



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McFee*

PROVERBS

BIBLE COMPANION

PREVIEW

POETRY

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of Proverbs heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Proverbs (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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Look for the complete *Proverbs Bible Companion* coming soon.

Get your heart ready.

LESSON 1

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM



Begin with prayer



Read **Proverbs Introduction—1:33**



Listen at [TTB.org/Proverbs](https://www.TTB.org/Proverbs) to **Proverbs Introduction, Proverbs 1:1-5,** and **Proverbs 1:5-33**

The book of Proverbs is different from any other book in the Bible. Although unique in its purpose, we can classify it as Hebrew poetry—along with the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

Proverbs focuses on what makes us wise. Ecclesiastes is the book on foolishness. Song of Solomon is the book on marital love—the happy-medium between wisdom and folly. Solomon, the author of both, was an expert on all three subjects! According to 1 Kings 4:32-34, Solomon wrote over a thousand proverbs and songs. We have just a few of them.

Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience. A proverb communicates a specific truth in a pointed and pithy manner. A good proverb is a truth that's easy to remember; it's a rule for conduct, a philosophy based on experience.

The book of Proverbs seems like it's a collection of sayings without any particular order. You read them and think, *Finally I've found a verse in the Bible that I can lift out and let stand alone. I can put them in a frame and hang it on the wall.* But you can't do that even with Proverbs. The book tells

a story of a young man starting out in life, and he gets his first lesson in the first chapter, verse 7: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

After the young man grows a while, he is invited to two different schools. They send out their catalogs to him, telling about the advantages of their schools. The first is known as the “College of Wisdom.” The other is the “College for Fools.” (By the way, they still advertise today.)

In chapter eight, the young man goes to the College of Wisdom, and chapters 10-24 are his curriculum. This instruction is good for all of us. It transcends all dispensations—from the Old Testament, to the New Testament, to the church. Proverbs is a good book for anyone—and especially for young people. When you’re just starting out, you need to learn about the broad way and the narrow one. The broad way is the wide path at the entrance where the crowd hangs out. It’s where you can do what you please and call it the way of liberty.

But notice this broad way gets more narrow as you go along. The way of the lawless is the dark way. “The way of the wicked is like darkness” (Proverbs 4:19). Bright lights adorn the entrance, but down a little farther, the lights go out and people don’t even know what they stumble over. That is the broad way the Lord Jesus described in Matthew 7:13-14. It’s like the big end of a funnel that shrinks until it finally ends in destruction.

In contrast, the narrow way is just that—very narrow at the entrance. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way” It’s so narrow that it’s limited to one Person: Jesus Christ. No one can come to the Father but through Him. You just can’t find a way more narrow than that. Peter said in Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Jesus said in John 10:9, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” The entrance is narrow, but after the entrance the way gets wider and wider, leading to an abundant life here and on into the light of heaven itself. The way to the best life—the widest and most glorious life—is found when we enter into the narrow end of the funnel, and that end is labeled *The Lord Jesus Christ*.

That is exactly the picture we get from Proverbs. We are given the option of two ways: the path of the just and the way of the wicked. The broad way is described in Proverbs 16:25, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” That’s lesson one.

As an aside, here's something that will make our study of Proverbs a thrilling experience for you. There's a proverb that is a thumbnail sketch of every character in the Bible, and we're going to study a few of them. There will be a proverb that fits all your friends and acquaintances, every one of us. As we read through the chapters, every now and then you'll come to a proverb and immediately you'll think of Mr. or Ms. So-and-So. The proverb will fit them exactly! It'll show us just how up to date the Word of God really is, and it will make for an interesting study. That said, you'll be wise if you keep some of those descriptions to yourself, because some of them aren't flattering. But the Bible is like a mirror, and wisdom will determine what you do with what you see.

Solomon gathered these proverbs from many sources in the ancient east. He was the editor of all of them and the author of some. What we'll study here is an inspired record that are either Solomon's or others, but God has put His stamp of approval on all of them.

Each of the proverbs are constructed in two parts, called by some "literary couplets." They generally relate to each other, a term called "parallelism." This is true for most all of Hebrew poetry.

As we study, we'll see three kinds of parallelism in the book of Proverbs.

1. **SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM** is when the second clause restates the first clause but in a little different way. Here's an example from Proverbs 19:29: "Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools."
2. **CONTRAST PARALLELISM** is when the first clause is made stronger in the second clause by contrasting it with an opposite truth. Like this from Proverbs 13:9: "The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out."
3. **SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM** is when the second clause develops the thought of the first. Here you have it in Proverbs 20:2: "The wrath of a king is like the roaring of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life."

Look for these three structures and it will help you understand the verse better.

The book of Proverbs opens with a very definitive purpose. Many people feel like you can just reach in this book and pull out a proverb. Sometimes it's acceptable to do that, but it's important that after we take it out and look at it, that we put it back where it belongs.

In the first section of nine chapters, we find wisdom and foolishness contrasted. In context, they are a father's advice to his son, starting off in life. The boy is in the home in chapter 1, and this is the purpose of the instruction God gives him:

To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. –Proverbs 1:2-4

Look at those verses carefully and you'll see nine words used like they're synonymous, but of course they are all different and nuanced. Let's put them under a microscope and find out their beauty. Every word of God is pure, we're told.

1. **“To know *wisdom*”** Wisdom in Scripture means “the ability to correctly use knowledge,” and it occurs 37 times in this book alone. Many brilliant folks today have the knowledge, but they don't seem to be able to use it well.
2. **“... and *instruction*.”** Used 26 times in Proverbs, sometimes this word is translated “chasten” or “discipline,” as in “he who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24). Now, when you correct a child, that's part of their instruction. You teach them by disciplining them and not to punish them.
3. **“To perceive the words of *understanding*.”** Understanding means “intelligence” or “discernment.” God expects us to apply our intelligence, to use a great deal of sanctified common sense.
4. **“To receive the instruction of *wisdom, justice*”** Justice is “righteousness,” right behavior. Right and wrong are not relative terms except in the minds of contemporary commentators; they are like light and darkness.
5. **“...*judgment*”** There are times we need to make a judgment and times to make a decision.
6. **“...and *equity*.”** This refers to principles rather than conduct. The child of God is not put under rules today, but under certain great principles.
7. The call is to be ***prudent***—to be wise in what we do.
8. **“*Knowledge*”** is information that's good for you.
9. The last word, **“*discretion*,”** means “thoughtfulness”—to think through the wisest course of action.

This book of Proverbs will help us incorporate all these words into our lives. How? By hearing and listening.

A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. –Proverbs 1:5

“A wise man will hear...” has been the characteristic of all great Christians—they never reach the place where they feel like they have learned everything.

“... Increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.” Here’s the challenge as we enter our study. If you’re smart, you’ll listen to what’s being said; you’ll listen to what the Spirit of God has to say in the book of Proverbs. We need a serious, concentrated study of the Word of God. You can’t read over a passage once and think you understand it all—you just don’t get it without study.

And today Proverbs challenges us to dig in! In the New Testament the parallel challenge is in 2 Timothy 2:15: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The key to understanding the entire book is Proverbs 1:7:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.


This is a contrasting proverb—do you see it? Those who are wise learn, and those who are fools don’t learn. Experience can’t teach a fool, but the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

That’s exactly what the book of Proverbs tries to do—it helps us not be stupid at life and helps us if we will listen and learn from its truths.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from TTB.org. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

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