

# The Christian Arsenal

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## PROVERBS 1:1-19

Today, we begin a new study. We're going to be looking at the book of **Proverbs** for the next nine Sundays. We won't be going through the entire book...just selected chapters and verses.

As we always like to do...let's look at just a little background on this book. And the first thing I want us to consider this morning is its author.

**There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs, and with the exception of two at the most and maybe only one, they were all written by Solomon.**

**Chapter 30** is attributed to a man named **Agur**.

**Chapter 31** is attributed to **King Lemuel** and contains instruction given to him by his mother. Some Bible scholars believe that Lemuel was Bathsheba's pet name for her son, Solomon...and that the instruction given in that chapter came from her.

Marva brought out a very good point last week as we closed out the book of **Jonah**. She said one of the things that meant the most to her from that book was the fact that God is able to use a sinfully rebellious, disobedient man to bring an entire city to salvation. She said this gives her hope that maybe God can use her as well!

And I believe we see that same truth in the Bible over and over and over...especially in this book.

Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba.  
Solomon was the man who succeeded his father as king.  
Solomon was chosen by God to build the temple his father had longed for so long to build.

And Solomon was given greater wisdom than any other man before or since.

But, Solomon had a flaw in his character. Solomon was a sinner. Bro. Bob described to us so vividly last Sunday night how all of us are sinners from conception...and Solomon was no different.

Solomon started his reign with such promise. But, Solomon ended his life in such failure.

**Solomon wrote three books of Scripture.**

Solomon wrote the **Song of Solomon**, which one commentator, Dr. Irving L. Jensen, said he wrote **while in his youth and in love**.

Solomon wrote the book of **Proverbs** which Dr. Jensen said he wrote **in his middle age when his intellectual powers were at their peak**.

Solomon wrote the book of **Ecclesiastes** in his old age **when he was disappointed, discouraged, depressed and disillusioned by the way he had spent his life**.

**Let me ask you...**

Why would God, the Holy Spirit, choose a man who had squandered the wisdom God had given him to write these books?

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**Well, let me ask you this...**

Why would God choose **a murderer like Moses** to lead His people from bondage and to write the first five books of Scripture?

Why would God choose **a rebel like Jonah** to preach a pitiful sermon to Nineveh and allow it to bear such incredible results?

Why would God choose **an adulterer and murderer like David** to be the sweet psalmist of Israel and a man after His own heart?

Why would God choose **a man like Saul of Tarsus** to become Paul the Apostle?

Why would God choose **a rough and sometimes violent and unfaithful fisherman** to become the Apostle Peter?

Did God not know all the things in the lives of these men?

Did God not know Solomon would live his life in such a way that in the end he would say, "All is vanity...?"

Did God not know that Moses would try to deliver his people his own way and not God's way?

Did God not know the lengths to which Jonah would go to avoid doing what God had called him to do?

**Did God not know what David would do that day when he decided to walk on his rooftop and look over and see Bathsheba bathing?**

Did God not know the things Saul had done to His church?

Did God not know that Peter would deny the Lord Jesus three times?

Of course He did. And He used these men and others because God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

And God has chosen the weak things of this world to shame the strong.

God has chosen to use sinful men as His vessels of service.

**And this is what made an impression on Marva...that He has chosen you and He has chosen me and knowing the sinfulness of our heart, He still will use us if we will allow ourselves to be used.**

Solomon was chosen by God to impart wisdom to you and me today on the first Sunday of the year 2004 because God chose him to do it.

And you know, God could have chosen to write His holy Word men who had lived exemplary lives...men who had no stain on their character...and there were no doubt some men like that who wrote Scripture...but, the bottom line is this – **all men are sinners**. But the men who wrote this Book were sinners who knew God! They were saved sinners...they were sinners, but they were holy sinners!

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**All Scripture was written by holy men... “Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” All Scripture is inspired by God. But, at the same time, all Scripture reveals the diverse personalities of its writers.**

I've been reading a commentary on the book of **Proverbs** written by a Scotsman named William Arnot. He said,

“He who made Saul an apostle did not disdain to use Soloman as a prophet. Very diverse were the two men, and very diverse their life course; yet in one thing they are perfectly alike, - together in glory now, they know themselves to have been only sinners, and agree in ascribing all their salvation to the mercy of God.”

I think we need never forget that the truth of God's Word doesn't depend on the goodness of the men who wrote it. In fact, if all the writers of the Bible had been perfect in holiness...if no error had ever been noted in their lives, not only would we be tempted to hold them in places of esteem God never intended but the Bible would not have served the purpose to which God **did** intend.

You and I would never be able to relate to a Moses who never sinned, or a David who never made a mistake, or a Solomon who never brought God sadness. But, because these men were mere men whom God chose to use, you and I can say as Marva did last week... “Maybe God can use me...”

Well, with all that said about the writers of Scripture in general...

and the writer of the book of **Proverbs** in particular...

Let's think about the purpose of this book...to whom was it written...when was it written...and how was it written.

This book is thought to have been written around **950-900 B.C.**

This book was written, not as much as a help for an unbeliever to find his way **to** God as much as it was written as a help for a believer to find how to walk **with** God.

The word “proverb” in the Hebrew means **“to be like”** or **“to represent”**. Another meaning of this word is **“to rule”**. Only one commentator I read this week preferred the meaning **“to rule”** and that commentator is Dr. John Phillips, a man whom I greatly admire.

Since many of these proverbs **compare one thing to another**, we can certainly understand the first meaning of this word being given by most scholars. Having said that, I believe we can safely say this...**proverbs are given in Scripture as truths, words and sayings that are meant to govern or rule our lives.**

The word “wisdom” is mentioned at least 38 times in this book. As Dr. Jimmy Draper said in his book on **Proverbs**: “Proverbs does not take

us to church very often. Instead, it takes us to our businesses, our schools, our homes, and our personal relationships with others.”

It meets us, as Dr. J. Vernon McGee, says “where the rubber meets the road.” It teaches us practical ways to apply God's wisdom to our everyday lives...and I hope that's exactly what we will learn as we look at this great old book.

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So, with all that in mind, let's look at

Proverbs 1:1-6...

In these six verses, Solomon sets forth his purpose for this book in his very own words. He said, "I want you to know wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs abound in every culture. We, in the English speaking world certainly have our share. How many of you have ever recited some of our well-known proverbs: "A stitch in time saves nine." "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

There are even old sayings that folks really believe are from the Bible. How many of you have heard folks quote things like "Cleanliness is next to godliness" and "God helps those who help themselves" as though they were from the Bible? Folks who don't know God's Word really believe this!

Bro. Bob... **"Every tub sits on its own bottom."**

**I remember one time when the boys were young, but old enough to have heard many of these adages or maxims, and we were on a trip and we were really bored, we all tried to remember and recite as many of these as we could. Of course, we made a contest out of it as we often did when we were on trips.**

I remember doing a piece of calligraphy for Brent one time a few years back. He had found a piece that he wanted framed for his home that was entitled **"Maxims from a February President"**. These were maxims or adages or proverbs penned by President Abraham Lincoln many years ago.

But, as familiar as many of these maxims or adages or proverbs are, they are not life-changing like these **Proverbs** are!

The Holy Spirit wants us to look at these **Proverbs** and know wisdom and instruction. I want to tell you...we can be full of knowledge and have no wisdom. We can know God's Word in Hebrew and Greek and have no wisdom. Knowledge isn't nearly as profitable to us as wisdom. I've heard it said, "Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge properly..."

The next thing Solomon says here is that he wants us to "discern the sayings of understanding." I believe the gift of discernment is one of the most desirable gifts we should ask for. What does it mean to discern the sayings of understanding?

I believe some folks have it and some folks don't! It's much like some folks have common sense and some folks don't! But, with God all things are possible...and even those of us who haven't been blessed with an abundance of common sense can discern the sayings of understanding if we follow these **Proverbs!**

The next thing Solomon says is we should receive instruction in wise behavior. Well, what is right or wise behavior? It is whatever God says is right...not what TV says or the newspaper says or the Internet says or our society says. Right behavior begins with knowing God!

And Solomon doesn't stop at wise behavior...he goes on to righteousness, justice and equity. The word "equity" could be translated "integrity." It has to do with **honesty** with each other...**fair play** with each other. I believe Solomon is telling us that we should pursue activities that embrace righteousness and justice and equity (or integrity) and wise behavior.

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And the way we do that is by knowing **unwise behavior** and avoiding it and by knowing what **unrighteousness** is and avoiding it and by knowing what **injustice** is and avoiding it and by knowing what **inequity** is and avoiding it.

What I think he means is this...the principle is this...if you cannot enter into an activity with the sure knowledge that God would look at this activity as righteous and just and equitable and wise, then we shouldn't enter into it!

Then Solomon says these **Proverbs** are to give prudence to the naïve and to the youth knowledge and discretion. I believe these are linked together. Most of us are very naïve as young people. Hopefully, as we live longer, we gather more knowledge and discretion. Solomon wants you and me to make wise choices and use good judgment.

Then, Solomon mentions that a wise person and a person of knowledge will hear and increase in learning and acquire wise counsel. What does this say to you? It says to me that we can never stop learning. We never get so smart that we can't learn something else.

I love to watch folks garden...and cook...and decorate. Now, I'm not much of a gardener myself, or much of a cook myself, or much of a decorator myself...but I love to watch other people do it. And I think I'm learning.

**But, God wants more of us than this. He wants us to turn off the Food Channel and HGTV and pick up His Book and learn and acquire wise counsel from it!**

I'm always amused by the "experts" on TV. We have experts on terrorism and experts on anti-terrorism and experts on homeland security and experts on war and experts on politics...both Democratic and Republican. I wonder how many of those experts are also experts on God's Word!

Then, Solomon mentions that he wants us to understand a proverb and a figure and the words of the wise and their riddles. I think this is a very interesting way of putting it... I believe KJV says "**the words of the wise and their dark sayings.**"

This doesn't mean God has spoken in His word in riddles hoping we never unravel the riddles. It means that there are some things in His precious Word that are hard to understand. Peter said this of Paul's writings.

It simply means that God's truth isn't always going to jump off the page! Paul said, "**Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who is not ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.**" (2 Tim. 2:15)

**Proverbs 25:2** says "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter." Many of God's richest truths are like diamonds and silver and gold. God doesn't scatter diamonds on top of the ground, does He? God doesn't scatter silver and gold on top of the ground, does He? NO! Diamonds and gold and silver are hidden away for man to look for and to find.

It is the glory of God to conceal His truth so that you and I must dig for it and ask His guidance in finding it! It glorifies God for His children to earnestly look into His blessed Word!

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I'm always amazed when I think of the book of **Revelation**. I've studied it on my own. I've taken a nine-month course on it in Precept. I've taught it twice! And each time I think I've got it! And then, two weeks later, I get it mixed up! Why? **Because it is the glory of God to conceal a matter and I must search through it again and again!**

The challenge of the book of **Proverbs** is this... Study it! Dig in! And I hope you will do that for the next nine weeks.

Well, let's look at the key verse in this book...

Verse 7...

I watched an interview last week with Richard Gephart. He was explaining how his views on such things as homosexuality and abortion had "evolved." He explained how he had been in the Baptist church so had been taught to be against these things. But, as he had grown older, his views on these things had "evolved." That's another reason I don't believe in evolution!

What does that tell you? It tells me that Congressman Gephart was holding up his finger to see which way the wind of public opinion happened to be blowing...

It doesn't matter how the wind of public opinion blows...it only matters what **God** says! **It doesn't matter how much you respect public opinion...it matters that you fear the Lord!**

The starting point of obtaining Godly knowledge and Godly wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Foolish men despise wisdom and instruction. You cannot tell a fool anything. The book of **Proverbs** has a lot to say about the fool.

I don't believe the Word of God is against education. I don't believe God wants His children to be ignorant. But, He wants you and me to have a reverential awe of who He is first and foremost!

This is the theme of this book. While the unbeliever may make statements about life and truth, he will never have true or ultimate knowledge until he is in a redemptive relationship of reverential awe with God.

What does it mean to have reverential awe of God? It became very popular several years back to use the question "**What would Jesus do?**" And I believe having a reverential awe of God means among other things asking the question... "**What would Jesus do?**" at every juncture of our lives.

The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which our **attitudes**, our **will**, our **feelings**, our **deeds** and our **goals** are willingly placed in submission to God!

In contrast to this fear of the Lord producing in us this knowledge is the fact that fools despise wisdom and instruction. And my, how these folks abound in our day! Don't try to educate an unbeliever in the things of God! They despise Godly wisdom and Godly instruction! They just make the same mistakes over and over and over again.

Man seems incapable of learning from his mistakes. As one man put it, "**All we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.**"

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Verses 8-9...

**How wonderful when a son or daughter lives by these words...but how sad when they don't!**

Solomon assumes in these verses that the instruction of the father and the teaching of the mother will be good and Godly. We all have seen the opposite occur. And we've seen the tragic result of that.

Bill grew up knowing two boys who grew up in the same home...in fact they were twin brothers. Their mother was immoral. One of these boys turned out to be a rebel...very much like his mother. But, the other boy turned out to be a fine Christian...high school coach of state championship football teams and a deacon at his church.

The brother who was a rebel no doubt learned his rebelliousness from his mother. The brother who turned out well did so **in spite** of his mother.

We need to remember that we're building into our children and grandchildren a legacy. If the instruction and teaching we give them is good, based on a reverential awe of God, then the chances are very good that these truths will be passed down to their children, as well.

It doesn't guarantee it, but it surely does improve the odds!

But, if they're not, the chances are also very good that a different story will be told at the end of our children's lives. A child **can** overcome bad or no teaching, as Bill's friend did, but it's a rare thing...

**Verses 9-19** tell us what we've probably told our children since they were old enough to go anywhere by themselves. We've told them time and again not to associate with bad people. The Word of God tells us **"bad company corrupts good morals."**

We've seen this happen to others, and maybe even some of us could tell stories of being influenced by others to do something we wouldn't have done had we been with someone else.

I believe what Solomon is saying is that our feet are very prone to wander. And if we are with folks who love to wander, we're going to be so much more inclined to wander as well.

**Now, I don't believe you and I are going to go out and do the things Solomon is warning against in this passage of Scripture. I hope you and I have never been nor never will be guilty of theft and violence, but let me ask you...**

If we're with folks, even Christians, who are doing wrong, how do we respond to them?

I mean, if we're with folks who are **gossiping**, do we gossip?  
If we're with folks who are **critical of others**, do we criticize?  
If we're with folks who **accentuate the negative**, do we?

Even as adults, peer pressure is still strong...it's still much easier to "go along with the crowd" than to be firm in our convictions and stand alone if need be, isn't it?

Do we allow the reverential awe of God...the fear of God...to be the governing influence in our lives? When the Holy Spirit tells us, **"This is the way, walk ye in it"**, do we listen to Him?

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Remember this as you study each week...

The book of **Proverbs** is not just a collection of homey sayings...this book contains deep spiritual insights drawn from experience. **A proverb is a short, wise, easy-to-learn saying that calls a person to action.**

It doesn't argue about basic spiritual and moral beliefs, it assumes we already hold basic spiritual and moral beliefs. It doesn't teach theology, it assumes we already know theology. It doesn't teach doctrine, it assumes we are already grounded in sound doctrine.

The book of **Proverbs** focuses on **God...on His character, His words, and His blessings...**and it tells us how we can live in close relationship to Him!