

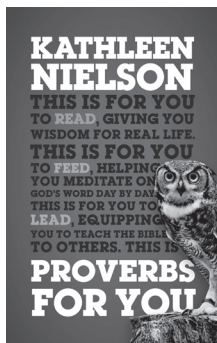
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& Rachel Jones

# Proverbs

*Real Wisdom for Real Life*



✔ **8-Session Bible Study**



## Proverbs For You

These studies are adapted from *Proverbs For You*. If you are reading *Proverbs For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Proverbs For You*:

Study One > Ch 1	Study Five > Ch 7
Study Two > Ch 2-3	Study Six > Ch 10
Study Three > Ch 4	Study Seven > Ch 12
Study Four > Ch 5	Study Eight > Ch 13

Find out more about *Proverbs For You* at:

[www.thegoodbook.com/for-you](http://www.thegoodbook.com/for-you)

Proverbs: Real Wisdom for Real Life

A Good Book Guide

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# Introduction

One of the Bible writers described God’s word as “a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we’ve discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They’re perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let’s take a look at what is included in each session.

**Talkabout:** Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

**Investigate:** These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

**Apply:** These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

**Explore More:** These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

**Getting Personal:** These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

**Pray:** Here, you’re invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you’ve seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven’t got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you’ll find a **Leader’s Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God’s light-giving word.

# Why Study Proverbs?

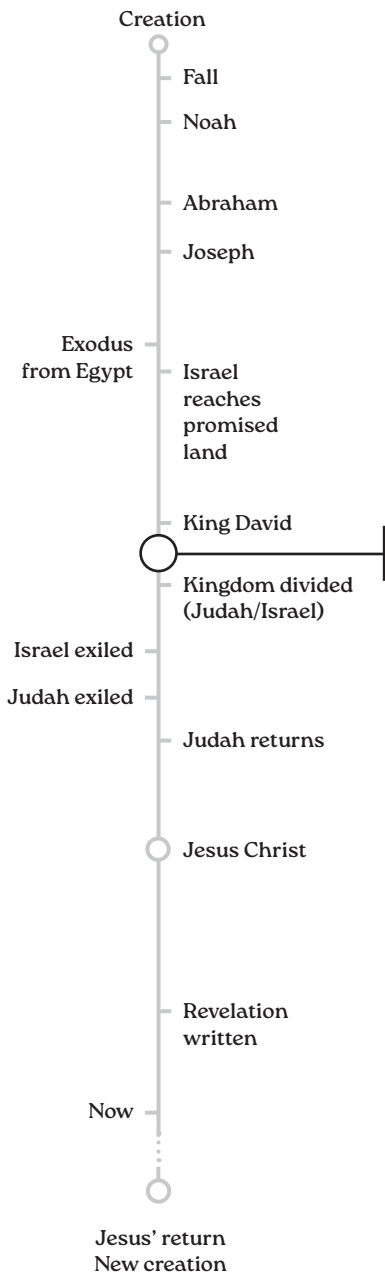
Human beings are and always have been in need of wisdom. Wisdom helps us make decisions about what work to do; what to say (or not say); what person to marry (or avoid). Wisdom points us to habits that tend to make life smoother and happier. Wisdom gives shape and meaning to our cries of both suffering and delight. In general, wisdom offers insight into the concrete experiences of human life. That's the commonly understood sense of wisdom.

But Proverbs offers God-breathed wisdom. This wisdom is utterly recognizable in that (like popular wisdom) it offers insight into the concrete experiences of human life. But it's also utterly different because it offers godly insight into the concrete experiences of human life in a world created and ruled by the Lord God of the Scriptures.

Proverbs addresses the spectrum of human activities and concerns that make up daily life: from eating and drinking to the way we speak to one another, to family and social relationships, to sex, to business dealings, and on and on. Proverbs calls us to see all the experiences of our lives in relation to the Lord, who created and rules the world, who calls us first to fear him, and who himself shows us how to live wisely.

Rather than taking a more thematic approach, we'll approach the book of Proverbs as God has given it to us—a carefully shaped poetic book that holds together as a piece of literature from beginning to end.

In just eight studies we can only begin to take account of Proverbs' wealth of insights. But let's begin. Let's see how the first nine chapters establish a foundation for all that follows—a foundation that keeps reappearing and even deepening at crucial points in the book. Let's taste the flavors of the various proverb collections built on that foundation, and let's hear the themes develop and wind around one another—kind of as they do in a day of real life! And let's allow these proverbs to point us to the source of wisdom: Jesus Christ, in whom "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).



## King Solomon 970-931 BC

The book's introduction notes King Solomon as the author or collector of most of its sayings, although certain sections are attributed to other wise men. 1 Kings 4:29 tells us that "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure."

# 1

## The Beginning of Wisdom

Proverbs 1:1-7

### Talkabout

1. In our culture, what different “voices” offer wisdom on how to live well? How do you decide who to listen to?

### Investigate

Whether it's books on business, podcasts on parenting, or articles on the art of home décor—we humans desperately reach out for wisdom. Centuries ago, God's people living in the kingdom of Israel also knew this universal need for wisdom. The nations surrounding them—Egypt, Arabia, Babylon, Phoenicia—had their own voices offering insight into the concrete experiences of human life. Proverbs is similar in style and approach to this other wisdom literature, but fundamentally different in its nature and source—as the book's “prologue” (1:1-7) makes clear.

 **Read Proverbs 1:1**

2. Who is the book of Proverbs attributed to? What made his wisdom different from that of the nations around him? (See 1 Kings 4:29.)

- What does verse 1 tell us about where Proverbs fits into the bigger story of God’s people in the Old Testament?

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## Explore More | OPTIONAL

“Wisdom” in Solomon’s day was not a new or foreign concept for the Israelites; in fact, wisdom had always been connected to God and to his revealed word.

### Read Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Deuteronomy is Moses’ sermon to the Israelites as they prepared to enter the promised land (around 450 years before Solomon).

- What does Moses say the people need to do in order to be wise?
- Why did God intend for the Israelites to be wiser than the nations around them?
- Think forward in Bible history through the Old Testament. Did Israel ultimately succeed or fail in this task, do you think?
- Think forward in Bible history to the New Testament. How did Jesus fulfill what Israel failed to do?

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### Read Proverbs 1:2-6

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#### DICTIONARY

**Righteousness** (v 3): right judgements and actions.

**Equity** (v 3): fairness.

**Prudence** (v 4): carefulness.

**Discretion** (v 4): showing good judgement.



3. Verses 2-4 lay out the book's aim. What will Proverbs equip the hearer to do?

- v 2

- v 3

- v 4

4. What do these different ideas tell you about the nature of wisdom?

It's helpful to think of wisdom in this book as a kaleidoscope of patterns. As Proverbs asks us to consider wisdom, it does not present a neat list of truths to learn and affirm. Rather, Proverbs points to wisdom that transforms all of life.

5. What do verses 5-6...

- call us to do?

- promise as a reward?

6. Who is the book's wisdom addressed to (v 4, 5)?

## Apply

It's thought that this book was originally used for Israel's leaders-in-training. Yet Proverbs' wisdom is continually needed by all of us, young and old, male and female. You are included in the ones who need to stop and listen (v 5)!

7. Proverbs warns against ever thinking we've outgrown the need to seek wisdom. How can we tell if we're in danger of having that attitude?

- What does it look like to continue to stop, listen, and learn as we grow in Christian maturity?

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## Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

Jesus likewise taught that wisdom lies in hearing and doing God's word: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24). Is there an area of your life where you need to observe this challenge to "hear" and "do" this week?

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## Investigate

 Read Proverbs 1:7

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## DICTIONARY

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**LORD** (v 7): the personal covenant name for God.

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8. What “opposites” does this verse set up?

9. What does it mean to fear the Lord, do you think?

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## Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” To what extent is your spiritual life marked with this kind of deep reverence? How, practically, can you seek to grow in this fear?

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*Proverbs’ wisdom is found in relationship with the Lord.* Yet we read the book of Proverbs today knowing that the kingdom of Israel (Proverbs 1:1) flourished and then fell, as God’s people turned away from their Lord. Only a remnant faithfully believed God’s word and trusted God’s promises of forgiveness and redemption.

The fulfillment of God’s promises to them arrived in the deliverer who came from the line of King David—the Lord Jesus. He is the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3); he is the one who makes relationship with the Lord possible.

People choosing the path of folly don’t need just an argument; they need to meet a person.

10. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. How does Jesus, “the wisdom of God” (v 24), bring about our salvation? What else strikes you from these verses?

## **Apply**

11. In what areas of your life do you most feel in need of wisdom? What would it look like to fear the Lord in these circumstances?

12. “People choosing the path of folly don’t need just an argument; they need to meet a person.” How have you seen that to be true in your own experience?

- How should that shape the way you seek to speak wisdom into the lives of others (both Christians and non-Christians)?

## **Pray**

*Spend time praising God for Christ: the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

*Pray for his help to fear him rightly as you walk in reverent relationship with him day by day.*

*Then pray through Proverbs 1:2-6, asking that you would indeed grow in each of these qualities as you study the book of Proverbs.*