



Lesson One

Wisdom Defined and Categorized

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”

“Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

These and other sayings are called proverbs. They are short, pithy, easy-to-remember statements of common truths. A proverb is a short sentence expressing a well-known truth.

Our Bible devotes one entire book to some of the most powerful proverbs ever known to man. The 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs contain a collection of more than 900 proverbs written by three men: King Solomon, who wrote most of them (Prov. 1:1 and 1 Kings 4:32); Agur (Prov. 30:1); and King Lemuel (Prov. 31:1). Most of these proverbs are simply short, unrelated sentences, but some of them develop a more detailed theme in the form of short paragraphs.

The book of Proverbs is especially instructive and beneficial for young people because it gives them principles for dealing with issues in many practical areas of their lives, including the following:

- Their home
- How to choose friends
- How to handle money wisely
- Character development
- How to use their tongues wisely
- Their associates
- Dating
- How to treat others properly
- Their thought lives
- The folly of vices and sin

Many areas of our lives are regulated by rules. But rules that are not based on principles are like leaves without trees. A leaf finds its origin in a tree and proves its usefulness when it is attached to a tree. When it is separated from the tree, however, the leaf loses its life, flies aimlessly about, and soon decays, becoming a nuisance to those who must rake their yards. So it is with rules.

Unfortunately, many Christians have been passing on their rules to each succeeding generation without passing along the principles on which the rules were originally based. The result is

that the young people of the new generation conform outwardly to the rules, but they have no firm conviction for obeying them. This, in turn, leads to inconsistency and randomness in making and enforcing rules. This inconsistency leads to either rebellion or a reexamination and revision of the rules, whereby the rules are perverted, annulled, or simply not enforced.

The book of Proverbs is primarily a book of principles. It provides the foundation upon which the rules of life are formulated.

The main purpose of a proverb is to teach. Proverbs 1:2-4 gives five general principles for the book of Proverbs. (Read that passage and see if you can list the five objectives. Your teacher will explain each of them in more detail during the class lesson and discussion.)

As beneficial as proverbs can be, however, one must recognize his or her need of instruction before their full benefit can be realized. When you read or hear a proverb, you must listen attentively to it and think carefully and prayerfully about how it applies to you to gain its full benefit. Doing so will lead to personal growth and “helmsmanship.” Rather than being adrift without a rudder, one who heeds and applies the proverbs will steer his life aright and with a God-honoring purpose.

TEACHER'S LESSON

Overview of Proverbs

- Content of the Book
 - ____ chapters
 - More than _____ Proverbs
 - Three authors:
 - King _____ (1:1)
 - _____ (30:1)
 - King _____ (31:1)
- Definition of a Proverb
 - A short _____ expressing in a _____
a _____

- Summary Outline
 - Chapters 1-9: The _____ of wisdom
 - Chapters 10-31: The _____ of wisdom

Main Objectives of Proverbs

- To Know _____
- To Know _____
- To Know _____
- To _____
- To Give _____

Keys to Understanding Proverbs

- Recognize Your _____
- Hear—_____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Benefits of Studying Proverbs

- _____
- _____

DEVELOPING THE IDEAS

1. What is a proverb? Give some examples of commonly known sayings or proverbs and explain the rules that come from them.
2. Why was the use of proverbs more important in early history than it is today? Do our modern, high-tech means of communication make the proverbs in the Bible obsolete or of less importance in our lives than they once were?
3. How can a study of Proverbs help you understand the rest of the Word of God?
4. How can we learn from the four “teachers” in Proverbs: wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity?
5. What is helmsmanship?
6. Explain how Bill Borden’s life (described by your teacher) exhibited a definite, God-focused purpose.
7. Begin your indexing of Proverbs. (See instructions under “How to Index Proverbs.”)

ASSIGNMENTS

During your study of Proverbs this year, you will have various assignments to help you better understand the truths you are learning. Some of these assignments will be short-term assignments specific to each chapter in your textbook. A few of the assignments will be long-term projects.

One such long-term assignment will be memorizing assigned Scripture verses. (Your teacher will explain this assignment more fully.) Another long-term assignment is that of indexing proverbs, organizing the contents of the book into broad subject areas. During each week of the year, you will categorize, or index, one chapter of Proverbs. Your teacher will set periodic dates for this project to be turned in for evaluation. Try to do your indexing faithfully so you don’t get behind. Reminders will be given in some “Developing the Ideas” sections along the way.

HOW TO INDEX PROVERBS

In a word processing program, type out the list of categories included below placing a page break between each. Be sure to keep multiple copies of the project in case you have computer

troubles. If you choose to do the project by hand, copy each of the following categories at the tops of separate sheets of paper. Place these sheets into a loose-leaf notebook or binder.

Then, beginning with Proverbs 1, index one chapter per week by writing out each verse and its reference under the appropriate heading. (For example, you might write out Proverbs 25:14 on the page you've labeled "Humility" because that verse deals with someone who boasts about having a false gift.)

Some of the verses might fit in more than one category, so you should include such verses in every appropriate category. Also, as you progress with your indexing project, you may find that you must add new categories to your list. If you are doing the project by hand, you will need to add a new page for each category you include. You will find that some categories require more pages than others.

YOUR INDEX CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

- I. WISDOM (This will be a *title page* for Section 1, which includes much of Prov. 1–9.)
 - A. What is Wisdom?
 - B. Importance and Blessing of Wisdom
 - C. Types of Wisdom (30:24–28, 31)
 - D. Examples of Wisdom (31:10–16, 25–30)
 - E. Personification of Wisdom (8:22–31)
 - F. How to Obtain Wisdom
 - G. Characteristics of a Fool
 - H. Characteristics of a Wise Man

- II. THE GOD OF WISDOM (This will be a *title page* for Section 2, which will draw material from the whole book of Proverbs.)
 - A. The Attributes of God (*title page*)
 1. God Is Wise
 2. God Is Loving
 3. God Is Holy
 4. God Is Just and True
 5. God Is Omniscient (All-Knowing)
 6. God Is Omnipotent (All-Powerful)
 7. God Is Sovereign (Rules All Things)

B. The Works of God (*title page*)

1. God Creates
2. God Judges
3. God Defends and Saves
4. God Guides
5. God Provides
6. God Hears Prayer

III. WISDOM IN DAILY LIVING (This will be a *title page* for Section 3, which includes much of Prov. 10-31.)

A. The Family (*title page*)

1. Parent-Teen Relationship
2. Husband-Wife Relationship

B. Companions (*title page*)

1. Friends
2. Dating

C. Treatment of Others (*title page*)

1. Kindness
2. Thoughtfulness
3. Arguing
4. Understanding
5. Respecting Others
6. Other

D. Finances (*title page*)

1. Borrowing
2. Thrift
3. Debts
4. Loaning
5. Seeking Wealth
6. Dishonest Wealth
7. Tithing

E. Thought Life

F. Taking Vows, Making Agreements

- G. Labor vs. Laziness
- H. Inner Qualities (*title page*)
 - 1. Love
 - 2. Honesty
 - 3. Humility
 - 4. Gladness and Joy
 - 5. Patience
 - 6. Persistence
- I. Vices (*title page*)
 - 1. Drinking
 - 2. Adultery
 - 3. Gluttonous Eating
 - 4. Greed
 - 5. Scoffing
 - 6. Murder and Hurt
 - 7. Punishment for Evil
- J. Speech (*title page*)
 - 1. Talking Too Much or Too Hastily
 - 2. The Speech of the Righteous
 - 3. The Righteous Know What to Say
 - 4. Destructive Speech
 - 5. Lying
 - 6. Gossip
- K. Making Decisions, Seeking Advice



Lesson Two

Wisdom: The Fear of the Lord

Most people today don't fear God. In fact, they are fighting against Him! And opposition to God is not just by individuals; people are organized in their opposition to God.

The anti-God movement known as humanism had its origins in ancient Greece, Rome, and China. Today, it is an organized religious movement that threatens to overthrow all that is Christian and, in the United States, all that is American.

Humanism stems from a statement by Protagoras, a Greek philosopher of the fifth century before Christ. He said, "Man is the measure of all things." In other words, man is his own god. "Right" is anything that pleases man and adds to his pleasure; "wrong" is anything that man dislikes. There is no heaven, no hell, and no God. Man's ultimate goal is to "do his own thing." The following summaries show some contrasts between humanism and Christianity.

ACCORDING TO HUMANISM...

- Man is the measure of all things, at the center of everything, and solves his own problems.
- The solution to all of man's problems is education. Man needs no god to help him; he is his own god.
- The key to successful living is getting more so you can "do your own thing." One can measure success by outward, material things.

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE...

- God is the proper central focus of all aspects of life. Life can have no real meaning apart from Him (Col. 1:16-18).
- The solutions to all of man's problems are found somewhere between Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 22:21 (Psa. 19:7-11).

- The key to successful living is focusing upon God in every area of life and submitting to His Word (Josh. 1:8).

Amazingly, our own U. S. Supreme Court has labeled humanistic philosophy a bona fide religion! Our public schools and state colleges teach humanism as fact, and some of the most powerful figures in American politics are admitted humanists. (One can often identify such people's humanist views by the legislation they promote in government or the causes they espouse in their communities.)

Many leading political and social organizations are humanistic, and their sole purpose is to belittle God and to replace Christianity with their godless religion of humanism. The following organizations are only a few prominent examples of such promoters of the humanist philosophy.

American Ethical Union (AEU). Founded in 1880, the work of this federation of more than thirty ethical societies has resulted in the establishment of several other influential organizations, including the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), and the National Organization of Women (NOW).

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). This group has been perhaps the most effective humanist tool for destroying the laws, morals, and rights of Americans. You are perhaps most familiar with it because it is frequently in the news. It is infamous for its attempts to remove all godly influences (e.g., prayer and Bible reading) from public schools, to restrict the displaying of manger scenes and the singing of Christmas carols on public property, to prohibit the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools and courtrooms, and to promote pornography under the guise of freedom of speech.

Among its founders were William Z. Foster, the former head of the Communist Party, USA; Dr. John C. Bennett, a president of the liberal Union Theological Seminary; John Dewey, a humanist educator and trainer of teachers; Clarence Darrow, the lawyer for the defense of evolution in the famous Scopes ("Monkey") Trial; and Corliss Lamont, a leading spokesman for humanism.

American Humanist Association (AHA). According to Chambers, the AHA was established in Illinois for "educational and *religious* purposes." In 1973, the AHA updated its "bible," known as *The Humanist Manifesto* (1933), producing *Humanist Manifesto II*. This "bible" criticizes true Bible believers and denies the existence of a creator. It asserts, "No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."

Think of it. These are the organizations and the people who control the news media, the entertainment industry, most government organizations, and our public school system! This is one reason why Proverbs is such an important study for your generation.

Remember, *true wisdom is never against the Lord*. Regardless of how official and religious today's humanists sound, and regardless of how well-educated (in their own false doctrines) they seem to be, God calls them *fools!*

STUDENT LESSON

So far in your study of Proverbs, you have learned that the book has five main objectives.

- To know God
- To know the Word of God
- To know God's principles
- To smooth the rough edges of life
- To give purpose to life

All of these objectives can be summarized by one word: *wisdom* (Prov. 1:2). But what is wisdom? The word in Hebrew is *hokma* and occurs some 150 times in the Bible, more than half of them in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The Bible also tells us about two kinds of wisdom: divine and human. (Read 1 Cor. 2:4-8.) We are concerned in this study with divine wisdom, but to better understand true wisdom we must first understand its importance and know what it is *not*.

WISDOM'S IMPORTANCE

Read the following verses about the importance of wisdom. Then answer the questions beside each reference.

- Proverbs 4:7—What does this verse say about the importance of wisdom?

- Proverbs 1:2—Why did Solomon write Proverbs? _____

- Proverbs 4:5-13—What does Solomon tell us to get? _____

According to Solomon's list in Proverbs 4:5-13, what nine benefits does becoming a wise person offer?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Clearly, Solomon wants us to be wise because such wisdom is important. But what is wisdom? We have to know what it is if we are to know whether or not we have it. Let's define wisdom by first looking at what it is NOT.

WHAT WISDOM IS NOT

Refer to the verses in parentheses after each of the following points to find biblical evidence that true wisdom is NOT man's wisdom.

1. Wisdom is NOT _____ (Prov. 21:30).

What does this mean? _____

List the examples of unwise things that are mentioned in the following verses:

- Psa. 14:1 _____
- Prov. 12:15 _____
- Prov. 14:9 _____
- Prov. 19:3 _____

Atheism or godlessness in any form is not wisdom but foolishness. This fact could apply to secular science and history books in that their authors might deny that God is the Creator or that He is in control of history and current events. In either case, they deny God's sovereignty over man and nature.

2. Wisdom is NOT _____ (Prov. 23:4).

Education is not wisdom. Someone once said, "You cannot put a man in the penitentiary for forgery until you first teach him to write. You can't put a man in jail for fraud until you first teach him to figure."

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:19-27. How do the educated and wise men of this earth compare with God? _____

- Good grades are not wisdom. Read 1 Corinthians 3:19-20. You may be the most intelligent person in your school and make every honor roll, but what does God say about your wisdom and intelligent thoughts? _____

3. Wisdom is NOT always _____ (Job 32:9).

Being a top athlete, public official, famous preacher, or educator does not mean that person has divine wisdom. Just because someone has lived a long time doesn't mean he has learned biblical wisdom.

WHAT WISDOM IS

- The definition of true wisdom is found in Proverbs 1:7 and Job 28:12, 20, 28. Read these verses and finish this statement: "True wisdom is the _____ of the _____."

The fear of God is based on the knowledge of God. Certain attributes of God (characteristics that make Him who He is) will produce a true fear of the Lord. The Teacher's Lesson will continue the study of what wisdom is.

TEACHER'S LESSON

The Source of Wisdom

- The _____ of the Lord (Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7)
- The _____ of God (Prov. 9:10)
 - Knowledge of God's _____ (Psa. 33:8)
 - Knowledge of God's _____ (Rev. 15:4)
 - Knowledge of God's _____ (I Sam. 12:22-24; Ps. 34)

The Fear of the Lord

- What the Fear of the Lord Is
 - It includes _____
 - It includes _____
 - It includes _____
 - Summary: The fear of the Lord is an _____ for God by which the child of God _____ himself _____ and _____ to his Father's _____.
- The Attitude of Fearing God
 - The child of God has only one dread—to _____ the Lord
 - The child of God has only one desire—to _____ the Lord
- The Importance of Fearing God
 - Isaiah 11:1-3 _____
 - Jeremiah 2:19 _____
 - Ecclesiastes 12:13 _____
 - 2 Samuel 23:3-4 _____
 - Psalm 147:11 _____

- How We Learn the Fear of the Lord
 - Studying God's _____ (Prov. 2:1-5)
 - Beholding God's _____ (Ps. 96:1-9)
 - Seeing God's _____
 - In _____ (Ps. 33:6-9)
 - In _____ (Josh. 4:20-24)
 - In _____ (1 Sam. 12:24)

DEVELOPING THE IDEAS

1. Those who fear the Lord exhibit certain characteristics. Read the following verses and write down the characteristics of a proper fear of the Lord.
 - a. Proverbs 8:13 _____

 - b. Proverbs 16:6 _____
 - c. Psalm 19:9 _____
 - d. 2 Corinthians 7:1 _____
2. What are the benefits and blessings that come to those who fear God?
 - a. Psalm 34:9 _____
 - b. Proverbs 15:33 _____
 - c. Psalm 111:10 _____
 - d. Psalm 25:14 _____

3. Write a short essay explaining why humanist reasoning appeals to so many people and why it never really delivers its promises. Support your points with appropriate Scripture passages.
4. Discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups.
 - a. What is the difference between love, reverence, and submission? How are they interrelated to one's fear of God?

- b. What are some of the outward signs that one
 - 1. loves God?
 - 2. reverences God?
 - 3. submits to God?
- c. What practical examples can you give of people showing a disregard for God and wisdom?
- d. What practical steps can you as a believer take to help other people desire true wisdom?



Lesson Three

The Wisdom of God vs. the Wisdom of Man

Throughout the history of mankind, men have been asking the same serious questions.

- Who am I?
- Where did I come from?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?
- How can I get there?

Perhaps you have at times asked yourself the same questions. Apart from God, however, philosophers have never been able to arrive at a satisfactory answer to even one of these questions. Yet, the answers to all of these important questions are found in God's Word, the Bible.

As you studied in the previous lesson, there are basically two worldviews: God's way, called biblical Christianity, and man's way, known as humanism. In this lesson, which is possibly the most important lesson of the year, we take a closer look at these two philosophies. They are locked in mortal combat. They are mutually exclusive; they can in no way peacefully coexist. There is no middle ground between them; every person must choose one side or the other (Josh. 24:15).

With this battle waxing hotter every day, a new generation of Christian young people must be built up. First, they must be introduced to the glorious God of the universe that they might know Him and love Him. Then they must be grounded in the faith and equipped to wage war—defending that faith, restraining the assaults of the enemy, and advancing the gospel of Christ throughout the world.

You are an important part of that generation. To be a good and victorious soldier in this spiritual war (Eph. 6:12), you must know the strategy, weaponry, strengths, and weaknesses of

both yourself and the enemy (2 Cor. 2:11). You must learn to detect the tricks of the most subtle and dangerous religion in the world today—humanism.

You have one of the most powerful arsenals at your disposal—“the whole armor of God.” This armor includes “the sword of the Spirit,” the Word of God (Eph. 6:10-18). The book of Proverbs is one of the most powerful weapons in that arsenal. Just as a soldier becomes intimately acquainted with his rifle by studying it, cleaning it, and practicing with it daily, so you must become intimately familiar with your weapon, your spiritual sword. Study Proverbs diligently (Acts 17:11), memorize it faithfully (Ps. 119:11), and apply its truths regularly to your daily life (John 13:17).

STUDENT LESSON

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HUMANISM

Read Proverbs 1:24-31. This passage deals with the deadly religion of humanism. As you read, answer the following questions.

The Sins (Characteristics) of Humanism

- How does the fool respond to wisdom’s call (vv. 24-25)? _____

- Read verses 29–30 again. What are some ways that people your age do the things listed in these verses? _____

The Future of Humanism

The word translated calamity or disaster in verse 26 comes from the Hebrew term meaning “a heavy crushing.” It implies that the trouble resulting from rejecting wisdom will be terrible.

- What four words are used in verse 27 to describe their troubles?
 - _____
 - _____

- _____
- _____
- What picture does the verse use to show how quickly and violently their troubles will come? _____

- Read verses 26-28. What does God say He will do when the people who reject wisdom call on Him for help?
 - v. 26 _____

 - v. 28 _____

- Explain (in your own words) their future as described in verse 31. _____

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

Read Proverbs 2:1-5. This passage deals with the Christian who truly wants to glorify God with his or her life. In your own words, list the characteristics from those verses that identify such a person and the blessings that he or she derives from living such a life.

The Characteristics of a Christian

- v. 1 (two answers) _____

- v. 2 _____

- v. 3 _____

- v. 5 _____

The Blessings of a Christian

- According to Proverbs 1:33, what is the blessing that comes from listening to wisdom?

Do you exhibit the characteristics of a Christian listed in Proverbs 2:1-5? Do you have a deep desire to know God intimately? The verses you've just read show you how to have all possible blessings of the Christian life.

CONCLUSION

Humanism and Christianity are 180° opposed and cannot coexist. Someone once said, "Humanists look upon the church and its doctrinal absolutes as the greatest enemy of mankind." As we have seen, God has declared the doom of our humanist enemies. From these two choices, everyone must choose a side: Man or God? There is no neutral ground. And the Christian knows which side is going to win the day when the dust of battle settles.

- Jeremiah 8:9 gives the final verdict. Summarize the verse in your own words on the lines below.

TEACHER'S LESSON

Christianity: The Wisdom of God

- The Foundation— _____
- Five Key Teachings
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____ of God
 - A _____ Worldview

Humanism: The Wisdom of Man

- The Foundation— _____
- Five Key Teachings
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____ Man
 - _____, _____ Order

Conclusion

- Christianity is God's revelation of _____ as the only source of _____ and _____.
- Humanism is man's attempt to _____ his _____ independently of _____.

DEVELOPING THE IDEAS

1. Read 2 Peter 3:5-7 and explain how that passage relates to evolutionists and humanists.
2. Explain how one can say that the roots of the "family tree" of humanism can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden.
3. How has the widespread acceptance of the humanist philosophy affected the way our national educational system functions? Why is evolution a cornerstone of the educational system? What are the inevitable results of following such views?
4. Why can one say, "The first stone of all humanistic thought is atheism?"
5. Why do humanists insist that there can be no moral absolutes?
6. What are the political ramifications of a world system that is based on humanism?
7. Read and report on one of the books dealing with humanism and/or evolution from the Recommended Reading List.

8. Read about the lives of some of the humanists mentioned in this chapter, noting how they arrived at their erroneous views and their animosity toward God, His Word, and His people.
9. Conduct a study of civilizations that were destroyed (or lost their wealth, power, and influence) because of their departure from God's moral absolutes. List the characteristics that signaled that fall. Note any similarities with our own national situation.
10. Debate the following proposition: "Resolved: that humanism and biblical Christianity cannot peacefully coexist."