

Introduction to the Book of Proverbs

I. Title

- A. Hebrew: מִשְׁלֵי - *“Mišlē”* - *Proverbs of*
1. From the first word in the book -
 2. מִשְׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן-דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
“The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel”
- B. Greek: ΠΑΡΟΙΜΙΑΙ ΣΑΛΩΜΩΝΤΟΣ - *Proverbs of Solomon*
1. Translation of the first two words of the book into Greek
 2. Παροιμῖαι Σαλωμῶντος υἱοῦ Δαυιδ ὃς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐν Ἰσραὴλ
“Proverbs of Solomon son of David who ruled in Israel”

II. The Ancient Near Eastern Context

- A. Wisdom literature was common in the ancient world
1. Examples of some Ancient Near Eastern proverbs:
 - a. *“You should not play around with a married young woman: the slander could be serious. My son, you should not sit alone in a chamber with a married woman.”* The instructions of Šuruppag, Sumerian +/- 2000 B.C.¹
 - b. *“Do not associate to thyself the heated man, nor visit him for conversation.”* Instruction of Amenemope, Egyptian +/- 1400 B.C.²
 - c. *“My son! let the wise man beat thee with a rod, but let not the fool anoint thee with sweet salve. Be humble in thy youth and thou shalt be honoured in thine old age.”* Words of Ahiqar 2.61, Assyrian +/- 700 B.C.³
 2. In Egypt, the “Instruction of Amenemope” stands out
 - a. Many similarities with Proverbs 22:17-24:22
 - b. No evidence of direct “borrowing” but there does seem to be a relationship between the two.
- B. The Old Testament attests to wisdom in other cultures (1 King 4:29-31)
1. It doesn’t discredit their wisdom
 2. It states that Solomon’s wisdom was greater than theirs
- C. Many scholars believe that Ancient Near Eastern wisdom was centered around “scribal schools,” “small villages,” or the “royal court.”⁴
1. If the royal court, or palace, this would make the king the “wise man -

¹ *The Instruction of Šuruppag*, [text online] (Oxford: University of Oxford, Oriental Institute, accessed 22 February 2005); available from <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcslmac.cgi?text=t.5.6.1#>

² James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 423.

³ Pritchard, 428

⁴ Michael V. Fox, “The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs,” In *Text, Temples, and Traditions* ed. Michael V. Fox, Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, Avi Hurvitz, et. al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 227-239.

- par excellence in Mesopotamian society”⁵
2. However, due to the wide nature of themes in the book of Proverbs, it does not appear that this collection was intended only for a royal or any other specific kind of social audience.
- D. There is a reason why similarities can be found in Biblical wisdom literature and other Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature
1. Prov 2:6 - All wisdom ultimately comes from God
- All truth is God's truth
 2. 1 King 4:32 - Solomon spoke many proverbs
 3. Prov 24:23; 30:1; 31:1 - Apparently other proverbs were collected
 4. Solomon might not have authored all the proverbs, but may have collected sayings of the wise into a collection.

III. The Canonical Context

- A. Contrary to what many scholars say, the book of Proverbs is not secular
1. Though many Old Testament themes such as covenant and election do not appear in Proverbs, other themes such as righteousness and justice do.
 2. Several key verses in Proverbs point to its religious nature
 - a. Prov. 1:7; 9:10
 - b. Prov. 3:5-7
 - c. Prov 19:27
 - d. Prov. 22:19
 - e. 28:4-5; 29:18
 3. The sages appeared to have a specific place in the guidance Israelite society along with the priests and the prophets. (Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26).
 4. The conclusion is that Proverbs are also sacred scripture along with the rest of the Bible
- B. Proverbs in light of other Biblical wisdom literature
1. The Joseph stories in Genesis 37ff - Wisdom in action
 - a. Joseph exemplifies the principles of wisdom
 - b. Avoiding “woman folly” in Potiphar’s house (Prov. 6:20-29)
 - c. There appears to be a connection between righteousness and reward even though it is not immediate
 2. The Daniel stories in Daniel 1ff - Wisdom in action
 - a. The text introduces Daniel as one of the “wise men”
 - b. He conducts himself honorably before the king
 - c. He ultimately fears God
 - d. Passages from Proverbs applicable to Daniel
 - 1) Prov 14:16-17, 29

⁵ Ronald F.G. Sweet, “The Sage in Mesopotamian Palaces and Royal Courts,” In *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* ed. John G. Gammie and Leo Perdue, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 99.

- 2) Prov. 16:14; 22:11; 25:15
- e. Dan. 2:20-23 - Daniel's wisdom, unlike the Babylonian wise men, came from God
- 3. Job - Anti-wisdom
 - a. The perspective of Job's friends seem to be rooted in traditional wisdom such as the book of Proverbs. Examples:
 - 1) Prov. 10:24-25
 - 2) Job 4:7-11
 - 3) Job 34:11, 25-27, 37
 - b. Job struggles with the concept of retribution taught in Proverbs - Job 9:21-24
- 4. Ecclesiastes - Pessimistic wisdom
 - a. Comes to the conclusion that life is "meaningless"
 - b. Examples
 - 1) Eccl. 2:16-17
 - 2) Eccl. 7:15-18
 - 3) Eccl. 8:14
 - c. Wisdom did not live up to the preacher's expectations
- C. Proverbs illuminates and is illuminated by the rest of scripture

*"Put in another way, the book of Proverbs is engaged in a conversation with the rest of the Old Testament, a conversation that points to the common ground that lies between the covenant God made with Israel and God's instruction in wisdom found in Proverbs. A good example is the common language of fatherly discipline found in Deuteronomy 8:5 and Proverbs 3:11-12. One is set in the context of covenant, the other in the context of wisdom, yet both state that obedient sonship is a matter of growth and receiving correction."*⁶
- D. Observation about Proverbs - A proverb is not a cause-effect "law"
 - 1. The principles may lead to prosperity
 - 2. They might not lead to prosperity or long life

IV. The book context

- A. Here are the collections identified in the book
 - 1. 1:1-9:18 - Admonitions to the young
 - 2. 10:1-22:16 - Proverbs of Solomon
 - a. 375 Proverbs (Numerical value = Solomon)
 - b. All are two-line proverbs, most of them antithetical
 - 3. 22:17-24:22 - Words of the Wise
 - 3. 24:23-34 - These also are words of the wise
 - 4. 25:1-29:27 - Proverbs of Solomon transcribed by the men of Hezekiah
 - 5. 30:1-33 - The words of Agur
 - 6. 31:1-31 - The words of King Lemuel

⁶ Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 36.

B. The book is in essence a collection, or anthology of wisdom

V. Suggested Hermeneutical Guidelines for Proverbs ⁷

- A. Interpret individual passages in light of the overall structure, purpose, and motto of the book of Proverbs
 1. Keep in mind the book is made up of several collections of wisdom material
 2. The purpose of the book of Proverbs is clearly stated (see below)
 3. The motto is clearly stated in 1:7 and 9:10
 4. The setting appears to be that of an older experienced father figure teaching a youth on living in harmony with Yahweh and his creation
- B. Recognize the various literary forms and devices (the "Building Blocks" of the individual passages or proverbs) as a clue to the context
 1. Two basic literary forms
 - a. The wisdom sentence
 - 1) Observation based on experience stated indicatively
 - 2) Dominates 10:1 - 22:16 and chapters 25-29
 - b. The admonition
 - 1) Instruction stated as an imperative
 - 2) Could be a command or prohibition
 - 3) Dominates chapters 1-9
 2. Most significant kinds of parallelisms
 - a. Antithetic - Contrasting of "two ways", usually uses, "but"
 - b. Emblematic - Synonymous, one line is symbolic, the other literal, usually uses "as"
 3. Be aware of specialized uses of particular words
 - a. Proverbs uses the technical jargon of wisdom literature
 - b. Example: תּוֹרָה *tôrāh* - Law, instruction
 - 1) When it is used without qualification, may refer to divine law as in 28:9 and 29:18
 - 2) When qualified, it refers to home teaching as in 1:8; 3:1; and 13:14
 - c. Use of a concordance will help to analyze special meaning of wisdom words such as "way/road"
- C. Beware of the Erroneous Assumption that proverbs are unconditional promises
 1. By design, the creation has a natural, social, and moral order
 2. Prov. 3:19-20; 8:22-31 - Creation is the basis for the order of the

⁷ Greg W. Parsons, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the book of Proverbs," In *Learning from the Sages: Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 151-161.

universe

- a. God through wisdom placed order in the fabric of the cosmos
 - b. Living wisely is to discern and live in harmony with that order
 - c. The physical and moral universe operates by cause and effect
 - d. The analogies between animal, nature and human life are there because the same creator is behind it all.
 3. Proverbs are not legal guarantees, but poetic guidelines for good behavior. They are generally true.
 4. Some proverbs are amoral observations, such as 14:20; 17:8.
 - a. This does not condone evil
 - b. Distinction must be made between what is described, and what is proper
 5. Proverbs are worded more to be memorable rather than technically precise
 6. Proverbs are guidelines, not mechanical formulas
 7. Consider Jesus himself. Though he embodied wisdom and fulfilled the requirement of Proverbs, he did not have long life, riches, or much honor while on earth.
- D. Realize that some proverbs are unconditionally true
1. Usually the unconditionally true proverbs are connected to an attribute of God in some way
 - a. Prov 16:2, 12, 33
 - b. 11:1; 12:22; 15:3; 22:2
 2. There are still exceptions: 15:25; 16:7
- E. Interpret the book of Proverbs in light of the historical-cultural context of extra biblical wisdom literature.
1. Solomon was not the sole author of all the proverbs, but the inspired editor or collector or wise sayings
 - a. Some of the wise sayings may have come from other cultures
 - b. Lemuel is an apparently non-Israelite name
 2. The book of Proverbs shares the literary forms of the ancient Near East
 3. Be aware that the book of Proverbs is an ancient wisdom book, and therefore has a different historical context than ours
 - a. One would totally miss the meaning of Proverbs 26:17 if one envisioned a pet dog being taken by the ears. In the ancient world, dogs were wild scavengers similar to jackals.
 - b. Two proverbs that knowledge of Ancient Near Eastern culture may shed light on:
 - 1) You will heap burning coals on his head (25:22) - In Egypt, it was a custom for a penitent to go to the one he wronged carrying a clay dish on his head with burning coals.⁸

⁸ Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1989), 302-305.

- 2) The North wind brings forth rain (25:23) - Problem, in Palestine, the north wind does not bring rain. However, it does in Egypt, which may suggest that these two Proverbs may have originated from Egypt.
4. A historically sensitive commentary can help to make you aware of these sorts of things.

VI. The purpose of the book of Proverbs (Prov. 1:2-7)

A. To know “wisdom” Hebrew: חָכָם - *hkm*

B. In Proverbs, wisdom is the skill for living

1. What to say or not to say in certain situations,
2. How to act or how not to act in certain situations
3. Learning the ability to avoid problems and be successful
4. Not the same thing as intelligence
 - a. Intelligence is a part of it, but not the whole thing
 - b. Example: Prov. 30:24-28
 - These are not great in intelligence
 - They are wise because they know how to navigate life well

C. A description of wisdom:

*“Wisdom involves a right attitude and approach to all areas of life. In spiritual life, it includes a commitment to follow the teachings of the holy and righteous God who expects his people to reflect his qualities, and a moral commitment to do what is right and to avoid what is wrong. In secular life, wisdom involves prudence, skills in the arts and various types of work, administrative ability, and development of strong personal relationships. In all of these areas, wisdom enables us to adapt what we know so we can do effectively what we do.”*⁹

D. “Intelligence Quotient” (I.Q) v.s. “Emotional Intelligence”

“People who have a high I.Q. know many facts; they can solve difficult mathematical equations. Their ability to reason and use logic is superior to others. People with emotional intelligence have other abilities, including ‘self-control, zeal, and persistence and the ability to motivate oneself.’ They also have ‘abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope.’

⁹ Woodcock, Eldon G. “Basic Terminology of Wisdom, Folly, Righteousness, and Wickedness,” In *Learning from the Sages: Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 112.

Biblical wisdom is much closer to the idea of emotional intelligence than it is to Intelligence Quotient. Wisdom is a skill, a 'knowing how'; it is not raw intellect, a 'knowing that.'"¹⁰

VII. The purpose of the book of Proverbs as stated in the introduction

A. v. 2a - To “the knowledge of” דַּעַת *da‘at* wisdom and “discipline” מוֹסָר *mûsār*

1. *da‘at* - Knowledge, perception (verb: יָדַע *yāda‘*)
 - a. 1:7
 - b. 2:6; 3:20
 - d. 19:25
 - e. 21:11
2. *mûsār* Also translated as, “instruction, or correction.
 - a. Types of discipline *mûsār*
 - 1) Prov. 13:1 - Verbal *mûsār*
 - 2) Prov. 13:24 - Physical *mûsār*
 - b. Results of *mûsār*
 - 1) 15:33; 12:1
 - 2) 6:23
 - 3) 22:15
 - c. Dangers of ignoring *mûsār*
 - 1) 15:32
 - 2) 19:27
 - 3) 5:23
 - 4) 13:18

B. v.2b - To “discerning” בִּיַן *bîn* words of “understanding” - בִּינָה *bînāh*

1. The verb, *bîn* means to discern, to understand, to have insight
2. The noun, *bînāh* means discernment, understanding, or insight
3. Possibly related to בֵּיַן *bayin* - Between, interval
 - a. The idea of deciding “between” two things
 - b. So this is about making the right or best choices

C. v.3a - To receive instruction, to be prudent שָׂכַל *śākal*

1. Means to be wise, prudent, understanding, successful
2. Almost a synonym for wisdom

D. v.3b - Three ethical terms:

1. צֶדֶק *śedeq* - Rightness, righteousness
 - a. Lord loves those who pursue it (10:6; 15:9, 29; 21:3)
 - b. Ethical characteristics of the Righteous
 - 1) 11:5; 13:5-6; 29:27
 - 2) 18:5; 29:7; 17:15

¹⁰ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Proverbs*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 15-16.

- 3) 12:17
- 4) 10:20-21, 31
- 5) 21:26; 28:1; 8:20
- c. Other characteristics of the Righteous
 - 1) 24:16; 10:25; 12:3
 - 2) 11:8; 29:16
 - 3) 13:21; 15:6; 10:24; 11:18; 10:28
 - 4) 11:19; 16:31
 - 5) 14:34; 16:12; 8:15
- 2. מִשְׁפָּט *mīšpāt* - Justice, judgment, ordinance/decision (often a legal term)
 - a. 29:9, 14
 - b. 2:8
 - c. 29:26
 - d. 29:4
 - e. 17:23; 18:5
 - f. 12:5; 21:15
 - g. 16:11
- 3. מִישָׁר *mêšār* - Evenness, uprightness, equity, (verb: יָשַׁר to be fair, upright, straight)
 - a. 4:25
 - b. 3:6; 4:11; 11:5
 - c. 11:3, 6; 21:8
 - d. 16:17; 2:13
 - e. 14:2; 15:8
 - f. 8:6; 20:11
 - g. 14:11; 14:9; 16:13
 - h. 29:27; 29:10
- E. v.4 - To give to the simple ones-פְּתִי *peṭî* prudence-עֲרֻמָּה *ʿormāh* to the youth-נֶעַר *naʿar* knowledge and discretion-מְזִמָּה *mēzimmāh*
 - 1. פְּתִי *peṭî* - Simple, open minded, naive
 - 2. עֲרֻמָּה *ʿormāh* - Craftiness, prudence, insight
 - 3. נֶעַר *naʿar* - Boy, lad, youth
 - 4. מְזִמָּה *mēzimmāh* - Purpose, plan, discretion, advice, devising
2:11; 30:32; 24:9; 21:27
- F. v.5 - Let the wise man listen and let him increase learning; And the intelligent, guidance let him acquire
- G. v.6a - To understand a proverb and a figure
 - 1. מָשָׁל *māšāl* - Proverb¹¹
 - 2. מְלִיצָה *mēlišāh* - Figure, enigma, satire, mocking poem
 - a. Used here and Hab 2:4 - NASBU - "Mockery"

¹¹ See the previous section, Introduction to Wisdom Literature, page 3 for more on the meaning of *māšāl*

- b. Verb form: לִיץ *liš* - To scorn, scoff (participle = scoffer)
Ps. 1:1; Prov 3:34

H. v.6b - The words of the wise and their riddles

1. חִידָה *hīdāh* - Riddle, enigmatic, perplexing saying or question
Also used in Psalm 49:4

2. A description of the characteristic of a riddle.

*“Basic to the riddle is the ambiguity of language; it can only operate where words bear meanings that are common knowledge and at the same time conceal special connotations for an exclusive group. ...for example, in the expressions ‘foot of the mountain’ or ‘lamp of the body’ the words ‘foot’ and ‘lamp’ are used in a special, symbolic sense. Once such ambiguity is possible, riddles can be formulated by use of ambivalent language interrogatively: ‘What has a foot but cannot walk?’”*¹²

3. On the various wisdom forms:
 - a. Training in wisdom offers skill in interpreting these forms
 - b. These forms teach wisdom indirectly
 - c. These forms conceal in order to reveal, they require skill and wit
 - d. Reflective question: Why teach wisdom indirectly?

I. The Motto of Proverbs: 1:7

The fear of Yahweh
the beginning of knowledge
Wisdom and discipline fools despise

Or

The fear of Yahweh
The beginning of the knowledge of wisdom
But Discipline fools despise

1. רֵאשִׁית *Rēšūt* “Beginning” can be used temporally or spatially. In other words, it could mean “beginning, first in time” or “head, first, what is of first importance.”
 - a. Fear of Yahweh is where knowledge begins
 - b. Fear of Yahweh is of first importance in wisdom
2. The book begins with the fear of Yahweh, and ends with it in 31:30.

VIII. Summary of the Purpose of Proverbs

- A. To gain the skill, wisdom and knowledge to navigate life
- B. Character formation. The introduction implies these attitudes as prerequisites¹³

¹² James L. Crenshaw, “Wisdom,” In *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 58.

¹³ Koptak, 67-70.

1. Humility
 - a. The learners are called “simple”
 - b. The learners need to receive “discipline” and “instruction”
2. Love for others
 - a. Implied in verse 3 - Righteousness, justice, uprightness
 - b. Many instructions in proverbs mirror this concern
3. Fear of Yahweh

VIII. The Theology of Proverbs

A. Many have incorrectly claimed Proverbs as a non-theological book. There is a wealth of doctrine on God, man, wisdom, and other related topics

B. Doctrine of God

1. Names of God
 - a. *יְהוָה* - *Yahweh* is used 87 times
 - 1) This is significant, since it is the personal name of God
 - 2) It is the covenant name - Exodus 6:1ff; 20:1ff
 - 3) It is this name that is used in Genesis 2 to give a detailed account of God’s actions and interest in humans
 - 4) God is interested in the thoughts and actions of humans
 - b. *אֱלֹהִים* *’Ēlōhîm* is used 7 times - 2:5, 17; 3:4; 14:31; 25:2; 30:5, 9
 - c. *אֱלֹהַ* *’Ēloah* is used once in 30:5
2. God is also called the following
 - a. Holy One - 9:10; 30:3
 - b. Righteous One - 21:12
 - c. The Defender - 23:11
 - d. The Maker - 14:31; 17:5; 22:2
3. His Holiness - 9:10; 30:3
4. His Omnipresence
 - a. Man's ways are before him and he watches - 5:21
 - b. Eyes of the Lord are in every place - 15:3
5. His Omnipotence
 - a. As creator of the universe - 3:19-20; 8:22-31; 30:4
 - b. As creator of man’s eyes and ears - 20:12; 29:13
 - c. As maker of the poor - 14:31; 17:5; 22:2
 - d. As maker of the rich - 22:2
6. Omniscience
 - a. In examining and knowing death - 15:11

- b. In knowing man's conduct - 5:21; 21:2
- c. In knowing man's motives - 16:2
- d. In knowing man's heart - 17:3; 20:27; 24:12
- e. In seeing good and evil - 15:3
- f. In seeing those who gloat over other's misfortunes 4:16-17

7. God's Sovereignty -

- a. Works everything for his purpose - 16:4; 19:21
- b. Determining decisions 16:33
- c. Directing man's steps 16:9
- d. Turning the hearts of kings 21:1
- e. Superseding man's plans 19:21; 21:30

8. God's Justice

- a. Justice comes from God - 29:26
- b. Punishes the wicked
 - 1) He curses the house of the wicked - 3:33
 - 2) Rejects the craving of the wicked - 10:3
 - 3) The wicked are delivered into trouble - 11:8
 - 4) Overthrows the words of the treacherous man - 22:12
 - 5) Condemns those who devise evil plans - 12:2
 - 6) Tears down the house of the arrogant - 15:25
 - 7) Repays according to conduct - 20:22; 24:12
- c. Rewards the righteous - 19:17; 25:21-22

9. God's Personality

- a. God hates - 6:16
- b. God loves - 3:12
- c. God delights - 11:1, 20, 22; 15:8-9

10. God's Actions, or Rule - In the passage above, have seen that God, repays, rewards, directs, creates. Etc.

C. Doctrine of Man

1. Humans are presented with two choices in Proverbs

- a. Sometimes they are called "simple" or "naïve" פְּתִי *petî*
 - 1) 1:4; 22, 32
 - 2) 14:15, 18; 22:3
- b. The proverbial descriptions throughout proverbs of one who is *petî* is one who is naïve, gullible or deeply impressionable.
- c. This is not always a bad term, but a natural one for young people that need to learn from wise teachers
- d. What is unacceptable is to remain naïve.

2. The way of wisdom

- a. Some of the names and descriptions for those who choose this way are: wise, upright, prudent, righteous, diligent, humble, generous, honest, teachable, moderate, sober, just, reliable, courageous, patient, etc.
- b. Results for those who choose this way include things such as prosperity, success, long life, etc.
- c. Be sure to notice these themes as we read through Proverbs

3. The way of folly

- a. Names for those who choose this way: Fool, Lacking in heart/without sense, scoffer, sluggard, wicked, dishonest, disobedient, gossip, slanderer, boastful, proud, arrogant, angry, harsh talker, quarreler, etc.
- b. Results for those who choose this way include things such as poverty, strife, conflict, and even death.
- c. Be sure to notice these themes as we read through Proverbs

IX. Old Testament Wisdom and the New Testament Christian

- A. There is a clear connection between the Old Testament literature of the sages and the New Testament

B. The Wisdom of Christ

- 1. Luke 2:41-52 - Jesus had demonstrated a wisdom beyond his years and continued to grow in that wisdom
- 2. Mark 6:2 - The people recognized his great wisdom
- 3. Matt 7:24 - Jesus's teachings have a strong wisdom theme.
- 4. A unique aspect of Jesus's teaching method - parables
 - a. Παραβολή *Parabolē* is one of the translations for the Hebrew מִשְׁלָּל *Māšāl*, which was the main teaching method of the sages.
 - b. Matt 13:10-11; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10
 - 1) Apparently the parable was not for everyone
 - 2) Note the similarity to Prov. 26:7, 9
 - 3) Jesus taught in the manner of the sages rather than the scribes (he also at times taught in the manner of the prophets)
 - c. Luke 11:31 - The incarnate Jesus is wiser than Solomon
 - d. Matt 11:18-19 -
 - 1) Jesus' actions were in accordance with wisdom
 - 2) A possible allusion to "Woman Wisdom?"
 - a) Wisdom sends out representatives (Prov 9:3-6)
 - b) What are wisdom's works? Probably those who heed her call. They have become wise.
 - c) Irony - Matt 11:25 - The wise have become fools, and the fools have become wise by listening to

Jesus, wisdom's ultimate envoy

5. 1 Cor 1:30 - Jesus became "wisdom" for us

C. Comparisons between Jesus and "Woman Wisdom"

In the Old Testament, believers were to seek after "Woman Wisdom" and heed her call and teaching and disregard "Woman Folly." In the new, believers are to seek after Christ, who, among other things, is the ultimate embodiment of God's wisdom, and disregard other voices that attempt to lure us away from him.

<p><i>Prov 4:13 Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.</i></p> <p><i>Prov 8:1 Does not wisdom call, And understanding lift up her voice?</i> <i>Prov 8:4 "To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men.</i></p> <p><i>Prov 8:15 "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.</i> <i>Prov 8:16 "By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly.</i> <i>Prov 8:22 ¶ "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old.</i></p> <p><i>Prov 8:26 While He had not yet made the earth and the fields, Nor the first dust of the world.</i> <i>Prov 8:27 "When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,</i> <i>Prov 8:28 When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed,</i> <i>Prov 8:29 When He set for the sea its boundary So that the water would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth;</i> <i>Prov 8:30 Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him,</i></p> <p><i>Prov 8:12 ¶ "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge {and} discretion.</i></p>	<p><i>John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.</i></p> <p><i>Eph 1:16 ... making mention of you in my prayers;</i> <i>Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.</i></p> <p><i>Col 1:15 ¶ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.</i> <i>Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.</i> <i>Col 1:17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.</i></p> <p><i>John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.</i> <i>John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.</i> <i>John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.</i></p> <p><i>Col 2:2 ... to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, {resulting} in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,</i> <i>Col 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.</i></p>
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D. Wisdom and the New Testament.

1. Wisdom is a prominent theme in several New Testament books.
2. The Gospels carry a strong wisdom theme, as Jesus often taught in the manner of the sage, through proverbial wisdom, metaphors, and illustrations
3. The Book of James has a strong wisdom theme, dealing with practical instructions on living for the Christian. Wisdom is specifically mentioned in these verses: 1:5; 3:13, 15, 17
4. Colossians has a wisdom theme, explicitly connecting wisdom with Christ. Verses that specifically mention wisdom are: 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5. There is also the allusion to creation by wisdom in Prov 8 in Col 1:15-16.
5. There is also a wisdom theme in the first half of 1 Corinthians which lays the groundwork for dealing with some of the problems in Corinth. The major passages include: 1:19-30; 2:1-14; 3:18-20.

Questions for Discussion

1. Is there anything in this study so far that stands out to you?
2. Has your understanding of wisdom changed in any way after this introduction? How?
3. In what way do you see connections between God and wisdom?
4. Where and how will you look for wisdom? Is this any different than what you have done in the past?
5. What would be your reaction if you were called “simple” or “naïve?” Why? How might a negative reaction affect your search for wisdom?
6. What attitudes do you see are implied in the introduction as being necessary to benefit from a study of the book of Proverbs?