

SKILLFUL LIVING
Monday, November 10
Reading: Proverbs 1:1-7

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

It is fitting that Solomon's name stands at the head of this book. After the death of his father King David, Solomon took the throne of Israel. "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore...He was wiser than anyone else...He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five" (1 Kings 4:29-34). Not all his proverbs are recorded in this book and not every proverb in the book was written by Solomon. But he wrote many of them and helped collect and arrange others (see Ecclesiastes 12:9).

The first seven verses of Proverbs introduce us to the theme of the book. Wisdom is defined by a list of synonyms. Put together these terms tell us that wisdom is not merely head knowledge but the ability to put it into action – to live skillfully. "Instruction" includes discipline and learning from experience. "Understanding" and "insight" speak of the ability to reach good decisions and make right choices. "Prudence" and "discretion" are the ability to plan ahead with foresight. "Knowledge" is knowing and doing what God wants. "Learning" implies understanding truth and being able to pass it on to others.

Proverbs 1:7 is the key to the book. Wisdom is not simply about learning and applying facts. It begins with "the fear of the Lord." This can be defined as a "deep-seated reverence and awe in recognition of the holiness of God."¹ It also involves obedience to God. In another one of his writings Solomon stated, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). A skillful life of wisdom must have God as its foundation.

These verses also introduce us to the three types of people that we will meet repeatedly in Proverbs. The WISE are those who fear God and follow His ways. The FOOL is the one who rejects God's wisdom and instruction. Finally, the SIMPLE are those who are young, naïve or easily influenced. The proverbs were written to help guide them to God's truth instead of them being seduced by the ways of the world.

There are many ways to outline the book of Proverbs, but we shall divide it into 3 parts:

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| (1) Proverbs 1-9 | Wisdom from a father to his son |
| (2) Proverbs 10-24 | Wisdom of Solomon (Book 1) |
| (3) Proverbs 25-31 | Wisdom of Solomon (Book 2), Agur, & Lemuel |

Proverbs is a book for daily living. It deals with the practical affairs of life. As we travel through this book remember: "Reading a proverb takes seconds; memorizing a proverb takes minutes; applying a proverb takes a lifetime."²

¹ Kenneth T. Aitken. Proverbs (The Daily Study Bible series), p. 15.

² Ray C. Stedman. Adventuring Through the Bible, p. 269.