

## Introduction to God’s Situational Handbook, (Proverbs).

As we begin to go through the book of Proverbs, it is essential, if we are to fully recover some of the treasures hidden in this book, we must understand certain truths and concepts and tools used before we delve into this study.

First a word about my use of different translations as learning tools within the same context of a given passage: As many of you know who have been studying along with me for a while, I use the NASB or the Holman when individual words or word phrases have specific meanings that are often missed in other translations. I use the NLT when the ease of reading, clarity of content, or the writer’s intent is what is important to our understanding [very occasionally KJV or NIV]. My intention when switching translations is never to manipulate the Word of God, forcing it into any predetermined theology, rather, it is to clearly articulate the Word of God as we meditate upon it together. Also, please continue to remember that while I use the Old Testament to gain a better understanding of the New Testament, keep in mind that we live under the New Covenant of Grace, Mercy, and Forgiveness.

Solomon is credited with writing or collecting the wisdom contained in the book of the Proverbs. He is also credited with being the king that accumulated the most power Israel has ever experienced, because of his great wisdom. His immense wisdom was not a result acquired by being naturally born or the inherited trait of common sense, it was a gift from God. In 1st Kings 3:5 we read: That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, *"What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"* <sup>[NLT]</sup> Solomon, to his credit, didn’t treat this gift lightly as the comics do with the theme of “Genie in a bottle” jokes; rather he requested of God; *"Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great nation of yours?"* <sup>1st Kings 3:9 [NLT]</sup>

Our Lord replied . . . *"Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people and have not asked for a long life or riches for yourself or the death of your enemies—* <sup>[12]</sup> *I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding mind such as no one else has ever had or ever will have!* <sup>1st Kings 3:11-12 [NLT]</sup> The proof of God’s benevolent gift is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 10:24: *People from every nation came to visit him and to hear the wisdom God had given him.* <sup>[NLT]</sup>

Born in 1011 B.C. in Jerusalem, Solomon reigned in Israel from 971 to 931 B.C. Solomon’s mother was Bathsheba, a wife of King David. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:24-25 we read; *Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba and went in to her*

and lay with her, and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the Lord loved him and sent word through Nathan the prophet, <sup>[25]</sup> and he named him **\*Jedidiah for the Lord's sake.** <sup>[NASB]</sup>

**\*Yedideyah** (*yed-ee-deh-yaw'*); “beloved of Yah,” Yahh, yaw; Jah, the sacred, most fervent name of the Lord.

Statistically, Solomon is described as the third king of the United Monarchy, and the final king before the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah split; following the split, his patrilineal descendants ruled over Judah alone. Over the course of his life, Solomon collected the wisdom and sayings in the world that were aligned with his God-given wisdom and recorded them for posterity in the Hebrew book of Proverbs. Eccles. 12:9: *In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher [qoheleth, {ko-heh'-leth}; assembler] also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs.* <sup>[NASB]</sup>

As Ecclesiastics informs us, these are categorized and arranged. There is a semblance of order that can, perhaps, best be understood through the eyes of a young fellow just starting out in life, beginning with Proverbs 1:7: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.* <sup>NASB</sup>

How can we know for sure that these proverbs align themselves with God's advice since some were collected from the wisdom of men? To begin with, unlike human proverbs these proverbs never contradict themselves. For instance, human proverbs say:

- ✓ Look before you leap, yet another says, he who hesitates is lost.
- ✓ You get what you pay for, compared to the best things in life are free.
- ✓ Leave well enough alone, compared to a rolling stone gathers no moss.

Or some that are simply not true, like the one that says, “God helps them who help themselves.” Our heavenly Father wants us to depend on Him for protection and provision. While it is true that Word of God clearly states, if a man wants to eat, he must work, it is not a contradiction, for God will bless that labor abundantly. Ephes. 4:28 *Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.* <sup>[NASB]</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:11: *and to*

*make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you.* <sup>[NASB]</sup>

Then there are those human proverbs that are sadly enough true, although they encourage deception, such as this one said in jest by Dr. Albert Einstein, “If the facts don't fit the theory, then just change the facts.” Or the one that our favorite auto mechanic used to quote to my wife, whenever she'd complain about a funny noise coming out of her car; “You just don't have your radio turned up high enough.”

The proverbs in the Word of God are scientifically verifiable and contain no miss-information even though the writer may not have understood the complexity of the aphorism. The NIV makes my point clearest in Proverbs 4:23: *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.* It wasn't until 1618 A.D. that Dr. William Harvey discovered that the heart is a muscle that pumps blood throughout the human body.

**Around 1618, William Harvey, an English physician, made a remarkable discovery that was to revolutionize thinking about the human body. He found that the blood circulated around the body, and did so rapidly. He also discovered a great deal about the motion and function of the heart, understanding its function was to pump blood throughout the body.**

Another example of this godly knowledge can be found in the writings of Isaiah around 700 B.C, where God revealed to him the organization of the universe as we know it today yet was disputed even up to the voyage of Columbus. Isaiah 40:22 *He sits enthroned above the circle [\*chuwg, {khoog}; a circle] of the earth.* <sup>[NIV]</sup> Or Job {ee`yobe} who records in Job 26:7: *God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.* <sup>[NLT]</sup>

And lastly, let's look at the structure of the proverbs. They take three distinct literary forms, most are couplets where the first clause is related to the last, these are known as parallelisms.

1. In synonymous parallelism, the second clause restates what is said in the first, although it expresses the same thought in a different way. Proverbs 9:12: *If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.* <sup>[NLT]</sup>
2. Using contrast parallelism, the truth stated in the first is reinforced by the second clause using an opposite truth. Proverbs 13:11: *Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.* <sup>[NLT]</sup>

3. And then there is synthetic parallelism where the second clause develops the thought of the first. Proverbs 20:4: *If you are too lazy to plow in the right season, you will have no food at the harvest.* <sup>[NLT]</sup>

The real thrill of studying the book of Proverbs is to discover which ones are most applicable to our individual lives or reveal illustrations of those events, errors, and miscalculations that have trudged across the paths we have already walked. God may have used these experiences to prepare us as instruments or ambassadors, with an experience that can be used to counsel younger folks, helping them to stay in concert with God's Holy Spirit. So let's get started!

**But before we do; let's ask our Lord for wisdom and application.**

Father, I come before You with praise and singing in my heart, submitting myself before You, choosing to serve in Your kingdom rather than the kingdom of darkness, submitting myself to your authority, for You alone are worthy.

I choose to set my mind on spiritual things and not the things of this world. I ask for protection from any distraction that would keep me from Your Word and obedience to Your Word. Help me to keep an open heart and mind to the voice of Your Holy Spirit.

Grant me wisdom and understanding, that through Your Word and the indwelling presence of Your Holy Spirit, I might know You and Your ways, and that I might be known by You.

I thank You for Your Word, Your Word is Truth. Teach me to apply Your Word in my life. And I thank you for the Sword of the Spirit, that I may correctly understand Your Word and not deceive myself or be deceived by an incorrect interpretation.

I am as the beggar who found bread and desires to share it with others, prepare me with Your Word, and grant me the opportunity this day to share Your Word with others.

Father, you know every step that I will take today. You know every life that I will touch. Quicken my spirit to recognize the hungry heart - the one that You have been preparing by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Grant me the spirit to represent Jesus well - to explain the aspects of the Christian life that will most meet

the need of this person. Give me the courage to lead them to You. Father grant me the insight to know what You are doing, that I also may do what You are doing to your glory.