

Proverbs 1:7 Commentary

PROVERBS 1:7 COMMENTARY

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Compiled by Bruce Hurt

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom,

And the man who gains understanding.

Proverbs 3:13

Proverbs Overview						
Purpose of Proverbs Pr 1:1-7	Proverbs to Youth Pr 1:8-9:18	Proverbs of Solomon Pr 10:1-24:34	Proverbs of Solomon (Hezekiah) Pr 25:1-29:27	Words of Agur Pr 30:1-30:33	Words of Lemuel Pr 31:1-31:31	
	Father's Exhortations	First Collection of Solomon	Second Collection of Solomon	Numerical Proverbs	Wisdom for Leaders Pr 31:1-9	Virtuous Wife Pr 31:10-31
Title: Proverbs Pr 1:1	Precepts of Wisdom	Proverbs of Solomon	Proverbs Copied by Hezekiah's Men	Proverbs of Agur	Proverbs of Lemuel Pr 31:1-9	Capable Wife 31:10-31
Theme: Proverbs Pr 1:7	Wisdom for Young Men	Proverbs for Everyone		Personal Notes from Agur & Lemuel		
Prologue	Principles of Wisdom			Epilogue		
Commend Wisdom	Counsel of Wisdom			Comparisons of Wisdom		

What is a proverb? First, what it is not - a proverb is not a promise or saying definitely guaranteeing the outcome that is being discussed (See MacArthur below). Second, proverb is the Hebrew word **mashal** which means comparison, similar, parallel. In short, a proverb is a figure of speech in which the author uses comparison in order to present a pithy, poignant observation or instruction. A proverb is a timeless truth in the form of a simple illustration that exposes a fundamental reality of life. Proverbs are practical (not theoretical), easy to memorize (Are you practicing the discipline of Biblical memorization?) and imminently applicable to real life situations.

Are the Proverbs guaranteed Promises? No. John MacArthur offers a good perspective: A final area of challenge comes in understanding that proverbs are divine guidelines and wise observations, i.e., teaching underlying principles (Pr 24:3, 4) which are not always inflexible laws or absolute promises. These expressions of general truth (cf. Pr 10:27; 22:4) generally do have "exceptions," due to the uncertainty of life and unpredictable behavior of fallen men. God does not guarantee uniform outcome or application for each proverb, but in studying them and applying them, one comes to contemplate the mind of God, His character, His attributes, His works, and His blessings. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge expressed in Proverbs are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3).

MacArthur adds: The word "proverb" means "to be like," thus Proverbs is a book of comparisons between common, concrete images and life's most profound truths. Proverbs are simple, moral statements (or illustrations) that highlight and teach fundamental realities about life. Solomon sought God's wisdom (2Chr 1:8-12) and offered "pithy sayings" designed to make men contemplate 1) the fear of God and 2) living by His wisdom (Pr 1:7; 9:10). The sum of this wisdom is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 1:30).

Wilkinson: Proverbs is the most intensely practical book in the Old Testament because it teaches skillful living in the multiple aspects of everyday life. Its specific precepts include instruction on wisdom and folly, the righteous and the wicked, the tongue, pride and humility, justice and vengeance, the family, laziness and work, poverty and wealth, friends and neighbors, love and lust, anger and strife, masters and servants, life and death. Proverbs touches upon every facet of human relationships, and its principles

transcend the bounds of time and culture. (Talk thru the Bible)

Theme of Proverbs: The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of **knowledge**. Fools despise **wisdom** and **instruction**. (Pr 1:7).

The **Septuagint** rendering amplifies the meaning of Pr 1:7 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (sophia); and there is good understanding (sunesis = "putting together the pieces") to all that practice it: and piety (eusebeia) toward God is the beginning of discernment (aisthesis); but the ungodly (asebes) will set at naught wisdom and instruction (paideia = "child training")." The Greek emphasizes wisdom instead of knowledge. Notice that "fools" are equated with the ungodly.

The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of **wisdom**, and the **knowledge** of the Holy One is understanding. (Pr 9:10)

Note that this **fear** is not "shaking fear" but a reverential awe. It is like a child who fears disappointing their father or losing his approval and thus it is a "healthy" fear, good for our "spiritual health!"

Key Words (NAS95): Wisdom (48x/47v), Righteous(ness)(90x/89v), Guidance (3x), Wise (62x/58v), Fear of the LORD (14x), my son (23x), Knowledge (40x/39v), Understand(ing) (56x/55v), Instruction (16x), Discipline (17x), Commandment/command (11x), Tongue (18x), Foolish (12x/11v), Fool(s) (58x), Tongue (18x), Evil (58x/55v), Wicked (83x/82v), Life (46x), But (246x/242v).

Jack Hayford (Spirit Filled Life Study Bible)- Proverbs make frequent use of vivid contrasts

- Wisdom versus Folly
- Righteousness versus Wickedness
- Good versus Evil
- Life versus Death
- Prosperity versus Poverty
- Honor versus Dishonor
- Permanence versus Transience
- Truth versus Falsehood
- Industry versus Indolence
- Friend versus Enemy
- Prudence versus Rashness
- Fidelity versus Adultery
- Peace versus Violence
- Goodwill versus Anger
- God versus Man

Sidlow Baxter has a useful, albeit non-exhaustive topical compilation of proverbs (which he extracted from

- Adultery—Pr 5:1–4; 6:20–35; 29:3
- Anger—Pr 14:29; 15:1; 22:24; 29:22; 30:33
- Borrowing—Pr 6:1–5; 20:16; 22:7, 26–27
- Bribes—Pr 17:8, 23; 18:16; 21:14; 28:21
- Chastening—Pr 3:11–12; 12:1; 22:5; 25:12
- Death and Sheol—Pr 5:5; 7:27; 8:36; 9:18; 11:17; 14:32; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 30:16
- Discipline—Pr 1:2–3; 5:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18, 24; 19:18; 23:13; 29:15, 17
- Drinking and Drunkenness—Pr 20:1; 23:31; 31:4
- Enemies—Pr 16:7; 24:17; 25:21; 27:6
- Family Life—Pr 5:15–19; 6:20; 13:1; 14:1; 22:6; 23:24–25; 29:15; 31:10–31
- Fear—Pr 1:7; 9:10; 14:16; 15:16; 29:25
- Food—Pr 10:3; 12:11; 23:20–21; 25:16; 30:8
- Fools—Pr 10:18; 12:15; 14:16; 15:5; 26:3–5
- Gossip—Pr 16:28; 20:19; 25:20
- Love—Pr 8:17; 10:12; 15:17; 27:5
- Poor—Pr 14:31; 19:1, 17; 22:2; 30:8
- Pride—Pr 6:17; 11:2; 16:5, 18; 21:4
- Riches—Pr 10:15; 11:4; 18:11; 23:5; 28:20
- Sin—Pr 14:9, 34; 16:4; 20:9; 24:9, 20; 28:13
- Sleep—Pr 3:24; 4:16; 20:13; 31:15
- Sluggard—Pr 6:6–11; 12:27; 22:13

- Ways—Pr 2:8; 13:15; 14:12; 16:7, 25; 20:24; 22:6
- Wife—Pr 12:4; 14:1; 21:9, 19; 27:15; 31:10–31
- Wisdom—Pr 1:20–23; 3:13–20; 8:1–36; 9:1–6

CONTRASTS

Because there are so many contrasts in Proverbs, we only cite their references. Most of the contrasts are double contrasts (like Pr 3:33: (1) “curse” vs. “blessing” and (2) “wicked” vs. “righteous”), but there are some single contrasts and some triple.

SINGLE CONTRASTS:

Pr 12:18, 20:17

DOUBLE CONTRASTS:

Pr 3:33; 3:34; 10:2; 10:3; 10:4; 10:5; 10:12; 10:13; 10:17; 10:21; 10:27; 10:28; 10:29; 10:30; 10:31; 10:32; 11:1; 11:4; 11:13; 11:14; 11:18; 11:19; 11:23; 11:26; 11:27; 11:28; 12:2; 12:3; 12:4; 12:6; 12:7; 12:8; 12:10; 12:13; 12:16; 12:17; 12:19; 12:20; 12:21; 12:22; 12:24; 12:25; 12:27; 13:2; 13:3; 13:4; 13:5; 13:9; 13:11; 13:12; 13:16; 13:17; 13:19; 13:20; 13:24; 13:25; 14:1; 14:2; 14:3; 14:4; 14:5; 14:6; 14:11; 14:15; 14:18; 14:20; 14:22; 14:23; 14:25; 14:28; 14:29; 14:30; 14:32; 14:33; 14:34; 15:1; 15:2; 15:13; 15:19; 15:21; 15:22; 15:27; 15:29; 16:9; 16:22

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction

Amplified - The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning and the principal and choice part of knowledge [its starting point and its essence]; but fools despise skillful and godly Wisdom, instruction, and discipline.

Living Bible - How does a man become wise? The first step is to trust and reverence the Lord! Only fools refuse to be taught.

NET Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- **fear** - Pr 9:10; Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; 112:1; Ecclesiastes 12:13
- **beginning...but** - Pr 22,29,30; 5:12,13; 15:5; 18:2; John 3:18-21; Romans 1:28
- [Proverbs 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE THEME OF PROVERBS: THE FEAR OF THE LORD

And to man He said, '**Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom**, and to depart from evil is understanding.' (Job 28:28)

Henry Morris - Job twice asked the rhetorical question about the source of true wisdom (Job 28:12, 20) and then answers it in this key verse, a truth largely ignored in the modern world. True wisdom begins with the fear of God (Pr 1:7; 9:10; Colossians 2:3-note).

Proverbs 1:7 summarizes the theme of the Book of Proverbs and is the key that unlocks the entire Book.

Robert Morgan - Think of the book of Proverbs as God's Twitter feed to the human race. With Twitter, you have 140 characters for your message or to sum up what's going on in your life. These little messages are short bursts of communication. When you read a tweet—a Twitter message—you're reading a burst of truth about a person's life, activities, observations, or philosophy, summed up in 140 characters or less. That's just what we have in the book of Proverbs: God's giving advice to us in short bursts of communication, usually 140 characters or less per verse. Proverbs is God's divinely designed self-improvement course, His textbook for learning how to wise up and live. The 915 verses in Proverbs represent God's wisdom for the hundreds of situations we step into each day. Think of Proverbs as portable wisdom—heavenly rules for earthly living. God's wisdom has little to do with grades on a report card but everything with getting high marks in life. It isn't just data accumulation or brainpower. It is putting our knowledge to work in everyday life. Thumb through the thirty-one chapters of Proverbs, and you'll find them packed with advice about working hard, eating wisely, watching how much we drink, guarding how much we speak, avoiding unhealthy friendships and immoral sexuality, treating people kindly, handling money well, and making good decisions in matters great and small....Each of the Proverbs either tells us: (1) how we will respond to life if we have a healthy fear of the Lord, or (2) how we will mess up if we don't. The fear of the Lord is not unhealthy, dysfunctional, or debilitating fear. It means an appropriate respect, reverence, awe, and wonder.

A. W. Tozer - The fear of God is... astonished reverence. I believe that the reverential fear of God mixed with love and fascination and astonishment and admiration and devotion is the most enjoyable state and the most satisfying emotion the human soul can know.

Job was clearly a man had a healthy **fear of God**...

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job (cp Abraham = Ge 26:24; Moses = Ex. 14:31 -**O, to be known in heaven's courts as the servant of Jehovah! Notice the crucial role of holy fear! From the context, what does or should holy fear cause us to do? Are you turning from or running toward evil?**)? For (See **Terms of explanation**) there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, **fearing God** and turning away from evil."

Fear of the LORD - Jehovah is the object of our fear. And what is this fear but the saint's reverential awe and admiration, which motivates glad obedience to God. **Fear** of God goes hand in hand with love of God. Love is the positive side, **fear** the negative. Love prompts one to do what pleases God (Jn 15:14). **Fear** prompts one to refrain from what displeases God.

Right fear of God is an awe and admiration which manifest itself in unflinching obedience.

H A Ironside - On the threshold of this treasure-house of wisdom we are presented with one of the sharp contrasts which characterize the book of Proverbs. There is no true knowledge apart from the fear of the Lord. All that pretends to be wisdom and ignores God is folly. "The young man" should bear this in mind when meeting the many pseudo-scientific theories now abroad. Philosophers and scholars have cast to the winds the fear of the Lord and ruled Him out of His own creation. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22). As a result abounding absurdities are readily accepted by the ignorant as science and true philosophy. The word science implies exact knowledge. To call the wild guesses of evolutionists and infidel biologists science is word-prostitution. Hypotheses, however original and erudite, are not science. There never has been, and never will be, a conflict between the Bible and science. The conflict comes between the Bible and unbelievers' vain theorizing or between unscriptural religious notions and scientific facts. ([Reference](#))

Constable - "**Fear**" includes not only a correct way of thinking about God but a correct relationship with Yahweh. It is an affectionate reverence that results in humbly bowing to the Father's will. It is a desire not to sin against Him because His wrath is so awful and His love is so awesome.

Richard Alleine - He who knows what it is to enjoy God will dread his loss. He who has seen his face will fear to see his back.

The fear of the LORD ultimately expresses reverential submission to the Lord's will and thus characterizes a true worshiper. In this context it is the first and controlling principle of knowledge. In Proverbs the **fear of the Lord** is the foundation for wisdom (Pr 1:7 9:10) or the discipline leading to wisdom (Pr 15:33); it is expressed in hatred of evil (Pr 8:13), and it results in a prolonged life (Pr 10:27).

Charles Bridges - Job had said this (the fear of the LORD) previously (Job 28:28). So had the wise man's father (Psalm 111:10-[note](#)). This saying is so weighty that Solomon repeats it (Pr 9:10). All man's happiness, all his duty, is dependent on his having reverence for God (Eccl 12:13). So as Solomon starts to instruct us from God's mouth he begins at the beginning, with the principal matter. All heathen wisdom is but foolishness. Of all knowledge, knowledge of God is the basic principle. There is no genuine knowledge without godliness. But what is the **fear of the LORD**? It is that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law. God's wrath is so bitter and His love so sweet that we have this earnest desire to please Him and to fear him, so that we will not sin against him (Heb 12:28-29-note).

C S Lewis while not directly using the term, nevertheless described the **fear of the Lord** in **Mere Christianity** when he said "In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud, you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you." As Ortlund pointed out how opposite was the pompous platitude of Rene Descartes who said "I think, therefore I am." Proverbs 1:7 is the antidote for Descartes' deadly, deceptive doctrine!

Bruce Waltke - **Fear of the LORD** (yirat YHWH) involves both rational and non-rational aspects at the same time. Its rational aspect entails an objective revelation that can be taught (cf. Ps. 34:12ff-[note](#)) and memorized..."Fear of the LORD" also entails a nonrational aspect, an emotional response of fear, love, and trust. The unified psychological poles of fear and love come prominently to the fore in the surprisingly uniform way Deuteronomy treats "love of the LORD" and "fear of the LORD" as synonyms (cf. Dt 5:29 with Dt 6:2, and Dt 6:5 with Josh. 24:14; cf. Joshua 10:12, 20; 13:5).

William Arnot - **The fear of the Lord** is an expression of frequent occurrence throughout the Scriptures. It has various shades of meaning, marked by the circumstances in which it is found; but in the main it implies a right state of heart toward God, as opposed

to the alienation of an unconverted man. Though the word is "**fear**," it does not exclude a filial confidence, and a conscious peace. There may be such love as shall cast all the torment out of the fear, and yet leave full bodied, in a human heart, the reverential awe which creatures owe to the Highest One. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." "Oh, fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him!" "I am the Lord thy God;" behold the ground of submissive reverence: "which brought thee up from the land of Egypt;" behold the source of confiding love. What God is inspires awe; what God has done for his people commands affection. See here the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the moral world, holding the creature reverently distant from the Creator, yet compassing the child about with everlasting love, to keep him near a Father in heaven. The whole of this complicated and reciprocal relation is often indicated in Scripture by the brief expression, "The fear of God."...What is the relation which subsists between the fear of the Lord and true wisdom? The one is the foundation, the other the imposed superstructure; the one is the sustaining root, the other the sustained branches; the one is the living fountain, the other the issuing stream.

Ray Ortlund - The **fear of the LORD** "is not a cringing dread before the Lord. It is not a guilty "Oh no, here comes God. I'm in for it now." The **fear of the Lord** is openness to him, eagerness to please him, humility to be instructed by him (Pr 15:33). The **fear of the Lord** is a willingness to turn from evil and change (Job 28:28). The **fear of the Lord** is surrender to his will (Ge 22:12). The **fear of the Lord** is one way we love him (Dt 6:2, 5)."

Al Martin - The essential ingredients of the fear of God are correct concepts of the character of God, a pervasive sense of the presence of God and a constant awareness of our obligation to God.

Jerry Bridges - If Jesus in His humanity delighted in the **fear of God**, surely we need to give serious thought to cultivating this attitude in our lives....Just as obedience to the Lord is an indication of our love for Him, so is it also a proof of our **fear of God**.

John Calvin reminds us that fear of God is practical writing that "Nothing is more powerful to overcome temptation than the fear of God."

James Denney amplifies Calvin's remark - Let us familiarize our minds with the fear due to Christ the Judge, and a new power will enter into our service, making it at once more urgent and more wholesome than it could otherwise be.

Alan Redpath - Reverent fear of God is the key to faithfulness in any situation.

Indeed "The fear of God is the soul of godliness." (John Murray)

John Piper - If we ask, what's the basis and beginning and integrating theme of the father's instruction and the mother's teaching—what is it that runs through all their daily modeling and counseling and explaining and correcting and disciplining that give unity and meaning to it all—the answer is **the fear of the Lord**....The **fear of God**—the reverencing of God, the standing in awe of God, the trusting of God—is what family's are for.....It (**fear of the LORD**) means keeping before our eyes what a fearful prospect it is to stop trusting and depending on God to meet our needs. The fear of the Lord is, therefore, the beginning of wisdom not only in the sense that it is the first step in a wise way to live, but also in the sense that all the later characteristics of wisdom flow from the fear of the Lord like a river flows from a spring...So the **fear of the Lord** is a very peaceful and secure feeling. In fact, fearing the Lord means counting on our fellowship with God to make us happier in the future than anything else could....The **fear of the Lord** is the root of "**wisdom**" which grows up like a trunk and then sprouts branches of "righteousness" where people can pick the fruit of life (cf. Pr 11:30). So life seems to flow through the root of the fear of God into the trunk of wisdom out through the branches of righteousness into the fruit of the lips which people eat and live.....The **fear of the Lord** is fear of fleeing out of his fellowship into the way of sin. Therefore **the fear of the Lord** is full of peace and security and hope. It keeps us near to the merciful heart of God, our fortress, our refuge, our sanctuary, our shield, our sun. Isaiah 8:13 says, "The Lord of Hosts, . . . let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, and he will become a sanctuary." A proper **fear of the Lord** keeps us under the shadow of his wings where we need not be afraid. Therefore the fear of the Lord is accompanied by tremendous blessing. Listen to the psalms. Psalm 25:14-note, "The friendship of the Lord is for those who **fear** him; he makes known to them his covenant." Psalm 31:19-note, "How abundant is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for those who **fear** thee, and wrought for those who take refuge in thee." (Notice that fearing God and taking refuge in him are parallel. Those who keep the **fear of God** before their eyes will not run from him but take refuge in him. (cp Ps 34:7-note, Ps 103:11-note, Ps 145:19-note)....The **fear of the Lord** is that sense of awe that the Lord God is infinitely holy and infinitely powerful and may not be trifled with. He is free to break in with indescribable, heart-stopping suddenness and power whenever and wherever He pleases. The **fear of the Lord** is what the disciples felt when Jesus had stilled the storm and when Ananias and Sapphira had dropped dead....Most of the world does not **fear the Lord** (Ro 3:18) and therefore lacks saving wisdom.

As an aside, many Christians think that fear of the LORD is an OT term and is not relevant to the church age. To the contrary healthy fear leads to a healthy, holy church!. If you feel holy fear is passé in the NT, read Acts 9:31, 2Cor 5:11-note, 2Cor 7:1-note, Eph 5:21-note, and notice what we encounter even in heaven! - Rev 19:5-note.

Spurgeon said "It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to Him."

Puritan Thomas Watson said it this way "As the embankment keeps out the water, so the fear of the Lord keeps out unclean-ness." I would add that practice of unclean-ness demonstrates one has no fear of God!

Ray Pritchard asks "**What should we fear?** We should fear living as though we don't believe in God at all. When we give in to anger, rage, malice, greed or lust, we are living as if we don't believe in God. When we turn to pornography to satisfy our lust, when we let hurtful words fly out of our mouth, when we defraud each other, when we seek revenge, when we lie about one another, when we forget the hurting people around us while hoarding up treasure for ourselves, when we have to be Number One and win every argument, every game, every competition, when we cannot lose gracefully and with dignity, we are living as if we don't believe in God. When we complain about how persecuted we are, when we moan about how hard we have it, when we gossip about how easy someone else has it, we are living as if we don't believe in God. At that moment, we are practical atheists even though we may go to church every Sunday. (Read his entire sermon [Living in the Fear of God](#))

Albert Barnes - The beginning of wisdom is found in the temper of reverence and awe. The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy (compare Job 42:5-6), this for the Israelite was the starting-point of all true wisdom. In the Book of Job 28:28 it appears as an oracle accompanied by the noblest poetry. In Psalm 111:10 it comes as the choral close of a temple hymn. Here it is the watchword of a true ethical education. This fear has no torment, and is compatible with child-like love. But this and not love is the "beginning of wisdom." Through successive stages and by the discipline of life, love blends with it and makes it perfect.

ESV Study Bible - Fear in response to a manifestation of God's presence involves both reverent awe and a healthy fear of God's displeasure and discipline (cf Acts 5:5)....Any society that commonly assumes that God will not discipline sin in this life or judge it in the next will have no **fear of God** and will therefore give itself increasingly to evil (Ro 3:18-note).

Isaiah calls the **fear of the LORD** our **treasure**. (Isa 33:6)

John MacArthur - While the unbeliever may make statements about life and truth, he does not have true or ultimate knowledge until he is in a redemptive relationship of reverential awe with God. Note the progression here: 1) teaching about God; 2) learning about God; 3) fearing God; 4) knowing God; and 5) imitating God's wisdom. The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one's own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals are exchanged for God's (cf. Ps 42:1-[note](#)).

Fear of the LORD - 23x in the OT - 2 Chr. 19:7, 9; Job 28:28; Ps. 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Pr. 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; Isa. 11:2f; 33:6;

Pr 1:7 The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 1:29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the **fear of the LORD**.

Pr 2:5 Then (When? Observe the context = Pr 2:1-4) you will discern the **fear of the LORD** And discover the knowledge of God.

Pr 8:13 "The **fear of the LORD** is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.

Pr 9:10 The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Pr 10:27 The **fear of the LORD** prolongs life, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Pr 14:26 In the **fear of the LORD** there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.

Pr 14:27 The **fear of the LORD** is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death.

Pr 15:16 Better is a little with the **fear of the LORD** Than great treasure and turmoil with it.

Pr 15:33 The **fear of the LORD** is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes humility.

Pr 16:6 By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the **fear of the LORD** one keeps away from evil.

Pr 19:23 The **fear of the LORD** leads to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

Pr 22:4 The reward of humility and the **fear of the LORD** Are riches, honor and life.

Pr 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the **fear of the LORD** always.

Comment: Read back through the passages above and note the two items that are repeated as "fruit" of fear - **evil** and **life**. The synonymous phrase **fear of God** occurs 5x in the OT Gen 20:11, 2Sa 23:3, Neh 5:15, Job

Fear (03374)(**yirah** from verb **yare** = to fear) can describe dread (Dt 1:29, Dt 2:25, Ps 55:5), being terrified (Jonah 1:10), standing in awe (1Ki 3:28), or having reverence (Lev 19:3, Ex 20:20, Ps 5:7). **Yirah** usually refers to the fear of God in a positive sense (2Chr 19:9, Ps 19:9, 34:11, 111:10, Pr 1:7, 1:29, 2:5, 8:13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:26, 14:27, 15:16, 15:33, 16:6, 19:23, 22:4, 23:17, Isa 11:2, 11:3, 33:6). **Yirah** is produced by God's Word (Ps. 119:38; Pr. 2:5). The fear of the Lord may be lost by despair of one's own situation (Job 6:14) or envy of a sinner's (Pr. 23:17). Fear of the Lord restrains one from sin (Ge 20:11; Ex. 20:20), gives confidence (Job 4:6; Pr. 14:26); helps rulers and causes judges to act justly (2Sa 23:3; 2Chr. 19:9; Neh. 5:15); results in good sleep (Pr. 19:23); with humility, leads to riches, honor, and life (Pr. 22:4).

With the Lord as the object, **yir'ah** captures both aspects of shrinking back in fear and of drawing close in awe. It is not a trembling dread that paralyzes action, but neither is it a polite reverence (a loose familiarity with God - as when I hear someone call Him the "Big Guy in the Sky!").

NET Note - The term **yara'** is the common word for fear in the OT and has a basic three-fold range of meanings:(1) "dread; terror" (Dt 1:29; Jonah 1:10), (2) "to stand in awe" (1Kgs 3:28), (3) "to revere; to respect" (Lev 19:3). With the LORD as the object, it captures the polar opposites of shrinking back in fear and drawing close in awe and adoration. Both categories of meaning appear in Ex 20:20 (where the LORD descended upon Sinai amidst geophysical convulsions); Moses encouraged the Israelites to not be afraid of God arbitrarily striking them dead for no reason ("Do not fear!") but informed the people that the LORD revealed himself in such a terrifying manner to scare them from sinning ("God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him in you so that you do not sin"). The fear of the LORD is expressed in reverential submission to his will – the characteristic of true worship. The fear of the LORD is the foundation for wisdom (Pr 9:10) and the discipline leading to wisdom (Pr 15:33). It is expressed in hatred of evil (Pr 8:13) and avoidance of sin (Pr 16:6), and so results in prolonged life (Pr 10:27; 19:23).

Dread (Webster) - Great fear, or apprehension of evil or danger. It expresses more than fear, and less than terror or fright. It is an uneasiness or alarm excited by expected pain, loss or other evil. We speak of the dread of evil; the dread of suffering; the dread of the divine displeasure. It differs from terror also in being less sudden or more continued.

NAS Usage - awesome(1), extremely*(1), fear(35), fearing(1), reverence(5).

Yirah - 43v - Gen. 20:11; Ex. 20:20; Deut. 2:25; 2 Sam. 23:3; 2Chr. 19:9; Neh. 5:9, 15; Job 4:6; 6:14; 15:4; 22:4; 28:28; Ps. 2:11; 5:7; 19:9; 34:11; 55:5; 90:11; 111:10; 119:38; Pr. 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; Isa. 7:25; 11:2f; 33:6; 63:17; Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 1:18; 30:13; Jon. 1:10 (Literally "the men feared a great fear" emphasizing the sailor's escalating fright" NN).

Beginning (07225) (**reshith**) can have one of two meanings - (1) The beginning or the first step in a course of action (as in Ps 111:10, Pr 17:14, Mic 1:13) or (2) The chief thing as the principal aspect or component of something (Pr 4:7). The **Amplified Bible** combines these two in Pr 1:7 paraphrasing **beginning** as "its starting point and its essence."

Reshith denotes the point in time or space at which something started, except when it specifies the point when time and space themselves were started (Isa 46:10, cp Pr 17:14; Jer. 26:1, 27:1; 28:1; 49:34; Mic 1:13-note; Ge 10:10. On other occasions, the term signifies the highest of anything, i.e., the best or most excellent, such as the choicest parts of offerings (1Sa 2:29); the best of the spoil (1Sa 15:21); or the finest in oils (Amos 6:6). **Reshith** designates the earliest or first products or results of something. **Reshith** can refer to the first products of harvest (Lev. 23:10; Dt. 18:4; Neh. 12:44) or even the firstborn (Ge 49:3; Dt. 21:17).

In Pr 1:7, the **beginning** is what must come first, the prerequisite but it is also the chief or supreme principle.

David Hubbard - **Beginning** means more than commencement, although it does mean that. **There can surely be nothing that the Bible classifies as true "knowledge" (see Pr 1:2–6) that does not commence with awe that leads to action.** But "**beginning**" is also culmination. The Hebrew root, an offshoot of the word for "**head**" (see its use in Pr 8:22–26), suggests that which is **first in importance as well as in time**. The point is not that we begin our quest for knowledge by fearing God and then venture forward to be made perfect by the flesh (Gal. 3:3). The point is that obeying God is the ceiling as well as the foundation of life. It should lead to knowledge, and, in turn, all knowledge should enhance it.

NET Note on Pr 1:7 "fearing the LORD is either (1) the first step in acquiring moral knowledge or (2) the most important aspect of moral knowledge. The first option is preferred because Pr 1:2–6 focuses on the acquisition of wisdom.

Constable - "**Beginning**" does not mean that the fear of the Lord is where one starts learning wisdom, but then he or she can move away from it as from the starting line in a race. Rather the fear of the Lord is the controlling principle, the foundation, on which one must build a life of wisdom.

Another source says that **beginning** speaks of that which is fundamental, primary and indispensable to true knowledge

Bruce Waltke - **Beginning** of (rēšîṭ) might mean, temporally, “first thing,” qualitatively, “chief thing” (i.e., the choice part), or, philosophically, “principal thing.” The second meaning ranks the fear of the LORD as just another wisdom teaching and allows that wisdom can be had apart from it. That notion hardly fits this context, which is not concerned as yet to state the specific content of wisdom but to prepare the way for it. The ambiguity of Pr 1:7 is resolved by the unambiguous word for “**beginning** of” (tehillat) in the parallel passage of Pr 9:10, pointing to the first meaning.

Vine - The abstract word **reshith** corresponds to the temporal and estimative sense of rosh. **Reshith** connotes the “beginning” of a fixed period of time: “The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the **beginning** of the year even unto the end of the year” (Dt. 11:12). The “**beginning**” of one’s period of life is intended in Job 42:12. **Reshith** can represent a point of departure, as it does in Ge 1:1 (the first occurrence). Estimatively, **reshith** can mean the “first” or “choicest”: (Ex. 23:19). This nuance of **reshith** may appear in the comparative sense, meaning “choicest” or “best.” Da. 11:41 exhibits the nuance of “some”: “... But these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief [NASB, “foremost”] of the children of Ammon” (Dan. 11:41). Used substantively, **reshith** can mean “first fruits”: (Lev. 2:12). (Nu. 18:12). Sometimes this word represents the “first part” of an offering: (Nu 15:20).

NAS renders **reshith** - beginning(19), choice(2), choicest(3), finest(2), first(16), first fruits(7), foremost(2).

Reshith - 49 v - Gen. 1:1; 10:10; 49:3; Exod. 23:19; 34:26; Lev. 2:12; 23:10; Num. 15:20f; 18:12; 24:20; Deut. 11:12; 18:4; 21:17; 26:2, 10; 33:21; 1 Sam. 2:29; 15:21; 2 Chr. 31:5; Neh. 10:37; 12:44; Job 8:7; 40:19; 42:12; Ps. 78:51; 105:36; 111:10; Pr. 1:7; 3:9; 4:7; 8:22; 17:14; Eccl. 7:8; Isa. 46:10; Jer. 2:3; 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34f; Ezek. 20:40; 44:30; 48:14; Dan. 11:41; Hos. 9:10; Amos 6:1, 6; Mic. 1:13.

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the **beginning** of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 3:9 Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the **first** of all your produce;

Pr 4:7 “The **beginning** of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding.

Pr 8:22 “The LORD possessed me at the **beginning** of His way, Before His works of old.

Pr 17:14 The **beginning** of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.

Charles Ryrie on “**fear of the LORD**” - a reverence for God expressed in submission to His will (cf. Job 28:28; Eccl. 12:13; Ps. 111:10; Pr. 9:10; 15:33). Wisdom is not acquired by a mechanical formula but through a right relationship with God.

Derek Kidner - The beginning (i.e. the first and controlling principle, rather than a stage which one leaves behind; cf. Eccl 12:13) is not merely a right method of thought but a right relation: a worshipping submission (fear) to the God of the covenant, who has revealed himself by name (the Lord, i.e. Yahweh: Ex 3:13–15). Knowledge, then, in its full sense, is a relationship, dependent on revelation and inseparable from character (‘wisdom and training’, Pr 1:7b). When we fence off (as we must) limited fields of knowledge for special study, the missing context must be remembered, or our knowing is precocious and distorted, as at the fall, and we end by knowing less (cf. Pr 3:7; Ro 1:21, 22), not more. (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Proverbs)

Stephen Olford: In this context, it (**the fear of the Lord**) means a penitential turning from sin. ‘**The fear of the Lord is to hate evil**’ (Pr 8:13). The Bible calls this repentance. We can never know God and hang on to our sins at the same time. But to know God, we must also trust Him. This calls for a reverential trusting in God...The second part of our text reveals the barrier to the knowledge of God. The word “**fools**” describes the unrepentant mindset that despises divine wisdom and instruction...synonymous with a wicked person. He or she aggressively flouts personal independence from God and His commandments. (Windows of Wisdom – Devotional Studies in Proverbs)

Wiersbe - “**The fear of the LORD**” means reverence for God and respect for His Word, a willingness to listen and a promptness to obey

Ray Ortlund - Knowledge starts within God, and then it moves toward us. He must reveal it by grace, and we must receive it in humility. Verse 7 is saying that what your ABC’s are to reading Shakespeare, what playing the scales are to performing Bach, what 2 + 2 = 4 is to doing calculus, the fear of the Lord is to wisdom. We start there, and we never leave it behind. Our search for reality can go wrong not only because of miscalculations along the way but also because of one grand blunder at the start—leaving God out, and making ourselves the judges of everything.

Knowledge ([01847](#))(**daat** derived from **yada** = to know, speaking in many contexts of an intimate knowledge) expresses knowledge gained in various ways by the senses (and is the opposite of folly). It describes “experiential active knowing.” In other words this **knowledge** is not just a bookish collection of information but is experiential knowledge of the Living God. **Knowledge** of His written Word cannot be separated from personal **knowledge** of God. To know God is to live in harmony with His will, and to live in harmony

with His will we must know His word. In Ex 31:3 (cp Ex 31:3; 1Ki 7:14) **daat** emphasizes skillful, the application of knowledge to a craft. Daat can refer to "moral" knowledge (Ge 2:9 - Lxx = **gnostos** - something clearly recognizable or made known; In Ge 2:17 the Lxx = "**Tree of ginosko**").

God possesses **daat** (Job 10:7; Ps 139:6; Pr 3:20), nothing can be hidden from Him (Ps 139:1–18) and He gives knowledge to man (Ps 94:10, 119:66; Pr 2:6), with the corollary being that man could never know unless He taught us! Prayer: Teach us O Great Jehovah, Thy "**daat**". Amen.

NET Note - **Daat** refers to experiential knowledge, not just cognitive knowledge, including the intellectual assimilation and practical application....The term דַּאֵת (da'at, "knowledge") goes beyond cognition; it is often used metonymically (cause) for obedience (effect); see, e.g., Pr 3:6, "in all your ways acknowledge him," and BDB 395 s.v. This means that the disciple will follow God's moral code; for to know God is to react ethically and spiritually to his will

Septuagint translates **daat** several times with the noun **episteme** which BDAG says describes " the possession or gaining of knowledge with focus on understanding aspects of the knowledge acquired." In Ps 19:2, 94:10, 119:66, 139:6 **daat** is translated with **gnosis**..

Swanson - knowledge, i.e., information of a person, with a strong implication of relationship to that person (Pr 2:5; 9:10; Hos 4:1),

Knowledge - Reverence and awe for the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God is the chief part of knowledge. Knowledge here is more than a recognition of God. It is recognition of Him as the self-revealing One, the Lord of grace and history. Fools live without taking God into account and become morally corrupt. Those who fear God see Him as the most important part of all knowledge. The saved are the wise ones so committed to God as the Source of all wisdom that they could never become fools and act as if God did not exist.

ESV Study Bible - **Knowledge** tends to focus on correct understanding of the world and oneself as creatures of the magnificent and loving God, while **wisdom** is the acquired skill of applying that knowledge rightly, or "skill in the art of godly living"

Constable - "**Knowledge**" is a relationship that depends on revelation and is inseparable from character. Even though many unbelievers have acquired much information without the fear of God, true knowledge rests on a relationship to God that revelation supports (**Ed**: cp Jn 17:3). We can learn the really important lessons in life only this way....The Hebrews believed people could acquire knowledge in three ways. One way was through observing nature and human behavior. Another way was by drawing analogies between traditional beliefs (e.g., creeds) and reality. A third way was through encounter with the transcendent God.

NAS Usage: concern(1), know(3), knowledge(81), premeditation(2), skill(1), truth(1), unintentionally*(2), what(1).

Daath - 89v - Ge. 2:9, 17; Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 24:16; Deut. 4:42; 19:4; Jos. 20:3, 5; 1 Ki. 7:14; Job 10:7; 13:2; 15:2; 21:14, 22; 33:3; 34:35; 35:16; 36:12; 38:2; 42:3; Ps. 19:2; 94:10; 119:66; 139:6; Pr. 1:4, 7, 22, 29; 2:5f, 10; 3:20; 5:2; 8:9f, 12; 9:10; 10:14; 11:9; 12:1, 23; 13:16; 14:6f, 18; 15:2, 7, 14; 17:27; 18:15; 19:2, 25, 27; 20:15; 21:11; 22:12, 17, 20; 23:12; 24:4f; 29:7; 30:3; Eccl. 1:16, 18; 2:21, 26; 7:12; 9:10; 12:9; Isa. 5:13; 11:2; 32:4; 33:6; 40:14; 44:19, 25; 47:10; 53:11; 58:2; Jer. 10:14; 22:16; 51:17; Da 12:4; Hos. 4:1, 6; 6:6; Mal. 2:7

The **knowledge** of Proverbs is in contrast to the **knowledge** which God did not want man to possess (the first gives life, the second brings death!)...

Genesis 2:17 but from the tree of the **knowledge** (Lxx translates with **ginosko**) of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Knowledge is a key word in Proverbs found in 39 verses -

Pr 1:4 To give prudence to the naive, To the youth **knowledge** and discretion,

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of **knowledge**; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 1:22 "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate **knowledge**?

Pr 1:29 Because they hated **knowledge** And did not choose the fear of the LORD.

Pr 2:5 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the **knowledge** of God.

Pr 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come **knowledge** and understanding.

Pr 2:10 For wisdom will enter your heart And **knowledge** will be pleasant to your soul;

Pr 3:20 By His **knowledge** the deeps were broken up And the skies drip with dew.

Pr 5:2 That you may observe discretion And your lips may reserve **knowledge**.

Pr 8:9 "They are all straightforward to him who understands, And right to those who find **knowledge**.

Pr 8:10 "Take my instruction and not silver, And **knowledge** rather than choicest gold.

Pr 8:12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find **knowledge** and discretion.

Pr 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the **knowledge** of the Holy One is understanding.

Pr 10:14 Wise men store up **knowledge**, But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.

Pr 11:9 With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor, But through **knowledge** the righteous will be delivered.

Pr 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves **knowledge**, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

Pr 12:23 A prudent man conceals **knowledge**, But the heart of fools proclaims folly.

Pr 13:16 Every prudent man acts with **knowledge**, But a fool displays folly.

Pr 14:6 A scoffer seeks wisdom and finds none, But **knowledge** is easy to one who has understanding.

Pr 14:7 Leave the presence of a fool, Or you will not discern words of **knowledge**.

Pr 14:18 The naive inherit foolishness, But the sensible are crowned with **knowledge**.

Pr 15:2 The tongue of the wise makes **knowledge** acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

Pr 15:7 The lips of the wise spread **knowledge**, But the hearts of fools are not so.

Pr 15:14 The mind of the intelligent seeks **knowledge**, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly.

Pr 17:27 He who restrains his words has **knowledge**, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

Pr 18:15 The mind of the prudent acquires **knowledge**, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

Pr 19:2 Also it is not good for a person to be without **knowledge**, And he who hurries his footsteps errs.

Pr 19:25 Strike a scoffer and the naive may become shrewd, But reprove one who has understanding and he will gain **knowledge**.

Pr 19:27 Cease listening, my son, to discipline, And you will stray from the words of **knowledge**.

Pr 20:15 There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; But the lips of **knowledge** are a more precious thing.

Pr 21:11 When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; But when the wise is instructed, he receives **knowledge**.

Pr 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve **knowledge**, But He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.

Pr 22:17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, And apply your mind to my **knowledge**;

Pr 22:20 Have I not written to you excellent things Of counsels and **knowledge**,

Pr 23:12 Apply your heart to discipline And your ears to words of **knowledge**.

Pr 24:4 And by **knowledge** the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches.

Pr 24:5 A wise man is strong, And a man of **knowledge** increases power.

Pr 29:7 The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor, The wicked does not understand such **concern**.

Pr 30:3 Neither have I learned wisdom, Nor do I have the **knowledge** of the Holy One.

Fools despise wisdom and instruction - A **fool** is one who is both mentally naive and morally irresponsible. They express a contempt (by their words and/or their deeds) for God's **wisdom** and **instruction**. They treat that which is of priceless with contempt, treating the precious as if it were worthless! Now that's a foolish thing to do! **Do I ever do that?** Fools are like Esau who despised his birthright, thinking so little of it that he was willing to sell it for a bowl of lentil stew! (Ge 25:34).

Waltke - Fools...are incapable of this prerequisite for understanding the sage's teaching and knowing wisdom, for they willfully make the corrupt moral choice to refuse the sage's moral teachings. These conceited fools, in contrast to the teachable wise, are fixed in the correctness of their own opinions—unlike the gullible—and so not educable.

As **Ray Ortlund** says "we must forsake the **fool** within, named **Self**, decisively and endlessly. "Change of being, **metanoia**, is not brought about by straining and 'will-power' but by a long deep process of unselfing." There is no other way....Getting down low before him—that is where we all belong. It is not degrading. It is profound....If you would like to experience God with that humility, here is how you can. You look at the cross. You see a wise man hanging there, dying in the place of fools like you, because he loves you. You may despise him, but he does not despise you. You may be above him, but he humbled himself for you. Look there at him. Look away from yourself. Look at him, and keep looking until your pride melts. You will not only worship, you will begin to grow wise."

Hubbard says **fools** are "those who choose against God's way, disrupt society, shame their families, and bear the dreadful consequences.... Their basic lack is not intelligence quotient, educational opportunity, or positive examples. They are not so much stupid as wicked."

Someone has said that he who does not fear God has need to fear everything else, an apt description of and warning for the **fool**!

John Trapp - Fools; so are all such as fear not God, "being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," or injudicious. {Titus 1:16}

Fool (0191) (**'evil**) refers to a person characterized by moral folly. The uses in Proverbs give us a "descriptive definition" (see verses below to compile your own "definition") of a Biblical **fool** = lacks understanding (Pr 10:21), does not store up knowledge (Pr 10:14), fails to attain wisdom (Pr 24:7), refuses correction (Pr 15:5; 27:22), is arrogant (Pr 26:5), speaks loosely (Pr 14:3) is contentious (Pr 20:3). A **fool** is easily deceived and spiritually flawed! A **fool** may possess mental capability but they manifest morally ineptitude! (So they really aren't very "smart" in divine matters, those things that matter the most in this life.)

In Proverbs, a fool is one who is morally deficient from the standpoint of being able to make reasoned moral judgments. He willfully refuses to make moral choices, choosing neither good nor rejecting evil. He arrogantly refuses to receive moral instruction and to learn from his mistakes (Pr 1:7; 12:15; 15:5). The fool is characterized by foolishness ('iwweleth), an internal moral corruption that renders the fool impotent to make reasonable moral judgments in life (Pr 15:21; 16:22). His moral deficiency manifests itself in matters of speech, morality, discipline, religion, and daily life. He speaks either the wrong thing or at the wrong time (Pr 10:8,10,14,21; 14:3), and he is quick to show his anger (Pr 12:16; 20:3) and to refuse resolution (Pr 29:9).

Related Resources:

- [The Fools of the Bible" by W P Paterson](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Fool, Foolishness, Folly](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Fool, Foolishness, and Folly](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Fools](#)
- American Tract Society [Fool](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Fool](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Fool](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Fool \(2\) Fool](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Fool](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Fool](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Fool](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Fool](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Fool](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Fool](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Fool](#)

Fool is clearly a key word in Proverbs as shown by it's OT prevalence (see below).

'Evil (fool) - 26 verses - Job 5:2-3; Ps. 107:17; Pr. 1:7; 7:22; 10:8, 10, 14, 21; 11:29; 12:15, 16; 14:3, 9; 15:5; 16:22; 17:28; 20:3; 24:7; 27:3, 22; 29:9; Isa. 19:11; 35:8; Jer. 4:22; Hos. 9:7

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; **Fools** despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 7:22 Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as one in fetters to the discipline of a **fool**,

Pr 10:8 The wise of heart will receive commands, But a babbling **fool** will be ruined.

Pr 10:10 He who winks the eye causes trouble, And a babbling **fool** will be ruined.

Pr 10:14 Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the **foolish**, ruin is at hand.

Pr 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, But **fools** die for lack of understanding.

Pr 11:29 He who troubles his own house will inherit wind, And the **foolish** will be servant to the wisehearted.

Pr 12:15 The way of a **fool** is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Pr 12:16 A **fool's** anger is known at once, But a prudent man conceals dishonor.

Pr 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, But the lips of the wise will protect them.

Pr 14:9 **Fools** mock at sin, But among the upright there is good will.

Pr 15:5 A **fool** rejects his father's discipline, But he who regards reproof is sensible.

Pr 16:22 Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, But the discipline of **fools** is folly.

Pr 17:28 Even a **fool**, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

Pr 20:3 Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any **fool** will quarrel.

Pr 24:7 Wisdom is too exalted for a **fool**, He does not open his mouth in the gate.

Pr 27:3 A stone is heavy and the sand weighty, But the provocation of a **fool** is heavier than both of them.

Pr 27:22 Though you pound a **fool** in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, Yet his foolishness will not depart from him.

Pr 29:9 When a wise man has a controversy with a **foolish** man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.

Charles Bridges asks "Why do so many **despise wisdom and instruction**? Because the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the LORD, is not set before them (Ps 36:1). They are unaware of its value. They scorn its directions. They are only wise in their own eyes. They are rightly called **fools** who despise such blessings. **Good Lord, may childlike fear of You be my wisdom, my security, my happiness!" Amen**

Ortlund - Despise is an emotional word, a word of contempt and relational aloofness. It is the arrogance of being above instruction, too smart for it, too good for it, too busy for it. Such a "fool" might be a gifted person, but he does not "feel the need for moral cleansing."

Despise (0936)(**buz**) means to scorn, to deride, to express contempt for someone or something, to treat as insignificant. The Septuagint translates **buz** with the verb **exoutheneo**, a strong verb which means to despise someone or something on basis that it is (seemingly) worthless or of no value. It means to treat as of no account (disdain, despise, disregard as in Lk 18:9) To **despise** is not simply to ignore God's Truth but totally devalue it! Compare Jer 8:9.

Fools regard **wisdom** and **instruction** as worthless and vile! The tragic truth is that even believer's **despise** God's Truth at times. In 2Sa 12:9-10 Nathan accuses the adulterer and murderer David asking "Why have you **despised** the Word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight?" Notice what happens when one despises the Word - evil is the rotten result! Conversely, when we presumptively sin against God's will (His Word), we are **fools**, for we like David are making a conscious choice to despise God's Holy Word of Truth! **Are you as convicted as I am?**

The **Septuagint** translates **buz** with the verb **exoutheneo** **exoutheneo** is a strong verb which means to despise someone or something on basis it is worthless or of no value. To treat something or someone as of no account. This verb means to regard as negligible, worthless, or distasteful.

Buz - 11v - Pr. 1:7; 6:30; 11:12; 13:13; 14:21; 23:9, 22; 30:17; Song 8:1, 7; Zech. 4:10

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools **despise** wisdom and instruction.

Pr 6:30 Men do not **despise** a thief if he steals To satisfy himself when he is hungry;

Pr 11:12 He who **despises** his neighbor lacks sense, But a man of understanding keeps silent.

Pr 13:13 The one who **despises** the word will be in debt to it, But the one who fears the commandment will be

rewarded.

Pr 14:21 He who **despises** his neighbor sins, But happy is he who is gracious to the poor.

Pr 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will **despise** the wisdom of your words.

Pr 23:22 Listen to your father who begot you, And do not **despise** your mother when she is old.

Pr 30:17 The eye that mocks a father And **scorns** a mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.

Wisdom (See **chokmah** from the verb **chakam** - to be wise) is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. **Wisdom** is the ability to see something from God's viewpoint. **Wisdom** is "God's character in the many practical affairs of life."

Wisdom in the biblical sense, is something more than a collection of factual information. It includes knowing how to conduct oneself in the practical affairs of everyday life, to make wise choices, to do the right thing in relation to others, and to have insight into the true nature of things. Wisdom of this kind can only grow out of an awareness of God and His purpose in the world. Fools may acquire encyclopedic information, but they cannot attain wisdom because they fail to take God into account.

Vance Havner once quipped that "It is one of life's strange turns that scholars ransack libraries looking for wisdom, while, perhaps, the janitor has found it long ago."

F B Meyer - Wisdom as used in this book is more than intellectual learning or cleverness. It represents a moral quality, the result of a pure and a true life. We are conscious that many simple-minded people, who have little enough book-learning, are remarkable for sagacious advice, insight into character, the wise reading of events, an intuitive knowledge-all based on the fear of God. The headlines of Scotch copy-books used to be taken from this book. Certain it is that the young who ponder and practice these maxims can hardly fail of a successful career.

**We can get INFORMATION "on LINE" (from Google)
but WISDOM is from "on HIGH" (from God)!**

Chokmah is the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. The consistency of making the right choice is an indication of one's spiritual maturity. The prerequisite for this "**wisdom**" is the fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7). "**Wisdom**" is personified as crying out for disciples who will do everything to pursue her (Pr 1:20). The person who seeks **chokmah** diligently will receive understanding: (Pr 2:6) and will benefit in life by walking with God (Pr 2:20, cf Gal 5:16).

Chokmah is used most often in Proverbs, so that the reader of the "wise sayings" might **know wisdom** and allow the Truth of God to govern his or her life. It follows that it behooves every child of God to **meditate** frequently and deeply on the Words of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs (see all uses below which would be a wonderful study, making a list of what you learn about wisdom and then praying accordingly). **Do I make Proverbs a frequent and vital part of my daily intake so that my heart and mind and soul and spirit might be nourished with God's wisdom, the wisdom from on high, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy?** (James 3:17, cp Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4)? This **wisdom** is not based on upon "theoretical knowledge but shows itself in a proper discernment between good and evil or right and wrong. **Wisdom** is the divinely created system of rules that governs the "moral fiber" of the universe. To master **wisdom** is to achieve true and lasting success in life. The first step toward **wisdom**, and its controlling principle, is faith in Yahweh" (Criswell), specifically Yeshua, Jesus, "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3- note), for Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1Cor 1:24) and by God's doing every believer is "in Christ Jesus, Who became wisdom from God." (1Cor 1:30).

**Wisdom is the right use of knowledge:
All true spiritual wisdom is found only in Christ.**

There is a "counter-wisdom" called "folly," the practice of which leads just as surely to destruction. God is the starting point for the education that leads to **wisdom**. **Wisdom** in the biblical sense, is something more than a collection of factual information. It includes knowing how to conduct oneself in the practical affairs of everyday life, to make wise choices, to do the right thing in relation to others, and to have insight into the true nature of things. Wisdom of this kind can only grow out of an awareness of God and His purpose in the world. Fools may acquire encyclopedic information, but they cannot attain wisdom because they fail to take God into account. Wisdom is not acquired by a mechanical formula but through a right relationship with God.

NET Note - The noun "wisdom" (חֵכֶמָה, *khokhmah*) could be nuanced "**moral skill**." It refers to "skill" that produces something of value. It is used in reference to the skill of seamen (Ps 107:27), abilities of weavers (Ex 35:26), capabilities of administrators (1Kgs 3:28), or skill of craftsmen (Ex 31:6). In the realm of moral living, it refers to skill in living – one lives life with moral skill so that something of lasting value is produced from one's life.

Thayer makes an excellent point that **wisdom** is "used of the knowledge of very diverse matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case."

Ortlund - **Wisdom** is skill, expertise, competence that understands how life really works, how to achieve successful and even beautiful results. We see a picture of wisdom in Exodus 35:31, where the word translated "**wisdom**" in Proverbs 1:2 is used for the skill of an artist adorning the tabernacle. We see wisdom in Jeremiah 10:9 where the expertise of goldsmiths is called "the work of **skilled** (**Ed**: Hebrew = adjective *chakam* derived from noun *chokmah*) men," or wise men. We see **wisdom** in Psalm 107:27 for the know-how of sailors, who use the winds and tides to make their way through the sea to their destination. Whether craftsmanship working with the materials of life or seamanship steering through the currents of life, so to speak, **wisdom** understands how real life can work well. **Wisdom** knows better than to walk onto the football field and hope the game will go well somehow; **wisdom** draws up a game plan that will score more touchdowns than the opponents because that plan takes into account not only the rules of the game but also psychology and timing and strategy and everything it takes to win. **That is wisdom**. (Preaching the Word: Proverbs—Wisdom that Works)

Spiritual wisdom is godly **wisdom** (contrasted with worldly wisdom - study and make a list of the contrasts in Jas 3:13-18 and 1Cor 1:19 through 1Cor 2:13) and involves living life in the light of the revelation of God's Will in His Word and applying this knowledge to specific situations. Biblical **wisdom** is definable as skill for living. God's plan to redeem us destroyed the **wisdom** of the worldly wise men (1Cor 1:19). In fact, human wisdom can never comprehend God's plan for salvation (1Cor 1:21). Paul was not bound by the limits of human wisdom because the Holy Spirit conveyed **spiritual wisdom** through him (1Cor 2:13) and we possess the same indwelling Spirit beloved!

Wisdom is the insight into the true nature of things. Knowledge is the mental possession of powers of perceiving objects, wisdom is the power of right reasoning concerning them and forming right decisions accordingly.

Wisdom is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding.

Wisdom is the art of being successful, of forming the correct plan to gain the desired results. Its seat is the heart, the centre of moral and intellectual decision

Wisdom emphasizes understanding of ultimate things—such as life and death, God and man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell, eternity and time.

Wisdom is mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense (Vincent).

Spurgeon - Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.

Chokmah can refer to technical skills or special abilities in fashioning something. The artisan was considered to be endowed with special abilities given to him by God Ex 35:31. **Wisdom** is seen in the skill of technical work in making garments for the high priest (Ex 28:3), craftsmanship in metal work (Ex 31:3, 6), as well as the execution of battle tactics (Isa 10:13). **Wisdom** is required from government leaders and heads of state for administration (Dt 34:9; 2Sa14:20), including pagan leaders as well as Israelites (Ezek 28:5). The Messiah demonstrates wisdom and discernment in his function as leader of His people (Isa 11:2). To act wisely means to carry out right principles. A wise workman works according to the right principles of his craft, producing a quality product. Morally, a wise person (enabled by the Holy Spirit, not by a fleshly driven legalism!) lives out the revealed principles of right and wrong, which reflect the character of God.

Vance Havner - If you lack knowledge, go to school. If you lack wisdom, get on your knees! Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge.

James Draper - **Wisdom** is the skill to live in a way that is pleasing to God. It is not simply information in our heads. It is information that we put to use—where we live, where we work, and where we play. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, of wisdom. That is the starting point. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. We must choose either to live in the power of God, under the discipline of his Word, or to live foolishly. The world offers no hope, no solution, no encouragement. God says, "I want you to have wisdom, the skill to experience life as it ought to be experienced." The choice is up to us.

Wisdom is "God's fixed order for life, an order opposed to chaos and death....No longer can wisdom be defined simplistically as 'the practical application of knowledge.' Instead wisdom must be thought of as a broad, theological concept denoting a fixed, righteous order to which the wise man submits his life." [[Bruce Waltke - The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature - Bibliotheca Sacra](#)]

"**Wisdom** means being skillful and successful in one's relationships and responsibilities. It involves observing and following the

Creator's principles of order in the moral universe." [Roy B. Zuck, "A Theology of the Wisdom Books and the Song of Songs," in A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament, p. 232.]

"It isn't enough simply to be educated and have knowledge, as important as education is. We also need wisdom, which is the ability to use knowledge. Wise men and women have the competence to grasp the meaning of a situation and understand what to do and how to do it in the right way at the right time...." "The pages of history are filled with the names of brilliant and gifted people who were smart enough to become rich and famous but not wise enough to make a successful and satisfying life. Before his death, one of the world's richest men said that he would have given all his wealth to make one of his six marriages succeed. It's one thing to make a living, but quite something else to make a life." [Wiersbe, pp. 10-11, 12.]

"When a man knows the right and does the right he is a wise man. It is the wedding of knowing and doing-it is the junction of the good and the true." [Paul E. Larsen, Wise Up and Live, p. 4.]

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary - The biblical concept of wisdom is quite different from the classical view of wisdom, which sought through philosophy and human rational thought to determine the mysteries of existence and the universe. The first principle of biblical wisdom is that people should humble themselves before God in reverence and worship, obedient to His commands. This idea is found especially in the Wisdom Literature: the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. In the Old Testament, the best example of a "wise man" is King Solomon (1Ki 10:4,6, 7, 8). And yet the same book that heaps such lavish, warm, and glowing praise upon Solomon for his reputed wisdom (1Ki 4:29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34) also points out how Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord (1Ki 11:1-13)." (Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

From Solomon's life example, clearly "**spiritual wisdom**" is no guarantee that one will walk worthy, but needs to be affect our heart decisions in order to be practical. **How are you doing in this area? Are you like "wise" King Solomon, filled with "spiritual wisdom" and yet choosing to walk in a manner counter to God's clearly revealed will? Bible study won't do you much good unless it transforms your thinking and your walk. True spiritual wisdom must affect our daily life. Wisdom and practical intelligence must go together.**

NAS Usage: skill (5), skill* (1), wisdom (143), wisely (3), wits' (1).

Chokmah - 145v and **41x in Proverbs!** - Ex. 28:3; 31:3, 6; 35:26, 31, 35; 36:1f; Deut. 4:6; 34:9; 2 Sam. 14:20; 20:22; 1 Ki. 2:6; 3:28; 4:29f, 34; 5:12; 7:14; 10:4, 6ff, 23f; 11:41; 1Chr. 28:21; 2Chr. 1:10ff; 9:3, 5ff, 22f; Job 4:21; 11:6; 12:2, 12f; 13:5; 15:8; 26:3; 28:12, 18, 20, 28; 32:7, 13; 33:33; 38:36f; 39:17; Ps. 37:30; 49:3; 51:6; 90:12; 104:24; 107:27; 111:10; Pr. 1:2, 7, 20; 2:2, 6, 10; 3:13, 19; 4:5, 7, 11; 5:1; 7:4; 8:1, 11, 12; 9:1, 10; 10:13, 23, 31; 11:2; 13:10; 14:6, 8, 33; 15:33; 16:16; 17:16, 24; 18:4; 21:30; 23:23; 24:3, 7, 14; 28:26; 29:3, 15; 30:3; 31:26; Eccl. 1:13, 16ff; 2:3, 9, 12f, 21, 26; 7:10ff, 19, 23, 25; 8:1, 16; 9:10, 13, 15f, 18; 10:1, 10; Isa. 10:13; 11:2; 29:14; 33:6; 47:10; Jer. 8:9; 9:23; 10:12; 49:7; 51:15; Ezek. 28:4f, 7, 12, 17; Da 1:4, 17, 20

Below are all the uses of chokmah in Proverbs. A fruitful exercise would be to observe (especially to interrogate the passages using the "5W's and H" questions) each use of wisdom in Proverbs and make a note about what is associated with wisdom. In this way you could compile your own, personal "working definition" of wisdom. I think it might be an investment that could yield fruit all the remainder of your days!

Pr 1:2 To know **wisdom** and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise **wisdom** and instruction.

Pr 1:20 **Wisdom** shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square;

Pr 2:2 Make your ear attentive to **wisdom**, Incline your heart to understanding;

Pr 2:6 For the LORD gives **wisdom**; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Pr 2:10 For **wisdom** will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

Pr 3:13 How blessed is the man who finds **wisdom** And the man who gains understanding.

Pr 3:19 The LORD by **wisdom** founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens.

Pr 4:5 Acquire **wisdom**! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Pr 4:7 "The beginning of **wisdom** is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding.

Pr 4:11 I have directed you in the way of **wisdom**; I have led you in upright paths.

Pr 5:1 My son, give attention to my **wisdom**, Incline your ear to my understanding;

Pr 7:4 Say to **wisdom**, "You are my sister," And call understanding your intimate friend;

Pr 8:1 Does not **wisdom** call, And understanding lift up her voice?

Pr 8:11 "For **wisdom** is better than jewels; And all desirable things cannot compare with her.

Pr 8:12 "I, **wisdom**, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge and discretion.

Pr 9:1 **Wisdom** has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars;

Pr 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of **wisdom**, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Pr 10:13 On the lips of the discerning, **wisdom** is found, But a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding.

Pr 10:23 Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, And so is **wisdom** to a man of understanding.

Pr 10:31 The mouth of the righteous flows with **wisdom**, But the perverted tongue will be cut out.

Pr 11:2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is **wisdom**.

Pr 13:10 Through insolence comes nothing but strife, But **wisdom** is with those who receive counsel.

Pr 14:6 A scoffer seeks **wisdom** and finds none, But knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.

Pr 14:8 The **wisdom** of the sensible is to understand his way, But the foolishness of fools is deceit.

Pr 14:33 **Wisdom** rests in the heart of one who has understanding, But in the hearts of fools it is made known.

Pr 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction for **wisdom**, And before honor comes humility.

Pr 16:16 How much better it is to get **wisdom** than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.

Pr 17:16 Why is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy **wisdom**, When he has no sense?

Pr 17:24 **Wisdom** is in the presence of the one who has understanding, But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

Pr 18:4 The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; The fountain of **wisdom** is a bubbling brook.

Pr 21:30 There is no **wisdom** and no understanding And no counsel against the LORD.

Pr 23:23 Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get **wisdom** and instruction and understanding.

Pr 24:3 By **wisdom** a house is built, And by understanding it is established;

Pr 24:7 **Wisdom** is too exalted for a fool, He does not open his mouth in the gate.

Pr 24:14 Know that **wisdom** is thus for your soul; If you find it, then there will be a future, And your hope will not be cut off.

Pr 28:26 He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks **wisely** will be delivered.

Pr 29:3 A man who loves **wisdom** makes his father glad, But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth.

Pr 29:15 The rod and reproof give **wisdom**, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Pr 30:3 Neither have I learned **wisdom**, Nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.

Pr 31:26 She opens her mouth in **wisdom**, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

Some quotes on wisdom (from Complete Gathered Gold - John Blanchard - excellent resource)...

Knowledge leads us from the simple to the complex; wisdom leads us from the complex to the simple. - Anon.

True wisdom is a divine revelation. - George Barlow

Wisdom has never made a bigot, but learning has. - Josh Billings

Wisdom gives a balance to character. - John Blanchard

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. - John Calvin

This is our wisdom, to be learners to the end. - John Calvin

To search for wisdom apart from Christ means not simply foolhardiness but utter insanity. - John Calvin

True wisdom consists in being wise according to the law of God. - John Calvin

Wisdom is not the growth of human genius. It must be sought from above. - John Calvin

Wisdom and the will of God are intimately related... Nothing is more vital for practical knowledge of the purpose of God than wisdom. - Sinclair Ferguson

Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. - Matthew Henry

It is better to get wisdom than gold. Gold is another's, wisdom is our own; gold is for the body and time, wisdom for the soul and eternity. - Matthew Henry

Modesty is the badge of wisdom. - Matthew Henry

Such is the degeneracy of human nature that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those who are born again and who, through grace, partake of the divine nature. - Matthew Henry

He who has a constant longing for wisdom will persistently pray for it. - D. Edmond Hiebert

Surely the essence of wisdom is that before we begin to act at all, or attempt to please God, we should discover what it is that God has to say about the matter. - D. Martyn Lloyd Jones

Wisdom opens the eyes both to the glories of heaven and to the hollowness of earth. J. A. Motyer

Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty... acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours. - J. I. Packer

Wisdom is God-centred. - Michael Parsons

Wisdom in ruling is justice; wisdom in speech is discretion; wisdom in conduct is prudence; wisdom in evaluation is discernment. - George Seever

To know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is the highest principle and perfection of man. This attainment, infinitely above all others, constitutes true wisdom. - Charles Simeon

We can be certain that God wants us to be wise, just as we are sure that he wants us not to sin. - R. C. Sproul

Conviction of ignorance is the doorstep to the temple of wisdom. - C. H. Spurgeon

The sublimity of wisdom is to do those things living which are to be desired when dying. - Jeremy Taylor

The wisest person in the world is the person who knows the most about God. - A. W. Tozer

The true test of wisdom is works, not words. - Curtis Vaughan

If the Lord Jesus Christ is a stranger to you, the best you can hope for is to become a philosopher, like Socrates of old. But apart from Christ there is no wisdom. - Spiros Zodhiates

Wisdom, the wisdom of God, is not something that is acquired by man, but something that is bestowed by God upon his elect. It is a divine endowment and not a human acquisition. - Spiros Zodhiates

BEYOND INFORMATION ("We wired and tired!") - An investment company's full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal began with these words: "**Information** is everywhere. **Insight** is all too rare. For **insight** goes beyond **information** to discern underlying truths." Today, we are long on information and short on insight. Television offers scores of channels. Encyclopedias and world atlases are on compact disks (CDs) (**Ed**: Devotional written in 1996, but today information is [too] readily available on Internet = Wikipedia). Online databases give us the temperature in Hong Kong and the baseball score in Birmingham. **We're wired and tired** from trying to grasp the meaning of all we know.

Years ago, a friend encouraged me to read a chapter from Proverbs each day. One chapter each day takes me through this marvelous book of God's wisdom every month. "You can get knowledge in college," my friend said, "but wisdom comes from God." Here's what Almighty God promises when we seek His wisdom: "If you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding...then you will...find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Pr. 2:3-6). One chapter of Proverbs every day. Try it this month and see how God's Word will give you the wisdom to transform information into insight. -- David C. McCasland (Our Daily Bread) (Ed: While the "One Chapter a Day" is commendable, I prefer one verse or one group of verses of Proverbs a day. That way your focus is not how much of the Word you get through but how much of the Word gets through you! You are much more likely to remember the smaller "bits and bytes" than an entire chapter. And Proverbs is one of those books that is like a gold mine shaft that needs to be worked to get the deep riches therein!)

THINKING IT THROUGH

Why would someone not want to be wise? (Pr. 1:7).

What happens to those who live foolishly? (Pr 1:31-32).

What are some benefits of wisdom? (Pr 1:33; 2:6-11).

**You can get knowledge in college,
but wisdom comes from God!**

Instruction ([04148](#))(**musar** from **yasar** = to discipline, chasten, admonish) refers to discipline, chastening, correction. God's chastening is always for purposes of instruction, and should not be ignored or resented. (Job 5:17 cp Job 42:2). Solomon instructs us "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof." (Pr 3:11) One of major purposes of wisdom literature is to teach wisdom and instruction (**musar**) (Pr 1:2) Isaiah describes the divine chastisement poured out on the Suffering Messiah (Isa 53:5).

Related Resources:

- [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary - Discipline](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Chasten, Chastisement](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Discipline](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia - [Chastisement](#)
- [Hastings' Dictionary - Discipline - Part 2](#) [Discipline](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Discipline](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Discipline](#)

Musar is translated in the **Septuagint** with the noun **paideia** which is used of rearing and guiding a child to maturity (Heb 12:11) and refers to God's fatherly discipline (Heb 12:5). **Paideia** means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity.

Musar is used in Proverbs 3:11 "My son, do not reject the **discipline** of the LORD, Or loathe His reproof." Musar is something our flesh tends to reject because it speaks of the painful process of chastening which is necessary if we are to garner godly wisdom. The writer of Hebrews speaks to our "natural" push back against discipline writing...

You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE **DISCIPLINE** OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE **DISCIPLINES**, AND HE SCOURGES (metaphorical description of what was literally one of the most severe forms of punishment in ancient Rome) EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES....(11) All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Heb 12:5-6-note, Heb 12:11-note)

Harris - Instruction, properly "chastisement," signifying moral training, admonition, then good habits, the practical side of wisdom. (Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary)

Musar is a technical term for instruction in the school of wisdom. Instruction is characterized by reverence or fear of the Lord (Pr 15:33). Wisdom results from listening to this instruction (Pr 19:20). Discipline takes effort (Pr 23:12, 23). Proverbs also speaks specifically of parental instruction as something to be closely followed (Pr 1:8; 4:1; 13:1). Failure to listen to a father's instruction results in ignorance (Pr 19:27ff).

NET Note - The noun **musar** has a three-fold range of meanings: (1) physical or parental: "discipline; chastisement" (2) verbal:

"warning; exhortation" and (3) moral: "training; instruction". Its parallelism with **wisdom** suggests that it refers to moral training or instruction that the Book of Proverbs offers to its readers. This instruction consists of **wisdom** acquired by observing the consequences of foolish actions in others and developing the ability to control the natural inclination to folly (Ed: For believers only possible as we rely on the Holy Spirit's enablement! cp Ro 8:13). This sometimes comes through experiencing chastisement from God.

Musar is translated in the Septuagint with the noun **paideia** which means to provide instruction with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior. It was used in Greek culture for training, rearing and guiding a child to maturity. **Paideia** is a broad term, signifying whatever parents and teachers do to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them develop and mature as they ought. Wayne Detzler writes that *paideia* "moves from education to correction and finally embraces the concept of punishment. This idea is quite unpopular, because many Christians confuse salvation with sentimentality. God does not tolerate sin among Christians, but rather disciplines them as a good father would (Heb. 12:5-11-note). In fact, if a Christian is comfortable and undisciplined, there is cause to doubt that he truly is a believer!" (Detzler, Wayne E: *New Testament Words in Today's Language*. Victor. 1986)

John Phillips - The word translated "**instruction**" in Proverbs 1:2 means "admonition" or "discipline" and is sometimes translated "chastisement." There can be little recognition of truth without discipline. Only a disciplined mind can see the pros and cons of an issue and be willing to learn by correction.

Charles Ryrie gives a pithy description of **instruction** - Training by word (Pr 24:32) or rod (Pr 23:13).

Israel was guilty of not accepting discipline (instruction), correction or chastening (**Am I?**) (Jer 2:30, 7:28, 17:23; 32:33; 35:13) Accepting Musar brings blessing = "Behold, how happy (blessed) is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the **discipline** (musar) of the Almighty." (Job 5:17) In a parallel passage we read "My son, do not despise the LORD's **discipline** or be weary of his reproof." (Pr 3:11, cp Heb 12:5-11-note)

In a well known passage Isaiah says "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the **chastisement** (musar) that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (Isa 53:5)

NAS Usage: chastening (3), chastise (1), correction (3), discipline (18), disciplines (1), instruction (20), punishment (2), reproof (1), warning (1).

Musar - 50v -Pr. 1:2, 3, 7, 8; 3:11; 4:1, 13; 5:12, 23; 6:23; 7:22; 8:10, 33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1, 18, 24; 15:5, 10, 32, 33; 16:22; 19:20, 27; 22:15; 23:12, 13, 23; 24:32; Deut. 11:2; Job 5:17; 20:3; 33:16; 36:10; Ps. 50:17; Isa. 26:16; 53:5; Jer. 2:30; 5:3; 7:28; 10:8; 17:23; 30:14; 32:33; 35:13; Ezek 5:15; Hos 5:2; Zeph 3:2, 7

Musar 4x in Proverbs 1, 30x in Proverbs...

Pr 1:2 To know wisdom and **instruction**, To discern the sayings of understanding,

Pr 1:3 To receive **instruction** in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and **instruction**.

Pr 1:8 Hear, my son, your father's **instruction** And do not forsake your mother's teaching;

Pr 3:11 My son, do not reject the **discipline** of the LORD Or loathe His reproof,

Pr 4:1 Hear, O sons, the **instruction** of a father, And give attention that you may gain understanding,

Pr 4:13 Take hold of **instruction**; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.

Pr 5:12 And you say, "How I have hated **instruction**! And my heart spurned reproof!

Pr 5:23 He will die for lack of **instruction**, And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

Pr 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for **discipline** are the way of life

Pr 7:22 Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as one in fetters to the **discipline** of a fool,

Pr 8:10 "Take my **instruction** and not silver, And knowledge rather than choicest gold.

Pr 8:33 "Heed **instruction** and be wise, And do not neglect it.

Pr 10:17 He is on the path of life who heeds **instruction**, But he who ignores reproof goes astray.

Pr 12:1 Whoever loves **discipline** loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

Pr 13:1 A wise son accepts his father's **discipline**, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Pr 13:18 Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects **discipline**, But he who regards reproof will be honored.

Pr 13:24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him **disciplines** him diligently.

Pr 15:5 A fool rejects his father's **discipline**, But he who regards reproof is sensible.

Pr 15:10 Grievous **punishment** is for him who forsakes the way; He who hates reproof will die.

Pr 15:32 He who neglects **discipline** despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

Pr 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the **instruction** for wisdom, And before honor comes humility.

Pr 16:22 Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, But the **discipline** of fools is folly.

Pr 19:20 Listen to counsel and accept **discipline**, That you may be wise the rest of your days.

Pr 19:27 Cease listening, my son, to **discipline**, And you will stray from the words of knowledge.

Pr 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of **discipline** will remove it far from him.

Pr 23:12 Apply your heart to **discipline** And your ears to words of knowledge.

Pr 23:13 Do not hold back **discipline** from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.

Pr 23:23 Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and **instruction** and understanding.

Pr 24:32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received **instruction**.

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Today in the Word - The well-known "Prayer for His Son" by General Douglas MacArthur includes these words: "Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, brave enough to face himself when he is afraid . . . Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenges. Let him learn to stand in the storm; let him learn compassion for those who fall."

The opening chapters of the book of Proverbs are framed as a parent's advice: "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Pr 1:8). While the purpose of the book is "for attaining wisdom and discipline" (Pr 1:2-4), and while this journey begins with "the fear of the Lord" (Pr 1:7), it is equally important to understand that the context in which wisdom is learned is relational, starting with the parent-child relationship.

Wisdom literature has been defined as "truth applied to everyday life in practical ways." As we study Proverbs this month, we'll do so in ways appropriate to the genre. For the most part this book is a collection of individual proverbs. Proverbs are brief sayings or aphorisms that can observe, compare, contrast, advise, instruct, invite, warn, evaluate, persuade, and poke fun. They often make use of figures of speech such as metaphors and similes, as well as of literary devices including imagery, personification, parallelism, sarcasm, and irony.

In ancient Near Eastern literature, the term proverb includes our meaning but is broader and can also indicate parable-like imagery and brief narratives. An example of this is found in verses 20 through 33 of today's reading, in which personified Wisdom issues an invitation to embrace her along with a warning to shun foolishness.

Apply the Word - Solomon, the main author of Proverbs, was renowned for his God-given wisdom (1Ki 4:29-34). **It is important to remember that the proverbs he originated, while inspired Scripture, are proverbs and generally not commands or promises.** The practical wisdom in Proverbs is even more valuable and trustworthy when founded in a fear of the Lord. ([Ref](#))

CIPHERS THAT COUNT - You may set down six ciphers (zeros) - 000,000 - and they count for nothing; but if you put a five or any figure before them they all count - 5,000,000. Human knowledge alone only adds up a row of ciphers. A young man goes through his medical or law school and is graduated with honors, a learned man, but not yet a Christian. His acquirements make only a long row of ciphers. (**Ed:** This was me until I came to Christ at age 39 - **My Testimony to God's Grace**) These will be elements of power if he only gets in before them something that counts. Then he gives himself to Christ, consecrates all his attainments to Him, and every one of his acquirements assumes a high value. He has written a figure before the row of ciphers, and 000,000,000 has

become 6,000,000,000. The more a man knows, the more of a man he is, if he loves, reverences, and obeys God. But this is the first thing in all true wisdom. Not to have it, is to make failure out of life; and the greater the other acquirements the greater the failure. - J R Miller

THE WISDOM OF HOLY FEAR - On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake caused catastrophic damage in the western hemisphere's poorest country, Haiti. The world rallied to give aid to the devastated country. Nine months later, an earthquake of equal magnitude struck New Zealand's second largest city. There, not a single life was lost. How could two comparable earthquakes have such dissimilar effects? Most say that Haiti's inferior infrastructure and shoddy building codes were to blame.

When disaster strikes, the buildings left standing have secure foundations designed to allow them to survive calamity. So it is spiritually. Today, looking at the first chapter of the book of Proverbs, we see that the fear of the Lord is the only sure foundation for one's life. As we've already seen through this month's study on fear, we don't have guarantees from God that our lives will be trouble-free. We can't control life's outcomes, and this uncertainty makes us deeply afraid.

The good news is that when we walk in the fear of the Lord, we are preserving ourselves from any number of harmful people and circumstances. In the prologue to this book of wisdom, Proverbs makes the case that sin is itself a source of trouble and difficulty. Keeping company with sinners means inviting pain into your life. The plans they concoct lead to their own ruin.

The fear of the Lord is more than a refusal to participate in evil. Fearing the Lord means that we are actively seeking out and heeding God's wisdom. Primarily, we look to the Word of God as our source of wisdom, but beyond that, we listen to the instruction of our parents, we give priority to the public teaching of God's Word, and we obey those in authority over us.

Thankfully, everyone is invited to learn wisdom. None are excluded from the course: the young, the simple-minded, the new-to-faith, and the already wise. God's invitation for each of us is to listen, to learn, and to grow in the fear of the Lord. Then we experience His blessing. ([Today in the Word](#))

FEAR ESCAPE - In our increasingly dangerous world, think of what we have to fear: Ominous terrorist threats, frightening crime rates, increasing natural disasters, sobering energy crises...God. Yes, God. ***Ironically, isn't it, that in a world full of fearful things, the single source of our refuge and safety is also the One we are instructed to fear?*** Consider Solomon's words: "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge" (Pr. 14:26). Then look at the next verse: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." We try to avoid life's fearful things because they interrupt our peace. Yet we are told to move toward fear—the fear of God. For those who "fear the Lord... He is their help and their shield" (Ps 115:11). Our faith in God can deliver us from the fears of the world (Ps 23:4)—but only because our faith relies on a fear that is different from worldly fear. Pr 29:25 says, "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe." ***To fear God is to sense His awesomeness. When we acknowledge that greatness and trust in Him, we no longer want to sin against Him.*** He becomes our refuge from the fears of this world. In Him we find peace. —Dave Branon (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you His service your delight;
Your wants shall be His care.
—Tate & Brady

**Those who fear God
need not fear the world**

IN GOD'S PRESENCE - As a farm boy in North Dakota, I often had a sense of awe when I looked at the sky on a clear day or when I listened to the rolling thunder of an approaching storm. God seemed so great, and I felt so small. I often had the same feeling when I entered the church sanctuary or heard my father pray. Today, though, I admit that at times I tend to be quite casual when I think of God, pray, study the Bible, or engage in worship. When we assemble to worship, sing, pray, and listen to the message, we often do these things half-heartedly and with little sense of the fear of God. Ecclesiastes 5 speaks to those issues and warns us not to make promises to God carelessly and superficially! We are inclined to hear only part of what God is saying to us through His Word. But genuine hearing includes careful listening accompanied by obedience. Unkept vows are also a serious matter (Pr 1:2,4, 5, 6). Just as many dreams have no basis in reality, the careless speech of the fool in God's presence is empty (Pr 1:3,7). Always keep in mind how great and holy God is, and how small and sinful we are. Thank Him for His mercy and grace. This solemn contemplation of the Lord's character will help us obey the admonition to "fear God" (Pr 1:7). —Herbert Vander Lugt (Our Daily Bread)

A house of worship is a place
For praise and reverent prayer;
Let holy thoughts your spirit fill
Each time you enter there.
--Bosch

**The fear of God is
the beginning of true worship**

THE COST OF REBELLION - The 1960s are known for the rebellion of thousands of young people. But ever since the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, people of all ages everywhere have rebelled against authority—parental, governmental, and divine. The **fool**, who is referred to in Psalm 53:1, denied God's rule over his life. People in our day do so in their hearts and in their actions. It is obvious that rebellion pays bad dividends. It inevitably results in a sense of emptiness that often leads to alcoholism, drug addiction, bizarre religious practices, flagrant immorality, broken homes, incurable diseases, and despair. Sadly, many experience the high cost of putting what they call "my way" above "God's way." The psalmist portrayed God as seeing the defiance of the wicked, observing their antagonism toward His people, and striking them with bewildered panic (Psalm 53:5). One way or another, people who "despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7) always pay a high price. To live as if there is no God is foolish, for it leads to pain, despair, and eternal death. But to live in the "fear of God" is wise, for it leads to satisfaction, rejoicing, and everlasting life. You must decide, so choose wisely!

The fool denies that God exists,
Eternal truth defies;
But when the foolish one believes,
God's teaching makes him wise.
—Fitzhugh

He is truly wise who submits to God's wisdom.

Charles Bridges - The preface has stated the object of this Book of Wisdom. The book itself now opens with a noble sentence of instruction. 'There is not'—as Bishop Patrick observes—'such a wise instruction to be found in all their books, (speaking of heathen ethics,) as the very first of all in Solomon's, which he lays as the ground of all wisdom.' **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.** So Job had pronounced before (Job 28:28). So had the wise man's father. (Ps 111:10^{[note](#)}) Such is the weight of this saying, that Solomon again repeats it. (Pr 9:10) Nay—after having gone around the whole circuit—after having weighed exactly all the sources of knowledge—his conclusion of the whole matter is this, that the fear of God in its practical exercise "is the whole of man" (Eccl. 12:13. Cp. Job 28:12–14 with Job 28:28.)—all his duty—all his happiness—his first lesson and his last. Thus when about to instruct us as from the mouth of God, he begins at the beginning—the principal part. All heathen wisdom is but folly. Of all knowledge—the knowledge of God is the principal. There is no true knowledge without godliness. (Cp Dt 4:6,7, Titus 1:1-note)

But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law. His wrath is so bitter, and his love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please him, and—because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations—a holy fear—anxious care and watchfulness, "that he might not sin against him." This enters into every exercise of the mind—every object of life. (Pr 23:17) The oldest proficient in the Divine school seeks a more complete molding into its spirit. The godly parent trains up his family under its influence. (Ge 18:19; Eph. 6:4-note) The Christian scholar honors it as the beginning—the head—of all his knowledge; at once sanctifying its end, and preserving him from its most subtle temptations.

This is why the mass around us despise wisdom and instruction Because the beginning of wisdom—"the fear of God"—is not before their eyes." (Ps 36:1, Ro 3:18) They know not its value. They scorn its obligation. Wise they may be in their own sight. But surely God here gives them their right name. For fools they must be to despise such a blessing (Jer. 8:9)—to rush into willful ruin (Pr 1:22, 24–32. Cp. 1Sa 14:25. Jer. 36:22–32)—to treasure up work for despairing repentance. 'From hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandment, Good Lord deliver us.' (Litany) May thy reverential, affectionate, child-like fear be my wisdom—my security—my happiness!

OTHER RESOURCES
RELATED TO PROVERBS 1:7 COMMENTARY

Keil & Delitzsch Commentary - The title of the book is followed by its motto, symbol, device:

The fear of Jahve is the beginning of knowledge;

Wisdom and discipline is despised by fools.

The first hemistich expresses the highest principle of the Israelitish Chokma, as it is found also in Proverbs 9:10 (cf. Proverbs 15:33), Job 28:28, and in Psalm 111:10 (whence the lxx has interpolated here two lines). רַאשִׁית combines in itself, as ἀρχή, the ideas of initium (accordingly J. H. Michaelis: initium cognitionis, a quo quisquis recte philosophari cupit auspiciū facere debet) and principium, i.e., the basis, thus the root (cf. Micah 1:13 with Job 19:28).

(Note: In Sirach 1:14, 16, the Syr. has both times רִישׁ חִכְמָתָא; but in the second instance, where the Greek translation has πᾶσι σοφίᾳ, שִׁבַּע חִכְמָה (after Psalm 16:11) may have existed in the original text.)

Wisdom comes from God, and whoever fears Him receives it (cf. James 1:5). יִרְאֵת יְהוָה is reverential subordination to the All-directing, and since designedly יְהוָה is used, and not אֱלֹהִים (ה), to the One God, the Creator and Governor of the world, who gave His law unto Israel, and also beyond Israel left not His holy will unattested; the reverse side of the fear of Jahve as the Most Holy One is שִׁנְאָת רַע, Proverbs 8:13 (post-biblical חִטָּא יִרְאֵת). The inverted placing of the words 7b imports that the wisdom and discipline which one obtains in the way of the fear of God is only despised by the אִוִּילִים, i.e., the hard, thick, stupid; see regarding the root-
word אָוַל, coalescere, cohaerere, incrassari, der Prophet Jesaja, p. 424, and at Psalm 73:4. Schultens rightly compares πᾶσι σοφίᾳ, crassi pro stupidis.

(Note: Malbim's explanation is singular: the sceptics, from אִוִּלִּי, perhaps! This also is Heidenheim's view.)

בִּזְיוֹ has the tone on the penult., and thus comes from בִּזָּה; the 3rd pr. of בִּזָּה would be בִּזְיוֹ or בִּזְיוֹ. The perf. (cf. Proverbs 1:29) is to be interpreted after the Lat. oderunt (Ges. §126).

Matthew Henry - Solomon, having undertaken to teach a young man knowledge and discretion, here lays down two general rules to be observed in order thereunto, and those are, to fear God and honour his parents, which two fundamental laws of morality Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, but the former of them in a wretchedly corrupted state. Primum, deos immortales cole, parentesque honora--First worship the immortal gods, and honour your parents. To make young people such as they should be,

I. Let them have regard to God as their supreme.

1. He lays down this truth, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7) it is the principal part of knowledge (so the margin) it is the head of knowledge that is, (1.) Of all things that are to be known this is most evident, that God is to be feared, to be revered, served, and worshipped this is so the beginning of knowledge that those know nothing who do not know this. (2.) In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge this is most necessary, that we fear God we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. If any man will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, John 7:17. (3.) As all our knowledge must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough who know how to fear God, who are careful in every thing to please him and fearful of offending him in any thing this is the Alpha and Omega of knowledge.

2. To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes, Fools (atheists, who have no regard to God) despise wisdom and instruction having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath and obtain his favour. Those who say to the Almighty, Depart from us, who are so far from fearing him that they set him at defiance, can excite no surprise if they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools who do not fear God and value the scriptures and though they may pretend to be admirers of wit they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

Adam Clarke - The fear of the Lord - In the preceding verses Solomon shows the advantage of acting according to the dictates of wisdom; in the following verses he shows the danger of acting contrary to them. The fear of the Lord signifies that religious reverence which every intelligent being owes to his Creator; and is often used to express the whole of religion, as we have frequently had occasion to remark in different places. But what is religion? The love of God, and the love of man; the former producing all obedience to the Divine will; the latter, every act of benevolence to one's fellows. The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit produces the deepest religious reverence, genuine piety, and cheerful obedience. To love one's neighbor as himself is the second great commandment; and as love worketh no ill to one's neighbor, therefore it is said to be the fulfilling of the law. Without love, there is no obedience; without reverence, there is neither caution, consistent conduct, nor perseverance in righteousness.

This fear or religious reverence is said to be the beginning of knowledge; ראשית (reshith), the principle, the first moving influence, begotten in a tender conscience by the Spirit of God. No man can ever become truly wise, who does not begin with God, the fountain of knowledge; and he whose mind is influenced by the fear and love of God will learn more in a month than others will in a year.

Fools despise - אִילִים (evilim), evil men. Men of bad hearts, bad heads, and bad ways.

James Gray - The nature of this book makes divisions of its chapters rather arbitrary, and ours may not always be the best, but it is hoped it may prove useful in some degree. The opening of chapter four suggests a new beginning, for which reason we conclude this lesson at the close of chapter three.

It begins with an advertisement (Proverbs 1:1-6), in which mention is made of the author (Proverbs 1:1), the object of the book (Proverbs 1:2-3), and its great value (Proverbs 1:4-6). Then follows its theme, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7), of which the rest of the lesson is a development or exposition. "Beginning" is rendered in the margin of the Revised Version "chief part." "The fear of the Lord" means a right state of heart towards God as opposed to the condition of an unconverted man. Put the two ideas together, and we learn that the chief part of all knowledge is to be right with God. In working out of the thought:

1. The teacher exhorts his "son" or pupil, to avoid vice (Pr 1:8-19); 2. He shows the ruinous conduct of the unwise, a warning placed on the lips of wisdom personified (Pr 1:20-33); 3. This warning is accentuated by contrasting the consequences of obedience and a striving after wisdom (Pr 2:1-3); 4. The Lord is shown as the protector of those who are wise in this sense (Pr 3:19-26); 5. The division concludes with an admonition to charity and justice (Pr 3:27-35).

John Gill - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,.... Here properly the book begins, and this is the first of the proverbs, and an excellent one; it is such an one as is not to be found in all the writings of the Heathens. By "the fear of the Lord" is not meant a servile fear, a fear of punishment, of hell, wrath, and damnation, which is the effect of the first work of the law upon the conscience; but a filial fear, and supposes knowledge of God as a father, of his love and grace in Christ, particularly of his forgiving love, from whence it arises, Psalm 130:4; it is a holy, humble, fiducial fear of God; a reverential affection for him, and devotion to him; it includes the whole of religious worship, both internal and external; all that is contained in the first table of the law, and the manner of performing it, and principle of acting: this is the first of all sciences to be learned, and it is the principal one; it is the basis and foundation of all the rest, on which they depend; and it is the head, the fountain, the root an source, from whence they spring; and unless a man knows God, knows God in Christ, and worships him in his fear, in spirit and in truth, according to his revealed will, he knows nothing as he ought to know; and all his knowledge will be of no avail and profit to him; this is the first and chief thing in spiritual and evangelical knowledge, and without which all natural knowledge will signify nothing; see Job 28:28;

but fools despise wisdom and instruction; the same with "knowledge" before; they do not desire the knowledge of God, and of his ways and worship, but despise it, make no account of it, but treat it with contempt; especially the knowledge of God in Christ, in which lies the highest wisdom, for this is "life eternal", John 17:3; they despise Christ "the Wisdom of God", and the Gospel, and the truths of it, which are "the hidden wisdom" of God; and all "instruction" into it, and the means of it; they despise the Scriptures, which are able to make a man "wise unto salvation"; and the ministry of the word, and the ministers of it: such sort of "discipline"^{F14} was this, as the word signifies, they dislike and abhor; and especially "correction" or "chastisement"^{F15}, which is also the sense of it; suffering reproach and affliction for the sake of wisdom, a profession of Christ and his Gospel; and they are fools with a witness that despise all this; such fools are atheists, deists, and all profane and wicked men. The Septuagint render it, "the ungodly"; and such sort of men are all along meant by "fools" in this book.

John Trapp - The fear of the Lord is the beginning.] Or, The chief and principal point (a) of wisdom, as the word here signified; yea, wisdom itself. [Job 28:28] This Solomon had learned by the instruction of his father, as it is in the next verse, who had taught it him of a child, [Proverbs 4:4 Psalms 111:10] and therefore sets it here in the beginning of his works as the beginning of all. As in the end he makes it the end of all, [Ecclesiastes 12:13] yea, the all of man, (b) without which he counts him not a complete man, though never so wise to the world ward. Heathen sages, as Seneca, Socrates, &c., were wise in their generation, and had many excellent gifts, but they missed of the main; there was no fear of God before their eyes: being herein as alchemists, who miss of their end, but yet find many excellent things by the way. These merchants found goodly pearls, but "the pearl of price" [Matthew 13:45-46] they failed of. The prophet calls the fear of God "our treasure." [Isaiah 33:6]

But fools despise.] Fools; so are all such as fear not God, "being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," or injudicious. [Titus 1:16] Evil is Hebrew for a fool; Nebulo of Nabal; fool of Φαυλος. When one highly commended the Cardinal Julian to Sigismund, he answered, Tamen Romanus est; yet he is a popeling. So, yet he is a fool, because void of God's true fear. "Behold

they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" [Jeremiah 8:9]

Peter Pett - And at the root of all this is the fear of YHWH. These purposes in Proverbs 1:2-6 will be achieved in those who 'fear YHWH', for in that is the beginning (or prime element) of knowledge. In other words true and worthwhile knowledge about life has its roots in 'fearing YHWH' (responding to Him as a loving, but authoritative, figure) and in 'knowing God' (Proverbs 1:29; Proverbs 2:5-6; Proverbs 9:10). The emphasis is thus on a 'spiritual' life, one lived in conscious dependence on Him. Such a man wants to walk with God. The one who 'fears YHWH' (that is, who pays reverent regard to Him and to His requirements in the same way as a man should 'fear' his father and his mother - Leviticus 19:3) will be the one who will take heed because he wants to do what is right in His sight. He walks in a personal relationship with God. He departs from evil (Proverbs 3:7; Proverbs 8:13).

In contrast are the foolish who do not fear YHWH (compare Psalms 14:1) and who therefore despise such wisdom and instruction. They live their lives mainly heedless, through deliberate choice, of God and His ways. Thus to Solomon 'wisdom' is not just a collection of teaching about living, it is rooted in a personal relationship with, and a reverent obedience towards, YHWH, the covenant God.

This idea of the reverent fear of YHWH does not only occur here. It underlies the first nine chapters (see Proverbs 1:29; Proverbs 2:5; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 9:10), and continues on up to chapter 23 (see Proverbs 10:27; Proverbs 14:26-27; Proverbs 15:16; Proverbs 15:33; Proverbs 16:6; Proverbs 19:23; Proverbs 22:4; Proverbs 23:17). Thus the idea of the fear of YHWH underlies chapters 1-24. It is this that gives full significance to what is being said. It demonstrates that the teaching reveals the mind of God. It will also be noted that reference to it brings together the words of Solomon and 'the words of the wise' (Proverbs 22:17 to Proverbs 24:34), as indeed Proverbs 1:6 emphasises. And it makes them more than just a collection of improving sayings. They have all rather become a guide to living the spiritual life.

Proverbs makes clear that the fear of YHWH (looking for him to exercise the discipline of a father - Proverbs 3:12; Leviticus 19:3; Psalms 103:13) is a course that men must choose, and that it will be neglected by those who hate true knowledge, spiritual knowledge (Proverbs 1:29), for the fear of YHWH and the knowledge of God are in parallel (Proverbs 2:5; Proverbs 9:10). Those who do fear God will walk in accordance with His instruction (Jeremiah 44:10). They look to Him to be the director of their paths (Proverbs 3:6). So it is men's response to YHWH which makes clear the direction in which their lives are pointed. This parallels the idea of those who walk in the narrow way as spoken of by Jesus, rather than the broad way (Matthew 7:13-14). Those who gain true wisdom and understanding will understand the fear of YHWH, and find the true knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:5). Consequently it leads to a spiritual grasp of the truth. The one who thus finds the fear of YHWH will hate evil (Proverbs 8:13), and will grow in true spiritual wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 9:10). The book thus claims to be an inculcator of divine knowledge, rather than just earthly knowledge. It is speaking to the true heart and giving spiritual discernment. In this it is different from much other wisdom literature.

Robert Neighbour - AN ILLUSTRATION - The same Wisdom which pleads is the Wisdom that passes the sentence of death.

A young man was once driving a two-horse buggy down the crowded streets of a large city when suddenly the horses, taking fright, got beyond his control, and there he sat not knowing at what moment he might be hurled to instant death, for which he knew that he was utterly unprepared. Just as a catastrophe appeared inevitable, a stranger sprang in front of the flying horses and clutching at their bridles, at imminent risk to himself, held on to them until the frightened animals stopped, and the young man was able to jump out and thank his benefactor for having saved his life.

Some months after, this same young man stood in a felon's dock, charged with the crime of willful murder, of which the jury had just found him guilty. Before pronouncing sentence, the judge asked the prisoner if he had anything to plead in extenuation of his crime. Instead of giving a direct answer, the prisoner, looking intently at the judge, said, "Sir, don't you remember me? Don't you recall the occasion when you stopped two runaway horses in this city and saved the young man's life who was driving them?" "Yes," said the judge, "I'm not likely to forget that incident." "Well," went on the prisoner, "I'm that young man." "Ah," replied the judge after a pause, "I recognize you now; but what has that got to do with your crime and its punishment?" "Sir," pleaded the prisoner with his very soul in his voice, "you saved my life then; won't you spare it now?" For a moment tense silence fell upon the court; presently it was broken by the voice of the judge. "Prisoner at the bar," he said, "I am here in only one capacity, to administer justice; and," he added solemnly, "when I saved your life then I was your saviour; now I am your judge." And he condemned the guilty man to death. E. G. Carre.