

# The Wisdom Literature

## Lesson #12

### Wisdom In The Book Of Proverbs

#### **Introduction**

- There exists between the covers of this book we call the Bible the means whereby we may gain wisdom for life. However, it is not a wisdom of man's devising, though noble and honorable men may truly think God's thoughts after Him by intelligent reflection. Their wise thoughts may prove valuable, but the thoughts of the Lord are essential (4:7).
- This is the wisdom of God's mind, inscribed on the pages of this holy book that it might ultimately be inscribed in hearts of flesh (Hebrews 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:18). True wisdom will supply one with a number of blessings which will be explored in this lesson.

#### **The Wisdom To Fear God**

- The fear of God is both the starting point of wisdom and the Proverbs (1:7).
- Fear is not here viewed negatively, but as the attribute of highest honor and most sincere respect (John 6:38).
- To fear is to honor and respect as a loving child hears and obeys a loving Father (John 5:22-23).

#### **The Insight To Stay Alive**

- This is one of the promises of the word of God (Exodus 20:12; cf. Ephesians 6:2-3). The writer of Proverbs saw its importance also (3:2, 16, 18; 4:10).
- When people are young and strong they have a tendency to think that they are invincible and immortal; later, as time takes its heavy toll upon their aging bodies, they realize that they are not.
  - Gail Sheehy, who wrote the #1 bestseller *Passages*, writes of her own "mid-life crisis" occurring when a young boy was shot in the face with a high-powered rifle right in front of her; she came to see that she was not immortal.
  - Her view of the certainty of life was never again so confident. Life is a fragile flower that suddenly disappears.
- God's word encourages the kind of behavior that tends to lengthen one's days, and discourages behavior that leads to spiritual as well as physical death. Therefore, the person who listens to the wisdom of God is much more likely, statistically, to live a long and happy life.

### ***The Knowledge Of Where Happiness Is Found***

- Happiness is the outgrowth of a life lived in pursuit and appreciation of true wisdom (3:13-18).
- This is not identical with educational achievements, which may in themselves prove a frustration.
- Many people squander their lives in search of happiness in physical pursuits, all of which ultimately prove unsatisfactory (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:26).

### ***The Perception Of True Peace***

- Solomon promises to the seeker of spiritual wisdom the enjoyment of *shalom* or "peace," which indicates general well-being (3:2, 17).
- This peace is equated with spiritual security.
  - You will walk in your way securely (3:23).
  - Your foot will not stumble (3:23).
  - You will not be afraid (3:24).
  - Your sleep will be sweet (3:24).
  - The Lord will be your confidence (3:26).
  - He will keep your foot from being caught (3:26).
- Jesus came to leave us in peace (John 14:27; 16:33).

### ***The Insight To Succeed In The World***

- Clearly one can experience good success through the application of principles of wisdom and truth (4:7-8; Joshua 1:8).
- Joseph in Egypt is an excellent illustration of how one's stand for right can lead to both temporary problems and long-range success (Genesis 37:1-41:57).
  - Joseph wound up in prison on a trumped-up charge because he would not give in to a married woman's advances.
  - Ultimately, he ruled all Egypt at Pharaoh's right hand.
- The prophet Daniel experienced a similar fate (Daniel 6:1-28).
  - He was thrown into the lion's den for his unwillingness to bow to the king's unyielding decree.
  - Ultimately, he was raised to a high position as the king's counselor.
- In both of these instances God brought good success to men who stood for truth and right, even though for a time it appeared that they had been brought low because of their virtue and sterling character.
- Material rewards are said to follow in the wake of wise living (3:9-10). In its purest sense, wisdom is viewed as its own reward (2:5, 10).

### ***The Insight To Choose The Right Path In Life***

- Always before us in the Bible are the two ways, the paths of wisdom and righteousness, and that of folly and wickedness (2:7-9, 19-20; 3:6, 17, 23; 4:11, 18).
- These traits are polar opposites. They are represented by life and death and light and darkness (2:18-19; 4:18-19).
- Robert Frost said in his 1916 poem "The Road Not Taken": I shall be telling this with a sigh; somewhere ages and ages hence; two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.
- There is great wisdom in this poem, for it suggests that we not follow the road which the crowd meanders aimlessly down. Take the road less traveled! It is the road that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14).

### ***The Insight To Perceive God's Wisdom In His Divine Plan***

- Man has always had great difficulty in figuring out God and His ways, for they are not the same as man's ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).
- God's plan for human redemption was mocked by the self-centered and conceited Greeks as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:22-31).

### ***Conclusion***

- Can you marshal within yourself the wisdom to see God's profound strategy to give you a pleasant and successful life, save you from your sins and ultimately translate you into the heavenly kingdom? The wisdom is certainly there; the question is will you be able to appreciate it?
- Can you do something today to change your course and alter your destiny? God has done the work, will you have the faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1)?