

# PROVERBS

## Chapter 1

### *The Beginning of Knowledge*

**1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, 3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; 4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, 6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

The title of the Book (v 1) is expanded into five verses (2–6) that, in heaped synonyms and parallel statements, provide the purpose of these collections of proverbs: to teach wisdom. Immediately following the introductory statement of purpose, the course gets under way. The remaining verses (8–33) and chs 2–9 present versified units of instruction. They are not proverbs in our sense of the term but poems of varying length praising wisdom and urging everyone to pursue it. The individual lessons are not always clearly marked off. They treat a variety of subjects, using the pedagogical principle of repetition. (TLSB)

**1:1 Proverbs** – The Hebrew word “mashal” is used in a number of ways and has a wider range of meaning than our English word proverb. The NIV translates it in numerous ways. For example, it may signify a “saying” (1 Samuel 10:12), a “parable” (Ezekiel 17:2), a “taunt” (Isaiah 14:4), a “mournful song” (Micah 2:4), an “oracle” (Numbers 23:7), and a “discourse” (Job 29:1). In each instance, however, the use has to do with knowledge and the communication of knowledge. (PBC)

מִשְׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל—The Hebrew title of the book of Proverbs is the first word, which is the plural construct of מִשְׁלָה. The noun מִשְׁלָה usually means “proverb” (*HALOT*, 2) or “wisdom saying ... didactic speech ... parable” (*HALOT*, 3). Often a מִשְׁלָה involves a comparison. The verbal root מִשַׁל means “to compare.” The noun often refers to an observation about life based on some comparison, a saying or maxim (26:7, 9), an allegory (Ezek 17:2), or a familiar saying (1 Sam 10:12; Ezek 18:2). The noun is used in Proverbs to denote the wise sayings that constitute this book (1:1, 10:1; 25:1) as well as more generally to refer to any proverb that encapsulates divine wisdom (1:6; 26:7, 9). (CC)

Prov 1:1 is the book’s superscription. This introductory verse can be understood in two ways: (1) as applying to the entire book, with Solomon as the principal (but not the sole) author, or (2) as applying to 1:8–9:18 as having been composed by Solomon. Since the reader is left with the impression that what follows is from Solomon’s pen and most of the rest of the book is of the same character, it is best to understand this verse as applying especially to the first nine chapters of Proverbs, although it is also a general characterization of most of the rest of the book. (CC)

*Solomon.* His wisdom and prolific production of proverbs and songs are mentioned in 1Ki 4:32. His name occurs again in the headings of 10:1 and 25:1. Cf. Ecc 1:1; SS 1:1. (CSB)

The greatest kings of Israel, who each reigned for 40 years. King Solomon was the son of the warrior-king David by Bathsheba, with whom David had committed adultery. God gave Solomon

wisdom and a keen intellect (see pp 995–97); Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs, as well as works on botany and zoology (1Ki 4:32–33). (TLSB)

The *athnach* on **דָּוִד** suggests that the last phrase in apposition, **מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל**, “king of Israel,” is intended to describe the earlier person, Solomon, rather than David. (CC)

By naming “Solomon” as the “son of David,” the superscription gives the entire book of Proverbs a Christological orientation. The book, its inspired author, and its divine wisdom anticipate the greater “Son of David” (Mt 1:1), Jesus Christ, who embodies the sum total of all divine wisdom (1 Cor 1:18–31; Col 2:3). Although he has always been true God, as true man from the time of his conception, Christ had a fully human development, and as a child he grew in wisdom (Lk 2:40, 52). Those who heard him were astonished at his wisdom (Mk 6:2). (CC)

Unless the biblical text itself indicates otherwise, Solomon is the author of the various sections of Proverbs. (PBC)

*King of Israel* – The title of Solomon as “king of Israel” (Prov 1:1) also points toward Christ as “the King of Israel” (Jn 1:49; 12:13). Christ is greater and wiser than Solomon:

The queen of the South ... came from the ends of the earth to hear the *wisdom* of Solomon, and behold, someone greater than Solomon is here! (Mt 12:42; cf. 1 Ki 10:1–13)

Christ’s threefold office is that of Prophet, Priest, and King. “He has taken us as his own, under his protection, in order that he may *rule us* by his righteousness, *wisdom*, power, life, and blessedness” (LC II 30; emphasis added). He dispenses divine wisdom through the preached and written Word of his Gospel, and this wisdom is apprehended through faith in him. (1 Cor 2:6–7; Eph 1:8, 17; 3:10; Col 1:9, 28; 3:16; James 1:5; 3:17) CC)

**1:2–4** Verses 2–3 apply to the son (or student); v. 4 refers to the father (or teacher). (CSB)

**1:2** *wisdom*. This key term occurs 41 times in the book. It includes skill in living—following God’s design and thus avoiding moral pitfalls. A craftsman can be called a wise (skillful) man (Ex 31:3). Proverbs urges people to get wisdom (4:5), for it is worth more than silver or gold (3:13–14). The NT refers to Christ as “wisdom from God” (1Co 1:30; cf. Col 2:3). (CSB)

Hbr *chokmah*, appears 37 times in Pr. Elsewhere in OT, it may refer to an artisan’s skills. Wisdom is practical truth revealed by God. To know wisdom is to know of God Himself. God’s people receive and apply wisdom through the working of the Holy Spirit (1Co 2:13). (TLSB)

**וּמִדָּוִד**—The Qal (G) infinitive **לְרַעַת** is from **רָעַת** with **לְ**. The infinitives construct that begin each verse in 1:2–4, as well as **לְהַבִּינֵי** beginning 1:6 and the second half of 1:2, express purpose: the purpose of the book of Proverbs is to bestow divine wisdom. This could be clarified by rendering 1:1–2 as “the proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel, [given to you, the reader, so that you may] know wisdom and discipline ...” (CC)

Solomon has placed at the beginning of the book a preface designed to set the stage for the reader who wishes to learn about God-given wisdom and to receive this divine wisdom through the book of Proverbs. These verses are stair-like parallelism, with each line forming an additional step until the climax is reached in 1:7. Three key concepts for understanding and applying the wisdom in Proverbs are introduced as we climb the stairs: knowledge, discipline, and spiritual growth. (CC)

The first concept is knowledge, which is the essential foundation. “To know wisdom” (1:1) means to know the Lord himself. “This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ” (Jn 17:3). Unbelievers have no true knowledge of God; such knowledge only comes through faith. Hence St. Paul says to Christian converts, “When you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you know God, or rather, are known by God ...” (Gal 4:8–9). *Thus Proverbs is not simply about the natural knowledge of God that even unbelievers can glean from viewing creation and to which their conscience testifies* (Rom 1:18–22, 32; 2:14–16). *Proverbs is about the saving knowledge of God that comes through his Son, Jesus Christ.* (CC)

Biblical wisdom finds its highest fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who is the very wisdom of God. Only in the gospel of Christ can work a true change of heart and make us “wise for salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15). (PBC)

hokmah – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

Our first duty is to attain wisdom. Once we become wise in God’s ways, we need to allow them to rule over our lives. In both steps, we are dependent on God. Our knowledge of him and his will comes through his Word, the Bible; the desire and the ability to apply that knowledge comes through the Holy Spirit, who is at work in the Word. Philippians 2:13 reminds us, “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (PBC)

*instruction - moo-sawr’ – properly chastisement; figuratively reproof, warning or instruction; also restraint:—bond, chastening, chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke. – This is another key concept in Proverbs. It is that quality of being able to follow through and apply our God-given wisdom. We might call it self-discipline. The ancient Jewish rabbis had a saying, “The wicked are under the control of their impulses, but the righteous have their impulses under their control.” - Self-discipline is especially important for us to keep in mind, since our society encourages just the opposite. In a thousand different ways we are told, “If it feels good, do it!” Proverbs does not deny emotions their due. Joy and self-satisfaction have their place. But they are fully realized only when kept within the limits of God’s Word. God sets up rules for living, not to make us unhappy, but to bring us real, lasting happiness. (PBC)*

Hbr *musar*, “discipline,” “chastisement.” Education is inherently a moral activity, a worthy goal for all who belong to God through faith in Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

For the nouns חִקְמָה and מוֹסֵר, see “חִקְמָה, ‘Wisdom,’ and Related Words” and “מוֹסֵר, ‘Discipline,’ and מוֹסֵר, ‘to Discipline’ ” in “Wisdom in Proverbs” in the introduction. Wisdom in Proverbs is not mere worldly insight, but it is the insight and foresight given by the Holy Spirit to those who know God through faith and seek to do his will in accord with his Word. מוֹסֵר, “discipline,” occurs thirty times in Proverbs, including twice more in this preface (1:3, 7). While it can refer to the correction or instruction that a parent or other authority uses to train a child (5:12; 19:27), it also means the *self-discipline* of a person who is consciously striving to live in a way that pleases Yahweh (23:23). (CC)

The second concept is discipline, which follows knowledge. Discipline allows the believer to act wisely. The book of Proverbs has the purpose of enabling the reader “to acquire discipline for acting sensibly: righteousness and justice and fairness” (1:3). Solomon tells us exactly what

actions flow from knowledge exercised with discipline. They are not necessarily the behaviors that the world considers shrewd, but instead they are the types of behaviors that characterize God himself: righteous, just, and true acts. These he enables his justified believers to do (Eph 2:8–10; Phil 2:12–13). (CC)

*understand* – binah – The emphasis in this word is on understanding and the ability to distinguish. – This word is related to the concept of “between” and refers to the ability to make distinctions. Young King Solomon prayed for this type of wisdom early in his reign. (1 Kings 3:9) – Life constantly calls on us to distinguish between what is good and bad, or between what is a wise choice and what is an even better choice. How we make such choices does much to determine in the course of our life. When we face important decisions in life, how do we distinguish between the options? Do we merely act on impulse? Do we follow the advice of friends? Do we read books to gain insight? All these are important factors in life’s choices. But it is even more important that we consult God’s Word (including the scriptural advice of wise Christian friends, counselors and pastors) and that we ask God’s guidance in prayer. (PBC)

—In Proverbs the Hiphil (H) of בִּין often has the meaning “to understand” (*HALOT*, 1). The identical Hiphil infinitive construct לְהִבִּין begins 1:6, and the Niphal (N) participle נִבְּוֹן is in 1:5. Here the accusative direct object is the construct phrase אֲמָרֵי בִינָה, “words of understanding,” which has the cognate noun בִּינָה. (CC)

**1:3 discipline** – לְקַח מוֹסֵר הַשְׂכֵּל—The object of the Qal (G) infinitive construct (לְקַח, from קָח, with the preposition לְ) is the noun מוֹסֵר in construct with the Hiphil (H) infinitive absolute הַשְׂכֵּל. The construction means “to acquire discipline for acting sensibly” (cf. Waltke-O’Connor, § 35.3.3, example 9). The verb לָקַח meaning “to acquire, receive” wisdom is common in Proverbs (e.g., also 2:1; 4:10; 8:10). For מוֹסֵר, “discipline.” (CC)

*righteousness and justice and equity.* Hbr root means “level” or “straight,” therefore, “just.” (TLSB)

—This phrase also occurs in 2:9. “Righteousness” (צְדָקָה) for humans is thought and behavior that conforms to God’s standard. See “The Relationship between Wisdom and Righteousness in Proverbs” in “Wisdom in Proverbs” in the introduction. “Justice” (מִשְׁפָּט) denotes decisions that are correct and in keeping with God’s standard. “Fairness” (the abstract plural מִשְׁפָּטִים) is what is correct and lacks guile or deviousness. The noun comes from the Hebrew root יָשַׁר, which denotes straightness, in contrast to Hebrew nouns for deviousness and craftiness, many of which come from roots that denote something that is “twisted” or “crooked” (e.g., מְקַשָּׁוּחַ in 4:24; 6:12; נִפְתָּל in 8:8; נָלוֹחַ in 2:15; 3:32; 14:2; and הַפְּכָפְךָ in 21:8). (CC)

It again speaks of discipline and goes on to apply what is right: “doing [literally, taking hold of] what is right and just and fair.” The Christian life can never stop with worship or with Bible study. It always goes further and expresses itself in deeds. (PBC)

**1:4 prudence.** Good judgment or good sense (see 15:5; 19:25). Outside Proverbs the Hebrew word is used in the negative sense of “shrewd” or “crafty” (Ge 3:1; Job 5:13). (CSB)

*simple.* Another key word in Proverbs, occurring some 15 times. It denotes those who are easily persuaded and who “lack judgment” (9:4, 16), who are immature, inexperienced and naive (cf. Ps 19:7). (CSB)

Root meaning is “to be open,” depicting those ready to receive direction, i.e., those in need of God’s guidance (Ps 19:7; 116:6), especially the young. (TLSB)

עֲרֻמָּה—The noun עֲרֻמָּה denotes a “gullible, naïve person” (see *HALOT*). See “עֲרֻמָּה, ‘Gullible Person’ ” in “Fools in Proverbs” in the introduction. The feminine noun עֲרֻמָּה is often translated as “prudence,” which in English implies a cautious, conservative approach to life. However, the concept behind this word is insight into a situation so that one can determine the proper course of action (8:5, 12). The related adjective עֲרוּם, “prudent,” is used, for example, in 13:16; 22:3; and 27:12 to encourage insightful use of knowledge, not merely a conservative, cautious attitude. (CC)

Translated it has the root meaning “to be open.” It refers to a person of undecided views, who is wide open and susceptible to bad as well as good influences. (PBC)

*peth-ee', peh'-thee, peth-aw-ee' – silly (that is, seducible):—foolish, (QV)*

*youth – nah'-ar – a boy (as active), from the age of infancy to adolescence; by implication a servant; also (by interchange of sex), a girl (of similar latitude in age):—babe, boy, child, damsel [from the margin], lad, servant, young (man). – Translated “young” signifies an immature person without experience. Left to themselves, the young and the simple are not likely to find true wisdom. The notion that by themselves such people will choose the best course of action is without scriptural basis. Sinful by nature, we are all likely to follow the easiest path – namely, that which satisfies our personal inclination to act out of selfishness, lust, and whatever seems best for our personal interests, with little thought of what God wants or what may be good for others. (PBC)*

**1:5 wise** – One with emerging maturity in knowing, perceiving, and discerning. (Cf 1Co 13:12.). (TLSB)

לִקְחָהּ—The purpose clauses in 1:2–4 and 1:6 are interrupted by the exhortations in the two clauses of 1:5. The Hiphil (H) verb לִקְחָהּ is jussive in form, and probably the Qal (G) לִקְחָהּ is jussive too, hence “*may a wise person listen and increase ...*” Divine Wisdom is pleading with the reader or hearer of Proverbs to receive this saving knowledge in faith. “The Holy Scriptures ... are able to make you *wise unto salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). (CC)

*Discerning* – יָבִין תְּהִבִּילוֹת יִקְנֶה—The Niphal (N) participle יָבִין, used as a substantive, “a person with understanding,” is from the verb יָבִין, whose Hiphil (H) infinitive begins 1:6 and the second half of 1:2 (see the second textual note on 1:2). For the feminine abstract plural noun תְּהִבִּילוֹת, see “תְּהִבִּילוֹת, ‘Guidance’ ” in “Wisdom in Proverbs” in the introduction. The Qal (G) verb יִקְנֶה probably is jussive, “*may a person acquire,*” like the two jussives in the preceding clause. In this context יִקְנֶה, “acquire,” is a synonym of לָקַח, “receive, acquire,” at the start of 1:3. יִקְנֶה recurs in Proverbs referring to the acquisition of wisdom. See also the first textual note on 8:22. יִקְנֶה has the commercial nuance “to buy, purchase” in 20:14; 23:23. (CC)

The third concept is growth in wisdom. Those who know God still face the risk that they could be led away from wisdom and life toward foolish behavior and death. Especially the gullible and the young have much to learn from Solomon’s wisdom: “to give to gullible people prudence, to a young man knowledge and foresight” (1:4). Even those who are already wise through faith will benefit from reading and rereading Proverbs: “may a wise person listen and increase [his] learning, and may a person with understanding acquire guidance” (1:5). Prov 1:5 interrupts the

stair-like ascent and allows the reader to contemplate the value of maturing in wisdom throughout life. No matter how wise and knowledgeable we may consider ourselves to be, we have much more to learn. Now we only “know in part”; only in the eschaton shall we “know fully” (1 Cor 13:12). (CC)

**1:6** *understands* – לְהַבִּין מִשְׁלַל וּמִלִּצָּה דְבָרַי הַכְּמִים וְחִידוֹתָם—The verb לְהַבִּין, “to understand,” is repeated from the second half of 1:2. Here it does double duty since this single verb takes direct objects in both halves of 1:6. The first noun in the first half, מִשְׁלַל, “proverb,” is repeated from 1:1. The second noun, מִלִּצָּה, “enigma,” only occurs here and in Hab 2:6, where it refers to a bitter satirical condemnation of sinful behavior. It is from the root לִצָּה, which usually denotes showing contempt or mocking. Both times in the OT מִלִּצָּה is used with מִשְׁלַל, “proverb,” and חִידוֹת, “riddles.” Here it either denotes a saying characterized by its biting cleverness, or a saying that is enigmatic and allusive to those who do not know wisdom (*HALOT*). (CC)

*riddles*. The Hebrew for this word can sometimes refer to allegories (cf. Eze 17:2). (CSB)

Puzzles or mysteries requiring complex applications of knowledge and understanding (e.g., 23:29–30). (TLSB)

The final noun חִידָה, “riddle,” occurs seventeen times in the OT, most often in Judges 14, where Samson tells his riddle. In 1 Ki 10:1 the queen of Sheba poses riddles to test Solomon’s wisdom. Here it denotes a saying that is not easily understood by those without divine knowledge or understanding. (CC)

Solomon continues the ascent in Prov 1:6 by assuring the reader that his proverbs are able to teach us to understand wisdom in its most enigmatic forms, just as Solomon could solve the perplexing riddles that the queen of Sheba posed to him. This leads to 1:7, the proverb of Solomon that is placed at the climax to the preface to guide our reading of this entire book. (Note the similarity of the first line of 1:7 to the better-known first line of 9:10.) Here Solomon first explicitly introduces the wisdom of Proverbs as godly wisdom flowing from a positive relationship with Yahweh. (CC)

Some translations, such as the KJV, translate the term “riddles” as “dark sayings.” It is the same word used in 1 Kings 10:1: “When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the Lord, she came to text him with hard questions.” Growth in godly wisdom will help us find answers to life’s riddles, its and its hard questions. (PBC)

The noun לִקְחָה, “learning,” literally means “what is received,” and is cognate to the verb לָקַח, translated as “to acquire,” that began 1:3. The noun recurs in 4:2; 7:21; 9:9; 16:21, 23. The apostle declares about the Supper, “I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you” (1 Cor 11:23), and he uses similar phraseology about the Gospel (1 Cor 15:3). (CC)

**1:7** The theme of the book (see 9:10; 31:30; cf. Job 28:28; Ps 111:10). (CSB)

*fear of the LORD (Jehovah)*. † A loving reverence for God that includes submission to his lordship and belief in his promises (Ecc 12:13). God is our king (Mal 1:14), but even as we stand in awe of him we can rejoice (see Ps 2:11; Isa 12:6). (CSB)

*yir-aw'* – morally *reverence* – This godly reverence. It is not terror. In fact, the fear of the Lord delivers from fear! (PBC)

The First Commandment teaches that “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things” (SC, p xxxv). God is the giver of all human comprehensions; He desires for His people to regard Him in awe, respect, and love. Tertullian: “Fear has its origin in knowledge, for how will a man fear that of which he knows nothing?” (ANF 3:130). “So childlike fear can be clearly defined as anxiety that has been connected with faith, that is, where faith comforts and sustains the anxious heart” (Ap XIIA 38). Ambrose: “First stands faith, which is a sign of wisdom, as Solomon says” (NPNF 2 10:42). Such wisdom—given by God through Word and Sacrament, making us His children—is the theme for the Book of Proverbs. True wisdom begins with an individual’s apprehension in knowledge and trust of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior. (TLSB)

יִרְאֵהוּ יְהוָה—This important phrase, “the fear of Yahweh,” occurs fourteen times in Proverbs and only seven times elsewhere in the OT.<sup>c</sup> The fear of Yahweh can denote fear of God’s wrath (Prov 24:21–22). More often, however, it denotes a positive, filial relationship to God that causes a person to want to please the heavenly Father. God, who bestows blessings for temporal and eternal life and leads people to wisdom, is the one who initiates this positive relationship. The believer responds by fleeing evil and seeking to do the will of the heavenly Father (8:13). (CC)

This relationship with God is established by Christ, the incarnate Wisdom of God (Prov 8:1–36; 1 Cor 1:18–31). Thus wisdom is received through Christ and the content of wisdom is Christ himself. This wisdom brings the recipient into a favored relationship with God the Father. “The fear of Yahweh” (Prov 1:7) is first and foremost a filial relationship initiated by God when he reckons sinners as righteous through faith on account of his Son (Gen 15:6). God declares Christ to be “my Son” (Ps 2:7; Mt 2:15; Lk 9:35; cf. 2 Sam 7:14 || 1 Chr 17:13), and all baptized believers in Christ are sons of God (Gal 3:26–29). They share Christ’s filial relationship with God the Father, who has forgiven them and made them his children. (CC)

Prov 1:7 emphasizes this filial relationship with God under the rubric “the fear of Yahweh.” It was God who established the filial relationship of the people of Israel with himself when he called their ancestor Abraham (Gen 17:7; Deut 29:13–14 [ET 29:14–15]) and when he redeemed Israel, whom he called “my son” (Hos 11:1; cf. Mt 2:15) and “my firstborn son” (Ex 4:22), from Egypt and graciously promised to be Israel’s God. “The fear of Yahweh” as well as “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding” are embodied in the Davidic Messiah, the “shoot from the stump of Jesse” (Is 11:1–3). Jesse was the father of David and the grandfather of Solomon, and all three are ancestors of Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:17–22; Mt 1:1–7; Lk 3:31–32). Yet divine wisdom offers to all believers a filial relationship to God through faith that is even stronger than genetic ancestry (cf. Mt 3:9). (CC)

Therefore, *the theme and guiding principle of Proverbs is the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. By the same Gospel fully revealed in the NT, God called his OT people into existence, redeemed them, and sustained them by his grace. This Gospel relationship to Yahweh, encapsulated in the phrase “the fear of Yahweh” (Prov 1:7) is the beginning, source, and sustaining power of all wisdom. From the outset Solomon is laying down the theology essential for understanding the entire book of Proverbs:

- Wisdom comes from God through Christ.
- Wisdom is a free gift from God, received through faith.
- Wisdom cannot be possessed apart from God’s gracious work in Christ.
- Wisdom conveys Christ himself and hence confers sonship, righteousness, and everlasting life. (CC)

God had declared Solomon himself to be “my son” when he designated Solomon as the one who would inherit God’s kingdom, reign on David’s throne, and build the temple (1 Chr 22:10; 28:6)—all in anticipation of the incarnate Christ, whom God declares to be his “Son” at Christ’s Baptism (Mt 3:17; Lk 3:22; cf. Mt 2:15) and transfiguration (Mt 17:5; Lk 9:35) and resurrection (Rom 1:4; cf. Acts 13:30–34). Christ reigns on the throne of David as the eternal King of Israel (Is 9:5–6 [ET 9:6–7]), and his advent has brought the kingdom of God in grace. (CC)

In the following proverbs (1:8–9:18), Solomon, uttering divine wisdom, will issue a call, repeated fifteen times, for “my son” to pay attention to his father’s instruction. These admonitions to “my son” are in ten sections.<sup>3</sup> A “son” who is endowed with divine wisdom is a son of God by his grace in his Son (Mt 5:9; Jn 1:12; Rom 8:14–15; Gal 3:26; 1 Jn 3:1). (CC)

The same triune God who bestows wisdom and blessings for temporal and eternal life in Christ is the one who initiates and sustains the believer’s filial relationship until he calls the believer through death to resurrection and eternal glory (Dan 12:2–3; Rom 8:11, 16–21). The Lord works through his Word and appointed means of grace (in the church age, Christian Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) to regenerate the heart of man and fill him with his Spirit (Jn 3:3–5; Acts 2:38–39; Titus 3:4–6) and thus to lead him to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things” (SC I 1). Yet believers remain *simul iustus et peccator*, “simultaneously saint and sinner,” throughout this earthly life. Their sinful nature shuns God and fears his wrath. Therefore the Christian life is one of continual repentance, or penitence. The Lutheran Confessions explain penitence as having into two parts, contrition and faith, and this explains what is included in “the fear of Yahweh” (Prov 1:7):

Contrition is the genuine terror of a conscience that feels God’s wrath against sin and is sorry that it has sinned. This contrition takes place when the Word of God denounces sin. For the sum of the proclamation of the Gospel is to denounce sin, to offer the forgiveness of sins and righteousness for Christ’s sake, to grant the Holy Spirit and eternal life, and to lead us as regenerated men to do good.... (CC)

As the second part of our consideration of penitence, we therefore add faith in Christ, that amid these terrors the Gospel of Christ ought to be set forth to consciences—the Gospel which freely promises the forgiveness of sins through Christ.... This faith strengthens, sustains, and quickens the contrite.... This faith gradually grows and throughout life it struggles with sin to conquer sin and death. But love follows faith.... *Filial fear can be clearly defined as an anxiety joined with faith, where faith consoles and sustains the anxious heart.* (CC)

The final line of Prov 1:7 turns from believers with “the fear of Yahweh” to the opposite scenario: unbelievers, who lack fear of and faith in Yahweh. They are “stubborn fools” who “despise wisdom and discipline.” This sheds light on what makes a stubborn fool so stubborn. Believers have their new, regenerate nature as children of God as well as their old, sinful nature (see the apostle Paul’s description of his own Christian life in Romans 7). Fools, however, have only their corrupt, stubborn nature as children of the devil (Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 3:8–10). Fools have chosen to despise God, leading them to despise the wisdom and discipline that God bestows on those who fear him. The divine wisdom of the Gospel proffers the knowledge of God, but judgment awaits “those who do not know God,” who are “those who do not submit to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess 1:8; cf. 1 Thess 4:5). (CC)

The line of condemning Law that concludes Solomon’s preface (1:7b) mirrors to the reader the sinful foolishness of the unregenerate human heart, driving the reader to repent and embrace the wisdom that God freely offers to all. (CC)

*beginning* – This is the starting point, the foundation, upon which true knowledge rests. Solomon is saying that to live life as it should be lived, we need to have a proper relationship with the Lord, The God of free and faithful grace. All of life should be lived this way, not just certain parts. (PBC)

—Phrases similar to “the beginning of knowledge” are in 4:7 and 9:10. God-given faith, which fears and loves God, is the beginning in the sense that it is prerequisite and absolutely essential for receiving divine knowledge. Without faith it is impossible to please God or to know him. Without faith, a person, no matter how clever, is a fool. (CC)

*fools*. Those who hate knowledge (v. 22) and correction of any kind (12:1), who are “quick to quarrel” (20:3) and “give full vent” to their anger (29:11), who are complacent (1:32) and who trust in themselves (28:26) rather than in God (Ps 14:1). (CSB)

Those who hatefully reject God and the wisdom and instruction He freely offers through faith. (TLSB)

הַקְּמָה אִמוּנָה, אֲוִלִּים בְּזוּ—The first two nouns, אִמוּנָה אֲוִלִּים, are the direct objects of the verb בְּזוּ, “despise,” whose subject is the plural of אֲוִלִּים. This type of fool is stubborn and thick-headed, a “stubborn fool.” He clings to his foolish behavior because he has rejected God’s gracious offer of wisdom, righteousness, and life in Christ. (CC)

This is a person who is morally and spiritually foolish. He might be highly intelligent, and by worldly standards he may be very shrewd. But in God’s sight he is a fool. Jesus spoke of someone like this in Luke 12:15-21). (PBC)

*despise wisdom and discipline*. Wisdom is *hokmah* the most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. – Discipline is the same in verse 2. (CSB)

1:1–7 Solomon’s introduction reminds us of the difference between true wisdom and the wisdom of the world. True wisdom is from the Lord, a message that is foolishness to those who reject it but God’s very power to us who are being saved (1Co 1:18). • Lord, teach us true wisdom and give us its power to love and serve You. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Enticement of Sinners*

**8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, 9 for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. 10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. 11 If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; 12 like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; 13 we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; 14 throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse”—15 my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths, 16 for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. 17 For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, 18 but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives. 19 Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.**

1:8–19 The first address to a son. (TLSB)

**1:8** A typical introduction to an instruction speech in Proverbs, evoking a domestic situation of a father preparing his son for life in the world. Here and in 6:20 the mother is also depicted as teacher. (CSB)

*hear* – שָׁמַע בְּנֵי מוֹסֵר אֲבִיךָ—The Qal (G) of שָׁמַע meaning “hear with attention, listen to” often takes an accusative object (BDB, 1f), but English translation requires the preposition “to.” The direct object in the construct phrase, מוֹסֵר, “discipline,” may take on the connotation of “warning” (HALOT, 3), while still expressing the self-discipline that the father hopes to inculcate in this son. (CC)

*son* – Ancient wisdom literature often used the term to refer to the student. It shows the closeness between an instructor and the pupil. This is the first of more than twenty such occurrences in Proverbs. Much of what follows applies to “my daughter,” as well. Yet in Solomon’s day, men were more in need of the instruction, because the responsibilities described fell chiefly to them. (PBC)

A mature generation, including both fathers and mothers, encourages the next generation to follow the treasures of true wisdom, especially the knowledge of salvation by grace through faith. Note: In the Ancient Near East, the term “son” was often applied to a student, signifying the closeness of the relationship between teacher and pupil. The OT emphasizes their duty of parents to teach children (Dt. 6:6-9). The address :”my son” in Proverbs may often be regarded as indicating chapter headings. It is used 13 times for this purpose (1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 7:1, 24). “For this purpose He has given us children and issued this command: we should train and govern them according to His will. Otherwise, He would have no purpose for and father and a mother. Therefore, let everyone know that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God above all things” (LCI 173-74). (TLSB)

The first of the ten addresses in chapters 1–9 from father to son begins with an appeal to a son to learn from the instruction given by both parents (“father . . . mother,” 1:8). This instruction is not only characterized as “teaching” but also as “discipline.” While discipline may involve punishment, God and good parents mete out discipline in love (Eph 6:4; Heb 12:5–11; Rev 3:19). The positive aspect of discipline is mentioned here: discipline will lead to attractive personal qualities, just as a garland or jewelry are intended to make a person’s outward appearance attractive. This theme will be expanded by Solomon in 3:1–20, where he connects jewelry and other valuables to wisdom, which comes to the believer through Christ. (CC)

It is noteworthy that both parents are mentioned here and elsewhere in Proverbs as involved in the training of a child. Some understand the address as coming from a sage to his pupil, who is not his biological child. While a sage could address his student as “son” (Sirach 7:3), the continued reference throughout Proverbs to both mother and father as instructors and trainers of children—and their pride in children who do well, and their shame when their children go astray (e.g., 10:1)—indicates that this is instruction from actual parents. Also note that Solomon mentions learning the same lessons from his own parents (4:3). The responsibilities of parents to train children are, therefore, taken seriously in Proverbs, especially in the opening chapters (1–9; see Eph 6:4). (CC)

Of course, only Christ fulfilled the role of obedient Son perfectly as he obeyed his heavenly Father’s will (e.g., Mt 26:42; Lk 22:42; Heb 10:7–9; cf. Mt 6:10) as well as his earthly parents (Lk 2:51). Although we cannot obey our earthly parents or our heavenly Father perfectly, through faith in Christ his perfect obedience and his righteousness are imputed to us (Rom 5:19; 2 Cor

5:21), and we receive wisdom to grow in grace as he did (Lk 2:40) and to be obedient (Rom 6:16; 16:19; 1 Tim 3:4; 1 Pet 1:2). Solomon will expand this theme later (see the commentary on Prov 3:1–20). (CC)

*forsake not* – וַאֲלֹא־תִטַּח תּוֹרַת אֱמֻנָה—This identical clause recurs in 6:20b. The Qal (G) of *טַח*, “to forsake, abandon,” recurs again but as an imperative in 17:14. (CC)

*Teaching* – The noun תּוֹרָה, *torah*, occurs thirteen times in Proverbs. Frequently it is translated as “Law.” However, in many OT passages it also encompasses doctrinal Gospel, such as in the many instances where it refers to the Torah of Moses. Here and often elsewhere in Proverbs (e.g., 28:4), it has the broad meaning “teaching,” especially the teaching of God’s Word, including both Law and Gospel. Supporting this general meaning is the fact that in Proverbs תּוֹרָה never occurs with a definite article. In at least three instances, it refers to a mother’s teaching, which she imparts to her children (1:8; 6:20; 31:26). Elsewhere in Proverbs it can refer to a father’s teaching (3:1; 4:2) or God’s teaching (28:4, 7, 9; 29:18). (CC)

**1:9** *garland* – לְיָיִתָּהּ לְרֵאשֻׁנָּה | לְיָיִתָּהּ לְרֵאשֻׁנָּה—The noun לְיָיִתָּהּ, “garland, wreath,” occurs in the OT only in the construct phrase לְיָיִתָּהּ in Prov 1:9 and 4:9. The noun יָיִתָּהּ, usually meaning “grace,” occurs thirteen times in Proverbs. (Prov 1:9; 3:4, 22, 34; 4:9; 5:19; 11:16; 13:15; 17:8; 22:1, 11; 28:23; 31:30) Usually it refers to God’s grace, that is, his undeserved mercy and favor which he shows to his believing people. It is derived from the verb יָיִתָּהּ, which refers to God as “being gracious,” in, for example, Ex 33:19 and Num 6:25. The construct phrase לְיָיִתָּהּ recurs in 4:9a. It could be a genitive of material, “a garland [made out] of grace,” or an epexegetical genitive, “a [metaphorical] garland that is [God’s] grace.” (CC)

*graceful ... for your neck.* Those who follow wisdom add beauty and honor to their lives. (CSB)

Possibly alludes to an award for achievement. Two silver scroll amulets (c mid-seventh century BC) bearing the Aaronic Benediction (Nu 6:24–26) were found in cave 25 of Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem. Like decorations and jewelry, instruction and teaching are attractive when recognized among youth; the wisdom of the boy Jesus possessed this kind of appeal (Lk 2:52). (TLSB)

The garland symbolizes beauty and the chain honor. Joseph and Daniel wore chains around their necks. Young persons who follow their parents’ good guidance possess a dignity and beauty that go deeper than outward appearance. (PBC)

*pendants* – לְגַרְגָּרֵיךְ לְגַרְגָּרֵיךְ—The noun גַּרְגָּרָה occurs elsewhere only in Judg 8:26 and Song 4:9. Its plural is translated as “chain,” meaning a piece of jewelry, not an instrument of bondage. Here in Prov 1:9 the LXX translates it as κλοιὸν χρύσεον, “a golden chain.” Note that the parents’ instruction (1:8) gives true (spiritual) wealth in contrast to the stolen earthly wealth that sinners (1:10) promise in 1:13–14. (CC)

*Neck* – The plural reduplicated noun גַּרְגָּרוֹת, which has the singular meaning “neck,” occurs in the OT only in Proverbs. It always has the second masculine singular suffix and always refers to the part of the body around which divine wisdom is to be affixed metaphorically (1:9; 3:3, 22; 6:21). (CC)

**1:10** *entice* – *paw-thaw'* – A primitive root; to *open*, that is, *be* (causatively *make*) *roomy*; usually figuratively (in a mental or moral sense) to *be* (causatively *make*) *simple* or (in a sinister way) *delude*:—allure, deceive, enlarge, entice, flatter, persuade, silly (one). The Book of Proverbs

focuses especially on two enticements: (1) toward sexual sins, (2) toward material gain. The inspired writer here deals with the second. To people who are blind to the spiritual side of life, material gain becomes all-important. Wealth becomes a god. (PBC)

Peers hold ready influence among the young. The intensive form of the Hbr word for sinners shows that there are people for whom sin has become a habit. (TLSB)

םִּזְנוּתִי אֶמְדַּבֵּר—The Piel (D) of מְדַבֵּר, “to entice,” can also mean “to seduce” in sexual contexts (Ex 22:15 [ET 22:16]; Judg 14:15; 16:5), and so the enticement by sinners here may allude to the theme of seduction by the adulteress and by Lady Foolishness in 9:13–18. The verb is cognate to the noun מְדַבֵּר. (CC)

*Do not consent* – אֶל־הֵבִיא—The Qal (G) of הֵבִיא means “to be **willing**” or “to consent to” (HALOT, 3), to do what the sinners propose. The ה (instead of ה) in the second masculine singular jussive אֶבִּיא may reflect Aramaic influence (GKC, § 75 hh) or a northern Hebrew dialect. (CC)

**1:11-12** The parents’ instruction to their son recognizes that he is old enough to succumb to the pressure to leave the family and conform to his peers. The temptation to join the gang is portrayed as attractive in several ways. First, the gang offers the thrill of wanton violence (1:11–12). Second, it entices the young man with seemingly easily gained wealth (1:13). Finally, it offers companionship (1:14). These are powerful inducements that still lure youth into gangs and lives of crime and violence. However, the lure that Solomon describes is not to be seen simply as gang life. It is but one example of the pressure that peers can assert in youth and adulthood. It serves as a reminder that God’s people need to be constantly on guard against any societal pressures that would tempt them to various sins against God and their neighbor. (CC)

**1:11** *lie in wait for ... blood.* Their goal is personal enrichment by theft or oppression (vv. 13, 19), even if they have to commit murder. The author uses two major enticements that confronted the young man (in that culture) as examples of the way of folly: (1) to get rich by exploiting others (here) and (2) to be drawn into illicit sexual pleasure by immoral women who fail to honor their marriage vows (5:1–6; 6:24; 7:5; cf. 2:12–19). (CSB)

Temptations toward reckless evil, without regard for consequences, entice the young with the promise of adventure, gain, and belonging. (TLSB)

לְדַבֵּר לְדָמָא—The sinners use the Qal (G) cohortative of דָּבַר to propose, literally, “let’s set an ambush for blood” (cf. לְדָמָא דְּאֶרְבִּי in 1:18 and דָּבַר דָּמָא in 12:6). The phrase לְשִׁפְךְ דָּמָא in 1:16 (cf. 6:17) clarifies that “for blood” means “in order to *shed* blood.” Here and in the next clause (also twice in 1:18) the preposition לְ indicates disadvantage, “for” a hostile purpose of attack (BDB, 5 g (b) (v)). (CC)

*ambush* – לְנֶגְפָה לְנֶגְפָה—The cohortative לְנֶגְפָה is from the Qal (G) of נָגַף, “to hide,” which recurs in 1:18; 2:1, 7; 7:1; 10:14; 13:22; 27:16 and often means “store up, treasure.” נֶגֶף refers to an “innocent person” (BDB, 1), who has done nothing to provoke the attack and would not expect it. The adverb לְנֶגְפָה, which recurs in 1:17; 3:30; 23:29; 24:28; 26:2, here means “gratuitously, without any cause or reason.” The person whom the sinners propose to ambush has done no wrong to the attackers. The plan may be to assault someone for no better reason than the amusement of the gang members. (CC)

**1:12** *swallow ... like...pit.* Vivid poetic imagery for shamelessly victimizing others. (CSB)

נִבְלָעִם כְּשֶׁאֵל חַיִּים—The same vocabulary is in Num 16:30–33, where the Lord caused the earth to open up and “swallow” (בָּלַעַ) Korah and his people so that they “descended” (יָרַד, the verb in Prov 1:12b) “alive” (חַיִּים) to “Sheol” (שְׁאוֹל). In Proverbs שְׁאוֹל, “Sheol,” is synonymous with death and the grave (also 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 27:20; 30:16). Some passages emphasize its nuance of being the place of spiritual and eternal death for the damned, that is, hell (e.g., 7:27; 9:18). Some interpreters have asserted that Sheol is a place for all the dead, and therefore they claim the OT has no teaching of an afterlife. However, that is not the case, since Proverbs speaks of the hope for the righteous beyond the grave (23:18; 24:14, 20). Christians recognize this hope as the resurrection on the Last Day (e.g., Dan 12:2–3; Mt 25:31–46; Rev 20:11–15). (CC)

וְהַמְיָיִם כְּיִרְדֵי בֹרַה—The plural adjective הַמְיָיִם “whole,” like the parallel adjective חַיִּים, “alive,” refers back to the object suffix on נִבְלָעִם, “we will swallow *them*.” “Those who go down to the pit,” יִרְדֵי בֹרַה, with the plural participle of יָרַד in construct, refers to the damned who descend into hell, both here and (without בֹרַה) in other passages such as Ezek 26:20; 32:24–25, 29–30 (cf. Is 14:15, 19). בֹרַה can refer to a literal “pit” into which a person can be thrown, either dead (Gen 37:20) or alive and whole (Gen 37:22, 24). As a metaphor, the “pit” (בֹרַה) often designates death and hell, and is a synonym for Sheol, as here and in Prov 28:17. The Lord saves his redeemed people from the pit (Pss 30:4 [ET 30:3]; 40:3 [ET 40:2]). (CC)

**1:13** *precious goods*. By contrast, the book of Proverbs teaches that wisdom brings the greatest riches man could ever gain (3:14–16; 16:16; see also Job 28:12–19). (CSB)

**1:14** *throw in your lot among us* – גִּנְדְּלֶךָ תִּפְּיֵל בְּתוֹכֵנוּ—Here the imperfect תִּפְּיֵל (Hiphil [H] of נָפַל) has imperatival force, “you should cast” or “cast!” (cf. Joüon, § 113 m). The idiom “cast your lot [גִּנְדְּלֶךָ] among us” means “join us,” “share our fate.” This appeal of the gang to the young man shows that its members consider their lives to be a game of random chance and fate; they do not entrust their lives to the God who is Lord over all that happens. (CC)

*one purse*. Promise of acceptance and camaraderie by sharing wealth. The head of the family controlled the wealth, so youth were tempted to gain some money illegally outside family constraints. (TLSB)

כִּיִּם אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֶלְנוּ—The noun כִּיִּם can refer to a “coffer/purse” (Prov 1:14) with gold (Is 46:6) or to a “bag” for weights (Prov 16:11). The “one coffer/purse” means that they will divide and share the wealth equally. (CC)

**1:15-16** Solomon appeals to his son not to adopt the ways of this gang by extending the metaphor of the path (1:15–16). He begins by describing the behavior of the gang as a road or path. After warning his son not even to set foot on that path, he describes the feet of the gang members as running along the path in their hurry to do evil and commit murder. The metaphor is made powerful by the rush of the wicked to carry out their schemes. The path leads to sin, but they are more than anxious to accomplish their treacherous conspiracy. In this way Solomon uses this metaphor to demonstrate the foolishness of their ways. (CC)

**1:15** *hold back your foot*. Resist by God’s power, which is the Gospel (Ti 2:11–12). (TLSB)

*way*. Cf. the destructive paths of the adulteress in 2:18; 7:25. (CSB)

בְּנֵי אֶל־תֵּלֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲתָם—The noun דֶּרֶךְ is often translated as “way,” meaning a road or street. It is used frequently in Proverbs (seventy-six times), usually as a metaphor for a pattern of behavior, either evil (as here) or righteous (e.g., 2:8). The idiom here, “to walk” (the Qal [G] of תֵּלֶךְ) “in/along a way” (בְּדֶרֶךְ) occurs also in 2:13, 20; 7:19 (cf. 3:23; 16:29). דֶּרֶךְ is parallel to its synonym נְתִיבָה, “pathway,” in 1:15; 3:17; 7:25; 12:28 (cf. 8:2). (CC)

**1:16** The same as the first two lines of Isa 59:7 and partially quoted in Ro 3:15. Cf. Pr 6:17–18. (CSB)

*Feet run to evil* – בְּנֵי רַגְלֵיהֶם לָרַע יָרוּצוּ—Both clauses of 1:16 are repeated almost verbatim in Is 59:7. The noun רַגֵּל, “foot, leg,” is feminine, as are most Hebrew words for body parts that occur in pairs, but its suffixed dual (רַגְלֵיהֶם, “their feet”) is the subject of the masculine verb יָרוּצוּ, “they run,” probably because of the preference for the third masculine plural imperfect instead of the rare third feminine plural imperfect (GKC, § 145 u). Or perhaps the whole persons are envisioned as the subject of the verb, as seems to be the case with the verb in the following clause, the Piel (D) imperfect יִמְהָרוּ, “they rush.” (CC)

*haste to shed blood* – The preposition לְ with the noun רַע, “evil, injury, wrong” (BDB, s.v. רַע II, 2) is, literally, “for [the purpose of doing] evil.” This is confirmed by the parallel phrase in the next clause, the Qal (G) infinitive expressing purpose: לְשַׁפֵּךְ־דָּם, “to shed blood.” לָרַע (pausal: לָרַע) or לְרַע occurs in the same sense in Is 59:7; Ps 56:6 (ET 56:5); Eccl 8:9. In form לָרַע could have the generic article (contracted from לְהַרַע, “for *the/that which is evil*”), but לְ without the article often is pointed לְ when prefixed to a monosyllabic noun (here רַע) and when a following word contains the principal pause (the main disjunctive accent in the verse), as does יָרוּצוּ here (GKC, § 102 h). (CC)

**1:17** *in vain* – כִּי־חֲזַנִּים מְזוּרָה הִרְשָׁתָּ—The adverb חֲזַנִּים is repeated from 1:11 but here has the nuance “it is useless, futile.” The feminine noun רְשָׁתָּ, “net” (here in pause with the article: הִרְשָׁתָּ) recurs in Proverbs only in 29:5. It is the subject of the feminine Pual (Dp) participle מְזוּרָה. Elsewhere זָרָה in active stems usually means “to scatter, spread” and passive stems have corresponding passive meanings. A bundled-up net could be “spread” by throwing it so that it expanded and captured birds on the wing or upon the ground. Or a net could also be spread on the ground, and after birds landed on it, it could be pulled together with a drawstring. However, neither method would work if the birds saw the net in time to escape from it. (CC)

Garrett claims that זָרָה cannot be used to describe the spreading of a net. He understands the verse as saying that a bird cannot distinguish between the net and the seed scattered (spread) on it, luring the bird to be caught in the net. In the same way, the gang members cannot perceive the connection between the lure of ill-gotten gain and the trap they are setting for themselves. However, it is difficult to understand how a net (unless it is of a very fine mesh) could be baited with seed merely by scattering seed in it. It is more likely that the verse refers to the action of throwing the net, and the net is spread or unfurled by throwing it outward toward the birds. (CC)

*net.* Nets were used to catch birds and animals (see Ecc 9:12; Isa 51:20; Jer 5:26). (CSB)

Through instruction, God’s people can flee entrapment, like birds aware of a net. (TLSB)

A second metaphor is introduced in 1:17. The figure is of a hunter who is attempting to catch birds in a net. It is useless to put a net out where the birds can easily see it and avoid being captured. Instead, fowling generally sneaked up on birds from behind and threw their net over the birds. However, the gang members cannot see the very obvious trap they are setting for

themselves. Solomon employs irony by depicting them as ambushing themselves. Prov 1:18–19 then concludes the first address by pointing out that this trap is the deadly outcome for all who are greedy. It is not only the gang members who plan violence who fall into such a trap, but also every greedy person who seeks to take advantage of his neighbor. Solomon is warning against greed leading to every kind theft including fraud, embezzlement, and unethical business practices. By demonstrating the inglorious end of the gang members, he is attempting to curb the desire to join others in their sin. (CC)

Very often the wicked get caught in their own scheming. Solomon uses a picture to show the folly of this wrongful pursuit of wealth: it's as ridiculous as trying to catch birds by spreading a net out in the open. You won't catch any birds that way, but may get entangled in the net yourself. (PBC)

*Bird* – בַּעַל כַּנָּף—Translated as “bird” above, the phrase is, literally, “master/owner of a wing.” The noun כַּנָּף, “wing,” recurs in Proverbs only in 23:5. (For צִפּוֹר, “bird,” see 6:5; 7:23; 26:2; 27:8.) This phrase is a poetic way of referring to a bird's unsurpassed skill in flight, since “בַּעַל indicates the owner of an object which embodies his manner, his character or his occupation” (HALOT, A 6). בַּעַל is often used in construct with a word designating a skill, inclination, or occupation, for example, בַּעַל הַחֲלֹמוֹת, “master of dreams,” that is, “expert dreamer” (Gen 37:19); בַּעַל אֲרִיזָה, “master of anger,” that is, “hot-tempered person” (Prov 22:24); בַּעַל גִּבְעוֹן, “master of an appetite,” that is, “person with a big appetite” (Prov 23:2); בַּעַל פְּקֻדָּה, “master of the mustered army,” that is, “[army] officer” (Jer 37:13); בַּעַלֵי חֲצִיצִים, “masters of arrows,” that is, “archers” (Gen 49:23). Thus the meaning here is “a bird, a skillful master of swift and evasive flight.” It does no good to set a trap in plain sight of the birds it is designed to trap since the birds that see it can easily avoid being captured. (CC)

**1:18** *wait for their own blood.* The wicked unintentionally spread a net for their own feet (29:6; Ps 35:8), so they are less intelligent than birds (see 7:22–23). According to Isa 17:14, the lot of those who plunder God's people is destruction. (CSB)

All sin leads to punishment. Sin is often its own punishment. (TLSB)

וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְנֶפֶשׁוֹ לְנֶפֶשׁוֹ—The verbs אָרַב and צָפַן are repeated from 1:11. The two prepositional phrases (לְנֶפֶשׁוֹ ... לְנֶפֶשׁוֹ) use לְ with the nuance of disadvantage (see the first textual note on 1:11). The suffixes in the prepositional phrases refer to the subjects of the verbs and have a reflexive meaning: “for *their own* blood ... for *their own* lives.” The noun נֶפֶשׁ, “life, soul,” occurs fifty-six times in Proverbs and does not simply denote physical life. Rather, it refers to life in communion with God, including spiritual life. Unbelievers may be physically healthy and rich, but still lack “life,” as in 1:19b. (CC)

Moreover, the behavior of the gang members is eternally damaging. They are setting an ambush for their own lives (1:18). They risk dying eternally because of their actions that alienate them from God. Those who are alienated from God, rather than being reconciled to him through the blood of Jesus, shed their own blood and ruin their own spiritual lives. They seek to devour others like Sheol (1:12), but if they perish in sin and unbelief, they will be condemned to Sheol (5:5; 7:27; 9:18) in eternal disgrace (Is 66:24; Dan 12:2). The father and mother are warning their son that though he may have faith now, the lure of the world, the flesh, and the devil are powerful. Paul offered the same advice to the young pastor Timothy and even gave him an example of those who did not listen to Wisdom's words:

This charge I entrust to you, my child Timothy, in accordance with the previous prophecies about you, that by them you may wage the good fight, having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and made shipwreck of their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1 Tim 1:18–20) (CC)

Luther urges us to pray the Lord’s Prayer, especially the Sixth Petition, “and lead us not into temptation” (καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, Mt 6:13), so that we constantly plead with our heavenly Father that he (CC)

would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory. (CC)

**1:19** Cf. Isa 17:14. Contrast the long life enjoyed by the one who hates ill-gotten gain (28:16). (CSB)

In the end, it will cost the wicked their own lives. Even if they should escape judgment in this life, they will not escape God’s judgment. (PBC)

*Everyone who is greedy.* First counsel regarding the pursuit of easy money and violence. Greed and covetousness characterize the fallen human condition. (TLSB)

עֲבֹרָה—The noun אֲרֶז, “path,” is a synonym of דֶּרֶךְ and נִתְיָבָה (see the first textual note on 1:15). The Qal (G) participle עֹבֵר of עָבַר, “be greedy, gain dishonestly,” takes the cognate noun עֲבֹרָה (in pause: עֲבֹרָה), “ill-gotten gain,” as its object. The accent on the participle recedes from the second syllable (עֹבֵר-) to the first, penultimate syllable (-עֹבֵר) in order to avoid two adjacent stressed syllables (עֹבֵר-עֲבֹרָה). See Joüon, § 31 c. (CC)

אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ בְּעֵלְיוֹ יִקַּח—The noun עֲבֹרָה, “ill-gotten gain,” in the preceding clause is the implied subject of the verb יִקַּח, “take away,” and the referent of the objective pronominal suffix on בְּעֵלְיוֹ, “those who possess it.” (CC)

**1:8–19** Solomon warns against joining sinners in their adventurous plots, cautioning that the greedy and violent finally receive their punishment. Through the means of grace, God in Christ strengthens and preserves His people, just as He forgives all our sins for Jesus’ sake. • O Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. (TLSB)

### *The Call of Wisdom*

**20** Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; **21** at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: **22** “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? **23** If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. **24** Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, **25** because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, **26** I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, **27** when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. **28** Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. **29** Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, **30** would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, **31** therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. **32** For the simple are killed by their turning away,

**and the complacency of fools destroys them; 33 but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.”**

1:20–33 First poem about wisdom. (TLSB)

This first of three poetic descriptions of Wisdom reveals Wisdom’s message. The section is a tightly constructed chiasm:<sup>4</sup>

- A Wisdom addresses the crowds (1:20–21)
- B Wisdom calls out to fools (1:22)
- C Wisdom’s invitation and offer (1:23)
- D Wisdom’s offer was rejected (1:24–25)
- E Wisdom’s condemnation (1:26–27)
- D’ Wisdom’s reaction to those who rejected her offer (1:28–30)
- C’ The consequence of not accepting Wisdom’s invitation (1:31)
- B’ Wisdom speaks about the self-destruction of fools (1:32)
- A’ Wisdom addresses the crowds (1:33)

The description of Wisdom begins by clearly indicating that Wisdom is available to all (A; 1:20–21). Wisdom declares her song publicly. The four lines of 1:20–21 cover the entire city: outside or publicly; in the open squares; at the head of the crowded, noisy streets; and at the gates, the entrances to the city. Solomon emphasizes that no one has an excuse for being without Wisdom, which God offers to all freely.

After describing Wisdom’s availability by grace, the poem presents her song in her own words. The “how long” (1:22 ,יַדְמִינִי) that opens her call to the foolish (B) sounds a note of exasperation as she raises the question about the continued ignorant behavior of gullible people, mockers, and fools. This is followed by her invitation (C; 1:23). Wisdom’s appeal here begins with the Law and moves quickly to the Gospel. She speaks of a warning that is intended to drive her hearers to see their need for God’s Spirit, whom God promises to “pour out”<sup>6</sup> and who works through his Word. This is divine Wisdom speaking: God himself offers enlightenment that cures foolishness.

The rejection of Wisdom’s offer (D; 1:24–25) mirrors the experience of the prophets when they brought God’s message. This culminates in the rejection suffered by Israel’s greatest Prophet, Jesus.<sup>c</sup> He is the Wisdom of God incarnate, but the world deems the Gospel of Christ crucified to be foolishness (1 Cor 1:18–31). The stretching out of the hand as a gesture of invitation (Prov 1:24) serves to heighten the contrast between Wisdom’s gracious offer and the callous rejection it received.

The center of Wisdom’s song (E; 1:26–27) brings her condemnation in two carefully constructed verses involving interlocked chiasms. This highlights the vulnerability of those who reject Wisdom’s offer. Note the major chiasm:

<sup>26</sup>So I will laugh at *your calamity* [חֲסָדֶיךָ].  
I will make fun [of you] when *your fear* [פַּחַדְךָ] strikes,

<sup>27</sup>when *your fear* [פַּחַדְךָ] strikes like a violent storm,  
when *your calamity* [חֲסָדֶיךָ] strikes like a windstorm.

The two verbs in 1:26 are parallel to each other (“I will laugh at ... I will make fun”) as are the two nouns in 1:27 (“a violent storm ... a windstorm”). In addition, 1:26 is itself chiasmic in its word order. The first line of 1:26 concludes with a prepositional phrase with אֲתָ (“at, when”) and a first person verb, then the second line begins with a first person verb and prepositional phrase with אֲתָ (“at, when”). These are reflected in this literal translation:

At your calamity I will laugh.                      בְּאִדְכֶם אֲשַׂחֵק

I will make fun of when comes your  
fear.                      אֲלַעֵג בְּבֹא פְחַדְכֶם

The two verbs are adjacent in the center of 1:26, surrounded on either side by prepositional phrases. This word order forms a sharp contrast with 1:25, where the verbs were at the start and end of the verse and their direct objects were adjacent in the center, as reflected by this literal translation:

You ignored all my advice.                      וְתִפְרַעוּ כָּל־מַצְחָתִי

My warning you did not accept.                      וְתוֹכְחָתִי לֹא אָבִיתֶם

Finally, 1:27 forms its own chiasm. Its first and third lines have the same grammatical structure: a verbal temporal clause (בְּבֹא) with the subject noun(s) last. The second line has the inverse structure: the subject noun is first, and the verb is last. This is reflected in this literal rendition:

When comes like a storm your fear,                      בְּבֹא כְשֶׁאֵוָה | פְּחַדְכֶם

your calamity like a windstorm arrives,                      וְאִדְכֶם כְּסוּפָה יֵאָתֶה

when comes upon you trouble and distress.                      בְּבֹא מְעִלְיֶכֶם צָרָה וְצוּקָה

The rejection of Wisdom’s offer (D; 1:24–25) is carefully matched to Wisdom’s reaction against those who rejected her offer (D’; 1:28–30) by the repetition of several verbs and nouns.

- I called (1:24, קָרָאתִי).
- They will call to me (1:28, יִקְרָאֵנִי).
- You did not accept (1:25, לֹא אָבִיתֶם).
- They would not accept (1:30, לֹא־אָבִוּ).
- All my advice (1:25, כָּל־מַצְחָתִי).
- My advice (1:30, מַצְחָתִי).
- And my warning (1:25, וְתוֹכְחָתִי).
- All my warning (1:30, כָּל־תוֹכְחָתִי).

Note that 1:29 is not included in this echo of 1:24–25. Instead, 1:29 echoes 1:7, and it also stands out as the chief theological accusation, the reason why the rejecters will suffer the consequences. It explains why Wisdom will now reject them (as stated in 1:28). They have elected not to have “knowledge” and “the fear of Yahweh” (1:29), key terminology from the declaration that is foundational and programmatic for the entire book: “the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7). This serves as a stark warning to those who read Wisdom’s song. They are not to neglect the benefits Proverbs offers from its very beginning (1:7).

The self-destruction of those who are determined to be fools (B’; 1:32) stands in contrast to Wisdom’s call to fools (B; 1:22). Now we see the result of gullible people’s love for their gullibility (1:22): they kill themselves (1:32a). In a similar vein we are told the result of fools’ hatred of knowledge and complacency in the face of Wisdom’s offer: they destroy themselves (1:32b).

A close parallel exists between the warning that those who reject Wisdom will seek her but not find her (Prov 1:28) and the warning by Jesus that those who reject him will seek him but not find him (Jn 7:32–36). This applies especially to Judgment Day, when all unbelievers will be overcome by everlasting “fear” and “distress” (Prov 1:26–27), yet it will be too late for them to repent and be saved (cf. Dan 12:2–3; Mt 25:31–46).

Yet despite the fools’ rejection of Wisdom and her consequent rejection of them, she ends her song with another call to everyone who will listen (1:33). The promise contrasts the panic of fools who reject her offer (1:26–27) to the security of all who respond to her call. This, of course, is the everlasting security that God offers to all in the Gospel of Christ with the free invitation for anyone and everyone to believe and be saved (e.g., Jn 3:14–16; 6:47; 7:37–38; 11:25–26). Jesus reassures his flock that they have this security under his loving care when he promises:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish. Neither will anyone pluck them out of my hand. (Jn 10:27–28)

The father’s third section of instruction to his son about Wisdom (3:1–20) and the second poem on divine Wisdom (8:1–36) both directly point to the second person of the Trinity: God the Son, Jesus Christ. This first poem on Wisdom in 1:20–33 points to him only indirectly, via the verbal and theological parallels to the words of Jesus in the Gospels (cf. also 1 Cor 1:18–31). Nevertheless, Wisdom surely is divine here, because she offers security of life that the world cannot offer (1:33). This everlasting life comes through the work of all three persons of the Godhead.

Therefore, we see in this first poem on divine Wisdom that Solomon, the wise teacher, begins by introducing Wisdom without burdening his students with many details. Later he refines his words and further defines Wisdom as his son or his readers learn more and can understand more details. He introduces Wisdom in this poem, gives more Christological information about Wisdom in his third address (3:1–20), and climaxes with a full-blown treatment of Christ, the preexistent Wisdom of God, in the second Wisdom poem in 8:1–36. (CC)

**1:20** *Wisdom cries aloud.* Here and in 3:15–18; 8; 9:1–12 wisdom is personified. This is a poetic device common also in Isaiah (cf. 55:12; 59:14). (CSB)

Wisdom, personified as a woman, freely, clearly, and directly proclaims to all, excluding no one. (TLSB)

הַחֲכָמָה בְּתוֹרַת בְּתוּרָה—The abstract plural of חֲכָמָה in the form חֲכָמוֹת refers to personified or hypostatized “Wisdom” in 1:20; 9:1; 24:7 (cf. 14:1) and also Ps 49:4 (ET 49:3). The form is somewhat unusual because the expected pointing of the plural would be חֲכָמוֹת (Jouion, § 88M k). It is the subject of the Qal (G) third feminine plural imperfect בְּתוֹרָה from בָּרַן, “cry aloud, in summons, exhortation” (BDB, 3). The same plural verb form recurs in 8:3 (בְּתוֹרָה), where its subject is the feminine singular (8:1) חֲכָמָה. (CC)

*khok-moth'*, every wise [woman]. – Here, for the first time in Proverbs, we see wisdom personified. The fact that wisdom is depicted as calling out in the street indicates that wisdom is practical for the man in the street. Moreover, wisdom is also the leaders, since wisdom call aloud also in the sheltered gateways of ancient cities where the city elders would meet to discuss important matters of business. (PBC)

*raises her voice* – בָּרַן חֲכָמָה—The noun רֹחַב refers to an open area or plaza in a city (HALOT). The idiom בָּרַן קוֹל, literally, “to give one’s voice,” means “to raise one’s voice, speak up.” The implied subject of the feminine singular verb בָּרַן and the referent of the feminine

singular pronominal suffix on קולֶהָ is the feminine plural “Wisdom” (חֵכְמוֹת) in the preceding clause. (CC)

*noisy streets.* Open areas inside the gate of a fortified city. (CSB)

The noun חָוֶי can simply mean “outside” (*HALOT*, 1 a and 2), as in 22:13. Wisdom is pictured here as taking her message outside, that is, making it public. Here בְּחָוֶי is often translated as “in the streets,” to match the urban plural parallel בָּרְחֹבוֹת, “in the open squares,” in the next clause. However, the more general adverbial rendering “outside” or “publicly” is better. (CC)

**1:21** *cries aloud...raises her voice* – בְּרָאֵשׁ הַמְלִיֹּת הִתְקַרְא – The participle הַמְלִיֹּת is from the verb הִקְרָא, “to make a noise” (*HALOT*, 1), which can describe a noisy crowd or as here, noisy, bustling streets. For this form of the Qal (G) feminine plural participle, see GKC, § 75 v. For the first two Hebrew words, the LXX has ἐπ’ ἄκρων δὲ τειχέων, “and on top of the walls,” apparently reading חֲמוֹת instead of הַמְלִיֹּת. (CC)

*entrance.* Where the leaders of the city met to hold court (see 31:23; Ru 4:11; Job 29:7) and where the marketplace was located (2Ki 7:1). As a young man confronts life in its social context, two voices lure him, appeal for his allegiance, and seek to shape his life: (1) the voice of wisdom (as exemplified in the instructions of the teachers of wisdom) and (2) the voice of folly (as exemplified in the sinners of vv. 10–14 and in the adulteress of 5:3; 6:24; 7:5). Thus in the midst of life the youth must learn to exercise discretion. Here and in chs. 8–9 wisdom makes her appeal. She speaks neither out of heaven (by special revelation, as do the prophets) nor out of the earth (through voices from the dead—necromancy; see Lev 19:31; Dt 18:11; 1Sa 28:7–19), but out of the center of the life of the city, where man’s communal experience of the creation order (established by God’s wisdom, 8:22–31) is concentrated. And it is there also that the godly, the truly wise, test human experience in the crucible of faith and afterward give divine wisdom a human voice in their wise instructions—as in Proverbs. (CSB)

Gathering places in ancient communities. In social situations, godly wisdom is often challenged. (TLSB)

בְּפֶתַח יִשְׁעֵיךָ בְּנֵי – The noun פֶּתַח is the “opening” in which a door fits, and thus it denotes an “entrance” (*HALOT*, 1). (CC)

God’s saving Word goes out to all. It calls to people to turn to Christ, the wisdom of God and be saved. (PBC)

**1:22** *how long* – In teaching the way of wisdom, the Lord though his inspired writers often does so by using contrast. As a skilled artist who sets his subject matter against a contrasting background, the Lord sets the bright gem of wisdom against the dismal backdrop of foolishness. Here we see some of that backdrop. (PBC)

*simple* – *peth-ee’, peh’-thee, peth-aw-ee’* – *silly* (that is, *seducible*):—foolish. – Translated it has the root meaning “to be open.” It refers to a person of undecided views, who is wide open and susceptible to bad as well as good influences. (PBC) – He drifts along aimlessly until he falls easy prey to temptation. Of the various types of fool, this one is the least hardened. If this “simple” person doesn’t learn, he may well move to the next level of foolishness and become a full-fledged “fool.” (PBC)

פְּתִימִים תִּאֲהָבוּ עַד־מָתַי | פְּתִימִים תִּאֲהָבוּ פְּתִי—This is, literally, “until when will you gullible people love gullibility?” For the adjective and substantive פְּתִי, see “פְּתִי, ‘Gullible Person’ ” in “Fools in Proverbs” in the introduction. For the pointing of the Qal (G) imperfect תִּאֲהָבוּ, “you will love,” see GKC, § 63 m. The second person verb shows that Wisdom is addressing the gullible directly in the vocative, “you gullible people.” For the lack of an article on the vocative פְּתִיִּם, see Joüon, § 137 g. The noun פְּתִי (so BDB) in pause (פְּתִי), “gullibility, naïveté,” is the direct object of the verb. It occurs only here in the OT and obviously is cognate to the adjective. (CC)

*simple ... scoffers ... fools.* A cry against those content in their immaturity, those who delight in scoffing, and those who resist the way of the Lord. (TLSB)

*scoffers.* Those who are proud and arrogant (21:24), who are full of insults, hatred and strife (9:7–8; 22:10; 29:8), who resist correction (13:1; 15:12) even though they deserve flogging (19:25; 21:11). (CSB)

וְלִצְוֹן לְצֹן חֲמָדוֹ לָהֶם—See “לָץ, ‘Mocker,’ and לִצְוֹן, ‘Mocking, Scoffing’ ” in “Fools in Proverbs” in the introduction. The participle לִצְוֹן and the cognate noun לִצְוֹן are adjacent in Hebrew, but English translation requires separating them: literally, “and mockers desire for themselves [חֲמָדוֹ לָהֶם] mocking.” (CC)

*fools* – It’s important to remember that when the Bible in general – Proverbs in particular – speaks of foolishness, it points to a moral and spiritual condition. We should not confuse this lack of academic prowess or low IQ. Whether observing the fool, mocker, or the one who is lazy, the believer realizes, “There but for the grace of God go I.” King Saul began his reign wisely, only to fall into sins and have to admit, “I have acted like a fool” (1 Samuel 26:21). Even the author of the Book of Proverbs, wise King Solomon himself, became such a fool that he later fell into idolatry! (1 Kings 11:4-11) (PBC)

יִשְׂנְאוּ דַעַת—See “כְּסִיל, ‘Fool,’ and כְּסִילוּת, ‘Foolishness’ ” in “Fools in Proverbs” in the introduction for the noun כְּסִיל, which recurs in 1:32. For the noun דַּעַת, which recurs in 1:29, see “דַּעַת, ‘Knowledge,’ and יָדַע, ‘to Know’ ” in “Wisdom in Proverbs” in the introduction. The verb יִשְׂנֵא, “to hate,” is the antonym of אָהַב, “to love,” in 1:22a, but in context both denote foolish behavior. (CC)

**1:23 turn.** Hbr *shub*, common OT word for repentance. Wisdom does not simply compel us to get an education but to repent and trust in the Lord (cf v 29b). (TLSB)

תִּשׁוּבוּ לְתוֹכְחָתִי הִנֵּה ...—The Qal (G) of שׁוּב often means “to turn” to God in repentance, that is, in contrition and faith (cf. BDB, 6 c, d, e). It is followed by the particle הִנֵּה, “behold,” here used here to introduce a concluding sentence (*HALOT*, 7). This implies that the imperfect תִּשׁוּבוּ introduces a conditional clause: “if you turn, then [הִנֵּה] I will pour out ...” (cf. GKC, § 159 d). (CC)

*Reproof* – The noun תּוֹכְחָה occurs sixteen times in Proverbs, including 1:25, 30. It is derived from the verb יָכַח (see the first textual note on 3:12). The noun denotes a “reproof” (*HALOT*, 1 b), that is, a “criticism.” However, in Proverbs it is often used in the sense of constructive criticism intended for the good of the hearer or reader. The English word “warning” or “correction” fits well here and elsewhere in Proverbs. A good indication of this is 15:31, which uses the phrase יְיָיִת תּוֹכְחָת, which denotes a warning that preserves the life of those who heed it, a “life-giving warning.” (CC)

*pour out my spirit.* Wisdom is like a fountain. Her words would constantly refresh and strengthen (see 18:4). (CSB)

The Law is pronounced (v 22) so that the Good News of God’s love and grace might be proclaimed to receptive hearers. (TLSB)

אֶגְבִּיעָה לְכֶם רוּחִי—The Hiphil (H) stem of the verb נָבַע has the transitive meaning “to pour out” here. It recurs in negative contexts in 15:2, 28, where a mouth of a fool or wicked person “spouts” stupidity or evil. In the Qal (G) in 18:4, it refers to a stream “flowing” with water. (CC)

*spirit.* Hbr *ruach*, here the Spirit of the Lord, who works through the Word. (TLSB)

The direct object, “my Spirit,” is the only time in Proverbs where רִיחַ refers to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The collocation of a verb associated with water and the “Spirit” may recall Gen 1:2. Later, prophets speak Yahweh’s promise to pour out his Spirit as life-giving water (Is 44:3) and to sprinkle his people with cleansing water as he confers his Spirit (Ezek 36:25–27; cf. Eph 5:26). The NT affirms that God bestows his Spirit and regenerates through Baptism into Christ. (E.g., Acts 2:38–39; Titus 3:5–6; 1 Pet 3:21; cf. Mt 3:16; 28:19; Jn 3:5; Eph 4:4–5) (CC)

Literally, pour out His spirit. But when He receives nothing but rejection, wisdom will stop calling. This can happen to individuals, to entire nations (Isaiah 1:4), and church bodies. Jesus Himself had to proclaim this harsh reality to some of His followers: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe” (John 6:63,64). (PBC)

**1:24** *refused to listen.* As God was rejected by Israel (see Isa 1:4; 5:24) and Jesus by the people of Jerusalem (Mt 23:37). (CSB)

וְאִין מִקְשִׁיב—This is, literally, “and there was not [anyone] paying attention.” The Hiphil (H) of קָשַׁב means “heed, give one’s attention to.” It refers positively to listening to divine wisdom in 2:2; 4:1, 20; 5:1; 7:24. It negatively refers to believing lies in 17:4 and 29:12. (CC)

*stretched out my hand.* Cf. Isa 65:2, where God held out his hands all day long to a stubborn people. (CSB)

**1:25** *ignored all my counsel.* וְתִפְרְעוּ כָּל־עֲצָתִי—The Qal (G) of פָּרַע often means “let go, let loose,” but in Proverbs it means “ignore, neglect” (1:25; 8:33; 13:18; 15:32) or “avoid” (4:15). For the noun עֲצָה, which recurs in 1:30, see “עֲצָה, ‘Advice,’ and יוֹעֵץ, ‘Advisor’ ” in “Wisdom in Proverbs” in the introduction. (CC)

*Accept my reproof* – וְתוֹכַחְתִּי לֹא אָבִיתָם—“You did not accept my warning” renders this clause with אָבָה, “to be willing” or “to consent to” something (HALOT, 3). See also the textual note on 1:30, where it recurs. (CC)

**1:26** *laugh at your calamity.* Not an expression of heartlessness but a reaction to the absurdity of fools, who laugh at wisdom and bring disaster on themselves. Cf. the Lord’s response to kings who think they can rebel against him (Ps 2:4). (CSB)

Words expressing righteous recognition of the true consequences for failing to listen to wisdom’s call. (TLSB)

אֶלְעֵג בְּבֹא פִּהְדָּכֶם—The verbs פִּהְדָּכֶם and אֶלְעֵג, “make fun of, mock,” are parallel with God as subject also in Pss 2:4; 59:9 (ET 59:8). Compare אֶלְעֵג alone with God as subject in Job 9:23. In Proverbs אֶלְעֵג recurs in 17:5 and 30:17 referring to sinful human ridicule. (CC)

*calamity...upon you.* Also the fate of “a scoundrel and villain” (6:12–15). (CSB)

גַּם־אֲנִי בְּאֵי־דַכְּךָ אֶשְׂחָק—The noun אֵי, “calamity, disaster, ruin,” recurs in 1:27; 6:15; 17:5; 24:22; 27:10. God “laughs” (אֶשְׂחָק) at the wicked also in Pss 2:4; 37:13; 59:9 (ET 59:8), showing his supreme power over them and their evil schemes. (CC)

The use of בְּ with an infinitive construct (בֹּא) forms a temporal clause: “when your fear comes.” בְּבֹא recurs twice in 1:27. However, in English idiom, fear does not “come” but “strikes.” Using “come” here would be understandable, but may be taken by an English reader to indicate something unusual or awkward in the underlying Hebrew, since this is not the normal English construction. However, the Hebrew expression is *not* indicating anything usual and is not awkward Hebrew. Therefore, the correct corresponding English phrasing has been used in this and the following verse. (CC)

Note that the noun for “fear” in 1:26–27 is not יְרֵאָה, which is used to denote “the fear of Yahweh” (e.g., 1:7, 29), the positive relationship of the child of God to the heavenly Father. Instead, the noun פֶּחַד in 1:26–27 is “fear” that leads to panic when a recalcitrant unbeliever must face the consequences of his sins without Christ as his mediator before a wrathful God. However, this kind of “fear” is removed for the believer; see פֶּחַד in 1:33 and 3:25 and the verb פֶּחַד in 3:24 (cf. Mt 28:5, 10; Mk 5:36; 1 Jn 4:18). (CC)

**1:27** *like a whirlwind.* Hbr signifies a crashing storm that results in great devastation. (TLSB)

קִשְׁאוֹה—The Qere is קִשְׁאוֹה, while the Kethib is קִשְׁאוֹה, which appears to be a metathesis with ו and א interchanged. The noun קִשְׁאוֹה refers to a storm with violent consequences (*HALOT*, 1 c). קִשְׁאוֹה recurs in 3:25. Modern Hebrew uses it to refer to the holocaust. The Kethib, קִשְׁאוֹה, also would mean “devastating storm” (BDB). The parallel noun in the next clause, סִיפָה, “windstorm” (used also in 10:25), is a synonym that has the same preposition, כְּ, forming another simile (“like”). (CC)

The Hebrew term for “storm” signifies a storm that causes devastation. Such is the end of those who foolishly reject God’s wisdom. (PBC)

*distress and anguish.* צָרָה וְצִיָּקָה—These are more general terms that refer literally (not in a simile) to the consequences of rejecting divine Wisdom. The feminine noun צָרָה, “trouble, distress, straits,” recurs in 11:8; 12:13; 17:17; 21:23; 24:10; 25:19 and derives from the verb צָרַר, “bind, be cramped, be in distress.” The rare feminine noun צִיָּקָה, “distress,” is a synonym that occurs elsewhere in the OT only in Is 8:22; 30:6. (CC)

**1:28** *will not find me.* Just as God refused to listen to Israel when the people sinned (Dt 1:45; Isa 1:15). (CSB)

God comes to us; we cannot come to Him. Those who consistently reject God and His grace finally shut out the Holy Spirit entirely; this is the unforgivable sin (Mt 12:31–32). (TLSB)

Those who find wisdom find life and blessing (see v. 32; 3:13; 8:17, 35). – Many people put off God’s Word as if it’s something they’ll get around to later in life. The tragic fact is that most people who reject the Word in their youth won’t be able to grasp it in their old age either. Their hearts and minds will be too hardened. (CSB)

Procrastination is not a virtue, especially in spiritual matters. “Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).(PBC)

**1:29** *because* – כִּי תַּחַת—This combination of preposition and conjunction occurs only here and in Deut 4:37 (cf. Is 51:6). It means “for the reason that” (*HALOT*, 4 ,תַּחַת c), as the Greek γάρ often does (e.g., Mt 1:20; Rom 1:19). (CC)

*fear the LORD.* Theme of Proverbs. (TLSB)

### **Appropriate Fear**

“The fear of the LORD” is a key concept throughout the OT. Unfortunately, the Hebrew noun *yir’ah* that is translated “fear” (or the verb “to fear”) does not communicate itself through any single word in English translation. What does “the fear of the LORD” really mean?

For us, the word *fear* often has a negative connotation, namely, to be afraid of something or someone. The Hebrew term can mean that. For example, when Jacob prepared to meet his brother, Esau, he feared. Jacob had fled from Esau years before because he had tricked Esau out of his birthright. Jacob prayed to God, “Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I *fear* him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children” (Gn 32:11). But the word *fear* can have other shades of meaning. When referring to a person of high position, it takes on the idea of standing in awe or reverence before that individual. God wants us to fear Him in this sense. He is our Creator, and He is our Savior. How can we ever think of God with indifference or treat Him lightly?

Abraham illustrates a proper “fear of the LORD.” When Abraham traveled into the region ruled by Abimelech, he sensed that the king and his people were ruthless and would kill him just to get his beautiful wife Sarah. “Abraham said, ‘I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife’ ” (Gn 20:11). The Lord God wants us to have a healthy reverence of Him so that we respect Him and His Word as Abraham did. (TLSB)

### **Fear in Proverbs**

Proverbs points out that true wisdom begins with such fear. The opening verses sum up the entire Book:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Pr 1:7)

This fear is closely related to trust because we can truly respect and reverence God only when we believe that He is truly everything that His Word, the Bible, says He is. Understanding “fear of the LORD” as trust helps us understand other enigmatic Bible passages such as Ps 130:4:

But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared.

The idea of fearing God occurs repeatedly throughout the Book of Proverbs: 1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:2, 16, 26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 24:21; 28:14; 31:30. (TLSB)

**1:30** *my council* – לֹא־אָבוּ לְעֵצָתִי—The verb אָבָה is repeated from 1:25b but here with the indirect object “to my advice” (לְ with עֵצָתִי, which was in 1:25a). The proper English idiom to express consent to advice received is “take advice” or “accept advice.” (CC)

**1:31** *shall eat ... have their fill*. The consequences depend on their actions (18:20; 31:31; Isa 3:10). “A man reaps what he sows” (Gal 6:7). (CSB)

וַיֵּאָכְלוּ מִפְּרֵי דַרְכָּם—The Qal (G) of אָכַל, “eat,” can have the figurative meaning “of receiving [the] consequences of [one’s] action, good or [as here] bad” (BDB, 1), as also in 18:21. The consequences are מִפְּרֵי דַרְכָּם, literally, “from the fruit of their way.” The preposition מִן is used idiomatically here and in the next clause with verbs of eating or being filled “from” a source of food. See BDB, s.v. 2, מן, b (b). (CC)

וַיִּמְמַעְצְתֵיהֶם יִשְׂבְּעוּ—The Qal (G) of שָׂבַע, “be filled, satiated,” can be used with the preposition מִן attached to the food eaten (BDB, 1 c; HALOT, 6). Here the eating is metaphorical; the food in this case is the result of the “advice” (the plural of מְעַצָּה) of those who reject divine Wisdom. The verb שָׂבַע is used with מִן with a similar metaphorical meaning in 12:14; 14:14; 18:20. (CC)

**1:32** *turning away* – תִּהְרֹגֵם—The noun מְשׁוּבָה means “turning away” from God or “apostasy” (HALOT). It is the subject of the feminine Qal (G) imperfect הֲרֹגֵם, “will kill/kills them.” Those who abandon the advice and guidance of divine Wisdom do so to their own peril. 4QProv<sup>a</sup> contains the variant reading מוֹשְׁכַת, to be vocalized מוֹשְׁכַת, the plural of מוֹשְׁכַת in construct: “cords of.” It may be that a scribe was bothered by the “turning” that kills, since the root of the noun מְשׁוּבָה is the verb שׁוּב, which was used positively meaning “to turn (to God), repent” in 1:23. So the scribe borrowed the plural noun מוֹשְׁכַת from Job 38:31 (the only OT occurrence of מוֹשְׁכַת) in order to change the text to mean “the cords of gullible people kill them.” Alternately, מוֹשְׁכַת may be a simple case of graphic confusion of כ for ב and the later addition of a ו as a *mater lectionis* in the wrong place. (CC)

*complacency*. A false sense of security (see Isa 32:9; Am 6:1; Zep 1:12). (CSB)

Those who deny and reject God so they may continue in sin have plotted their own destruction. (TLSB)

וְשִׁלוֹת כְּסִילִים הָאֲבָדִים—The feminine noun שִׁלוֹת can refer positively to “quietness” (17:1), but here it denotes the lack of concern that a sinner ought to have, but does not have. Thus “complacency” is an appropriate translation. It is the subject of the feminine imperfect הָאֲבָדִים. The Piel (D) of אָבַד has a causative meaning: “to cause to perish, destroy.” (CC)

### Fools in Proverbs

God often teaches the way of wisdom by using contrast. As a skilled artist sets his or her subject matter against a contrasting background, so the Lord, through His inspired writers, sets the bright gem of wisdom against the dismal backdrop of foolishness.

When the Bible in general—and Proverbs in particular—speaks of foolishness, the first and most important point to remember is that it describes a moral and *spiritual* condition. We should not confuse foolishness with lack of academic prowess or a low IQ. Some people who are brilliant may, in God’s eyes, be fools. For example, Ps 14:1 and 53:1 state, “The fool says in his heart,

‘There is no God.’ ” In Proverbs, the fool is one who does not have a proper fear of the Lord. Consequently, such a person is likely to deny God’s Word.

The Hebrew language in which Proverbs was originally written makes a distinction among different kinds of foolishness or fools. Awareness of these differences will help you more fully appreciate the message of Proverbs.

**The simple**Hbr *pethi*, the person who is easily lured or deceived; gullible. Of the various types of fools, this one is the least hardened in his or her foolishness. These naive and inexperienced people drift along aimlessly, until they fall easy prey to temptation (14:15). Such gullibility, of course, is not an excuse for sinning. Gullible people are responsible for their actions and may even end up killing themselves (1:32). In Pr 7, Solomon observes the gullible people and notes one who is drifting along aimlessly, ripe for a prostitute’s picking. If they are to escape their ways “and live,” the gullible need wisdom (9:4–6). Indeed, wisdom invites them by calling out, “Whoever is gullible, turn in here!”

**The fool**Hbr *kesil*; if the gullible person doesn’t learn, he or she may well move to the next level of foolishness and become a regular fool. This Hbr word is used 50 times in Proverbs and is the Book’s most common term for fool. In the end, “fools die for lack of sense” (10:21).

**Stubborn fool**Hbr *’ewil*, occurs 20 times in Proverbs. What can be said about the “generic fool” can also be said about this fool. As the term “stubborn” implies, however, the individual at this level of foolishness is more hardened and persistent. “Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance” (14:9). This category of fool is connected to the word for foolishness and stupidity, or folly. Sadly, it’s a trait often found in children: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (22:15). As the child becomes a grown-up, the trait is even more difficult to correct: “Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him” (27:22).

**The godless fool**Hbr *nabal*, appears only three times in Proverbs. This is the word used in the psalms quoted earlier in this article. Those people who say to themselves, “There is no God.” Their mind is

closed; they have rejected the Lord. This word is used in Pr 30:21–23, which states that one of four things under which the earth trembles is “a fool when he is filled with food.” Once such a person’s physical needs are satisfied, who knows what havoc he or she will bring to others? We find the epitome of this boorish and domineering fool in the man named Nabal (1Sm 25). He was “harsh and badly behaved” (v 3), and one of his own servants said of him, “He is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him” (v 17).

### Scripture and the Fool

As we look closely at the fool in Proverbs and the rest of Scripture, we come face-to-face with sinful human beings and with the “natural man.” In other words, we see ourselves. The believer realizes, “There but for the grace of God go I.” Even the author and compiler of Proverbs, wise King Solomon, became such a fool that he fell into idolatry (1Ki 11:4–11). As long as we are in this world, we will struggle against giving in to our sinful, foolish tendencies.

The remedy for foolishness is for God’s Word to remain our daily companion (Pr 2:1). The foolishness of the world is overcome by the foolishness of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1Co 3:18). It comes down to this: to know Christ and Him crucified is to know God’s wisdom (1Co 1:23–25). His forgiveness destroys our sinful foolishness. Through the Savior, we become truly wise and able to offer that wisdom to others as well. (TLSB)

**1:33** *whoever listens* – Happily, this section of warning concludes on a positive note. The Lord watches over us and physically protects us. Even if He should allow bodily harm to come our way, we know that spiritually and eternally we still rest in His almighty arms. (PBC)

God’s grace gives peace and security to His own. (TLSB)

*secure ... at ease.* Words used of places that enjoy God’s protection (see Isa 32:18; Eze 34:27). (CSB)

חַטָּט לִי יִשְׁכַּן בְּטוֹט—The noun חַטָּט, “safety, security,” occurs four times in Proverbs and always has an adverbial meaning, “safely, securely,” whether it has the preposition (29, 3:23) לִי or does not (1:33; 10:9). Twice it modifies a verb for “live, dwell”: יִשְׁכַּן here and יָשַׁב in 3:29. Twice it modifies הֵלֵךְ, “to walk, go”: in 3:23 and 10:9. (CC)

הַיָּשׁוּב מִפְּחַד רָעָה—The verb יָשׁוּב occurs only in the Paal (D) stem (see GKC, § 55 d) and means “to be secure, at rest.” The preposition מִן has a privative sense, “without,” and the construct phrase הַיָּשׁוּב מִפְּחַד רָעָה contains a genitive of source, “fear at/caused by evil.” (CC)

Only by the grace of God and through His Word do we become wise and continue to grow in wisdom. The remedy against foolishness is to make God’s words our daily companion. (PBC)

**1:20–33** God’s will is freely proclaimed and may be universally received. His Law and His grace are for all people, for He desires all to be saved (1Tm 2:4). Those who turn their backs on God

and His will face condemnation. But those who believe in Jesus as their Savior can rest secure, now and forever, in His love and care. • Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word and faith. Amen. (TLSB)