rather than proudly and foolishly staying at home trying to figure it out himself, he instead attains unto wise counsel.

c. Attain v. - III. 10. To come so far as, succeed in coming to, get (to).
to attain to = reach, arrive at.

iii. A wise man doesn't wait for wise counsel to come to him, rather, he goes to it.

a. I will gladly take unsolicited advice from wise men, but I usually seek it out from them first when making any important decision.

(i) Before I would make any major, life-changing decision, I would seek wise counsel.

(ii) Such decisions would include going to college, choosing a career, changing careers, changing jobs, retirement planning, retiring, buying a house, buying a car or other large expenditures, engagement and marriage, raising children,

education plans for children, investing large amounts of money, starting a business, major health decisions, etc.
(iii) In all these areas, counsel should be sought *before* already having one's mind made up.

- b. The only man that *will learn* is he who *wants to learn*, and voluntarily seeks instruction.
- c. There is an old adage which says, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."
- d. This is why it's a fool's errand to send most young people to college with a check in their hand, expecting them to get an education (**Pro 17:16**).

6. **Pro 1:6** - "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings."

A. Let's look at the second half of this proverb first before getting to the first half.

B. *The words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*

- i. Even to a learned man, some of the proverbs are difficult to understand, hence the reason they are called *dark sayings*.
- ii. Dark adj - I. *literal*. 1. a. Characterized by (absolute or relative) absence of light; devoid of or deficient in light; unilluminated; said esp. of night. II. *fig.*
6. a. Obscure in meaning, hard to understand.
- iii. A dark saying is something that has been kept secret (**Psa 78:2 c/w Mat 13:35**).
- iv. Some proverbs, therefore, are secretive sayings with obscure meanings that are hard to be understood which is why they have to be *interpreted*.

C. *To understand a proverb, and the interpretation...*

- i. From the word order we see that *the proverb itself* must first be understood, after which *the interpretation* can be comprehended (**Pro 1:6**).
 - a. Put another way, to understand what a verse *means* we must first understand what it *says*.
 - b. To know what a proverb *says* requires that we identify its form which will usually be one of the following types: *comparing, contrasting, or a statement of truth* (see Interpreting a Proverb, Section II).
 - c. Once it is clear what a proverb *says*, then the *interpretation* must be given.
 - d. Interpretation n. - The action of interpreting or explaining; explanation, exposition.
 - e. To give the *interpretation* is to explain what the proverb *means*.
- ii. To understand a proverb and the interpretation, Solomon taught in the previous verse that a wise man must attain unto wise counsel, listen, and learn (**Pro 1:5**).
- iii. Proverb n. - 1. a. A short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all; an adage, a wise saw.

- a. Though a proverb is a saying in common use, its meaning is not necessarily obvious to all.
 - b. Given that a proverb is a wise saying that expresses a truth gained by experience, those who have yet to experience what the older and wiser generation have must therefore learn to understand and interpret their sayings.
 - iv. As previously stated, a man must attain unto wise counsels to understand a proverb and the interpretation (**Pro 1:5-6**).
 - a. How can a man understand what he reads without some man to guide him (**Act 8:30-31**)?
 - b. In the multitude of counselors there is safety (**Pro 11:14**).
 - c. The best counsel of all is the counsel of the LORD (**Pro 19:21**).
 - (i) God's counsel is found in His word (**Psa 119:24; Pro 2:6; Pro 22:20-21**), which is manifested through preaching (**Tit 1:3**).
 - (ii) The best way to understand a proverb and the interpretation is to learn in the manner in which the Holy Ghost teaches, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (**1Co 2:13**).
 - (iii) For the finest explanation of an author's work, it's best to ask the author himself.
 - (iv) The proverbs are no different.
7. **Pro 1:7** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."
- A. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...*
 - i. There are certain things that carnal men without the fear of God (**Rom 3:18**) can know naturally (**Jud 1:10**).
 - a. They are ever learning *things*, but never come to the *knowledge of the truth* (**2Ti 3:7**).
 - b. This is not the knowledge that Solomon is speaking of in this verse.
 - ii. Solomon is instead speaking of *the knowledge of God* which comes after one understands *the fear of the Lord* (**Pro 2:5**).
 - iii. The world by its wisdom cannot have the knowledge of God (**1Co 1:21**).
 - iv. In order to have the knowledge of God and His truth, a man must first possess the *fear of the Lord* which is the beginning of knowledge.
 - a. Before a man can fear God, he must first have been born again by the Spirit of God because the natural man cannot fear God (**Rom 3:18**) and is not subject to the law of God (**Rom 8:5-8**).
 - b. He next must believe that God exists (**Heb 11:6**).
 - c. For an honest man, this merely requires:
 - (i) looking up at the heavens (**Psa 19:1**)
 - (ii) looking around at the amazingly complex creation (**Rom 1:20**)
 - (iii) looking at himself who is fearfully and wonderfully made (**Psa 139:14**)

- (iv) These three things demand that there is an eternal, omnipotent God that created them all.
- d. A humble child of God should be overwhelmed with a dreadful feeling of *fear* toward the omnipotent God that created all these things.
- e. Fear *n.* - 1. In OE.: A sudden and terrible event; peril. 2. a. The emotion of pain or uneasiness caused by the sense of impending danger, or by the prospect of some possible evil.
- f. A man's awareness of God's eternal power and infinite intelligence should give rise to a solemn *fear* of disobeying Him.
- v. The God of the Bible does not simply require a *healthy respect* like some fools say.
 - a. But rather we must, "fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (**Luk 12:5**).
 - b. Our God is a consuming fire who must be served acceptably with reverence *and* godly *fear* (**Heb 12:28-29**).
- vi. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (**Pro 1:7**) and wisdom (**Pro 9:10**) because it *is wisdom* (**Job 28:28**).
 - a. Beginning *n.* - 1. The action or process of entering upon existence or upon action, or of bringing into existence; commencing, origination.
 - b. When a man fears God, he has made his first act of wisdom which opens the door for knowledge and more wisdom to enter.
 - c. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom (**Pro 15:33**).
 - d. In other words, the fear of God teaches us wisdom.
 - e. Those that don't fear God hate knowledge (**Pro 1:29**) and therefore will not receive it.
 - f. The fear of the LORD teaches men to obey God and do His commandments (**Psa 111:10**).
 - (i) God's word is our wisdom (**Deut 4:5-6**).
 - (ii) When we learn and do His commandments, we learn His knowledge.
 - g. Men that fear God hate evil (**Pro 8:13**) and depart from it (**Pro 16:6**) and its snares of death (**Pro 14:27**).
 - (i) When we depart from evil, God increases our knowledge of Him (**Joh 7:17; Pro 1:23**).
 - (ii) When we avoid evil men and company with good men, we learn the knowledge of God (**Pro 13:20**).
 - h. The fear of the LORD leads to knowledge which leads to riches, honor, and life (**Pro 22:4**).
- B. *...but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
 - i. A man who denies there is a God is a supreme fool (**Psa 14:1**).
 - a. A fool of this magnitude will certainly not find the knowledge of God, seeing he denies His very existence.
 - b. He will, of course, therefore despise God's wisdom and instruction.
 - ii. But not all fools deny God's existence.

- a. Many of them profess belief in the LORD, blessing His name when things go well, but then fretting against Him when they have perverted their way by their foolishness, and are suffering for it (**Psa 107:17; Pro 19:3**).
- b. A cursory reading of the book of Proverbs unfortunately shows that believers, as well as unbelievers, often bear the characteristics of a fool.
- c. Fool *n.* - 1. a. One deficient in judgement or sense, one who acts or behaves stupidly, a silly person, a simpleton. (In Biblical use applied to vicious or impious persons.)
- d. Such a man naturally despises *wisdom*.
- e. Wisdom *n.* - Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgement in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, esp. in practical affairs: opp. to folly
- f. He also despises *instruction* because he has no desire to be shown the error of his way which would require that he make changes in his life.
- iii. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*, but a fool never gets past the first rung of knowledge's ladder because he doesn't fear God's judgment and forges on ahead in his foolishness (**Pro 14:16**).
- iv. As the old saying goes: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."
- v. If a man despises instruction, thinks he knows it all, and has no need to be taught by another, he is a *fool*.
 - a. This goes for the child or young man (**Pro 15:5**) and the old man alike (**Ecc 4:13**).
 - b. Such a man not only despises his instructor, but also despises *himself* (**Pro 15:32**).