

# Book of Proverbs Introduction

## Author

We cannot say for certain who the author is because this is a collection of Proverbs. Certainly, the first verse tells us these are the Proverbs of Solomon, king of Israel. But as we look throughout the Proverbs, we will see inscriptions to other collectors and authors.

Other books in the Bible explain the wisdom of Solomon, that he was wiser than anyone else in the world (1 Kings 4:29-34). He is credited with receiving wisdom from God and making the choice for wisdom above all other blessings from the Lord (1 Kings 3:1-15). The Bible credits him with writing over 3000 Proverbs (1 Kings 4:32).

Sol. Omon could have written Proverbs 1-22:17, and Proverbs 25-29 is also attributed to Solomon. But there are other Proverbs that have inscriptions from other authors (collectors) such as

Preamble (1:1–7)

Extended Discourses on Wisdom (1:8–9:18)

Solomonic Proverbs (10:1–22:16; 25:1–29:27)

Sayings of the Wise (22:17–24:34)

Sayings of Agur (30:1–33)

Sayings of King Lemuel (31:1–9)

Poem to the Virtuous Woman (31:10–31)<sup>1</sup>

For our group, we will consider Solomon to be the author/collector of wisdom sayings in Proverbs 1-22:16 and 25-29, and other contributors were indicated in the text.

## Audience

The audience of Proverbs is specifically the sum of Solomon, or any of his sons, as an education in wisdom to rule in place of their father after his role was complete. More widely and generally, Proverbs is written to anyone, man or woman, who seeks to learn the ways of wisdom to make wise decisions and live successful lives within the context of the fear of the Lord.

## Date and Occasion

Since the Proverbs are a collection of proverbs, pithy sayings that help a person live a life that is successful in God's eyes, they cannot be dated exactly. If they were composed and collected during Solomon's lifetime, the date could range his lifetime (around 970-930 BC). King Hezekiah is also mentioned, and King Lemuel.

The wisdom sayings of Proverbs can be considered a collected savings in the courts of Kings for the training of kings and their sons for rolling with wisdom. Wisdom from other nations and empires was not necessarily based on the fear of the Lord. The Proverbs are.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tremper Longman III, [\*Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 24–25.

The best understanding for dates for the Proverbs would be from 995 BC at the very earliest to most likely within the lifetime and kingship of Solomon from 970-930 BC.

### **Purpose**

Proverbs was written so that anyone who reads it and applies the wise and skillful living founded its pages can become wise in decision-making and action. Therefore, the Proverbs bring happiness and success when followed in the fear of the Lord.

### **Themes**

- **Wisdom Versus Foolishness.** Right from the beginning of the book, you will find almost every proverb deals with the difference between wisdom and foolishness, wise living and foolish living, wise decisions and foolish ones, and how wisdom impacts every part of our lives. From the introduction to the young man (Solomon's son) of Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly, Proverbs does not stop showing the difference between wisdom and foolishness.
- **Relationships.** Proverbs deals with relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, sexual relationships, social relationships, and professional relationships. This is part of the practical proverbs found in the book.
- **Speech.** Speech between wise and foolish people is often an indication of their level of wisdom. You will find a surprising amount of proverbs about speech.
- **Wealth Versus Poverty.** Many of the Proverbs deal with wealth and poverty as the results of wisdom or lack of wisdom. These are often found in the middle of the book in the assorted proverbs.
- **Wickedness Versus Righteousness.** Unlike many Proverbs of the ancient world, the moral center of the Proverbs in the book of Proverbs deal with wicked and righteous living. This is the practical walking out at the fear of the Lord in everyday life.
- **Discernment and Discipline.** Discernment is required to apply the proverbs to daily life. Some Proverbs seem to contradict others, but that is because you must apply the right proverb to the right situation. That is where wisdom comes from. The Proverbs place an emphasis on discipline of each person to apply wisdom to their lives through decision-making and actions, to follow through with what wisdom points to.
- **Respect and Humility.** The Proverbs lay heavily on the expectation of respecting one another in society and having humility. Humility accompanies wisdom and is a result of being wise.
- **Cause and Effect.** The Proverbs connect the cause of your thinking, decision-making, and actions to lead to a result, whether good or bad based on the first part of the Proverb. They are not sayings that address philosophical topics such as suffering. Job is better suited for that.

## Outline

<p>The first clection of proverbs (1:1–9:18)</p> <p>The second collection: proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16)</p> <p>The third collection: sayings of the wise (22:17–24:22)</p> <p>Further sayings of the wise (24:23–34)</p> <p>The fourth collection: more proverbs of Solomon (25:1–29:27)</p> <p>Other collections of proverbs (30:1–31:9)</p> <p>Epilogue: the treasure of a wise wife (31:10–31)<sup>2</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Andrew Knowles, <i>The Bible Guide</i>, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 247.</p>	<p>Title, Introduction and Motto: 1:1–7</p> <p>I. A Father’s Praise of Wisdom: 1:8–9:18</p> <p>II. Proverbs of Solomon: 10:1–22:16</p> <p>IIIa. Words of Wise Men: 22:17–24:22</p> <p>IIIb. Further Words of Wise Men: 24:23–34</p> <p>IV. Further Proverbs of Solomon (Hezekiah’s Collection): 25:1–29:27</p> <p>V. Words of Agur: 30:1–33</p> <p>VI. Words of King Lemuel: 31:1–9</p> <p>VII. An Alphabet of Wifely Excellence: 31:10–31<sup>3</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Derek Kidner, <i>Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary</i>, vol. 17, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 22.</p>	<p>I. Prologue: title, purpose, and theme 1:1–7</p> <p>II. The invitation and instruction wisdom 1:8–9:18</p> <p>III. Solomon’s proverbs 10:1–22:16</p> <p>IV. The sayings of the wise 22:17–24:22</p> <p>V. Further sayings of the wise 24:23–34</p> <p>VI. Solomon’s proverbs transcribed by Hezekiah’s men 25:1–29:27</p> <p>VII. The instruction of Agur 30:1–33</p> <p>VIII. The instruction of King Lemuel’s mother 31:1–9</p> <p>IX. Epilogue: the acrostic poem on the virtuous wife 31:10–31<sup>4</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, <i>Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary</i> (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), 747.</p>
--	--	---

## Dates for Ecclesiastes and Proverbs



## Facts about Ecclesiastes and Proverbs

Title	Authors	Theme	Key Verse	Key People	Key Places	Key Things	Chapters	Verses	Words
Proverbs	Solomon; Writer of Proverbs		Pr 9:10	Agur; The Father in Proverbs; Lemuel; Solomon; A Wise Person; Writer of Proverbs; Addressees of Proverbs	--	--	31	915	10,047
Ecclesiastes	Qohelet		Ec 12:13	Qohelet; Addressee of Qohelet	--	--	12	222	4,552

## Timeline of Proverbs

