

# Proverbs 1:1-7: Listen Up!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] reading is from the book of proverbs we've entered into our series in proverbs and we're looking at a passage that really gets us into the book on today uh proverbs chapter one verses one through seven it was the same scripture that was read in our hearing on last week but this time we get to expound it on this afternoon the proverbs of solomon son of david king of israel to know wisdom and instruction to understand words of insight to receive instruction in wise dealing in righteousness justice and equity to give prudence to the simple knowledge and discretion to the youth let the wise hear and increase in learning let the one who understands obtain guidance to understand a proverb and a saying the words of the wise and their riddles the fear of the lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction this is the word of the lord you may be seated a document that includes the following words was signed on this date 234 years ago listen we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and that they're endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness words from the preamble of the declaration of independence and we come likewise to a preamble on today the day in which we celebrate our freedom or declaration of that freedom as a nation we come to a preamble that leads us in to the book of proverbs itself and this particular text one through seven has rightly been referred to as a preamble it's the opening of this entire collection 31 chapters uh this entire collection of proverbs i was struck on this afternoon as the musicians were preparing and their their preparation their practice was actually somewhat of a prelude of worship for me uh as it was preparing me for worship that's what a prelude does it prepares you for what is to follow so this likewise a preamble a prelude an opening an introduction and another way that we might want to look at it is that it is an appetizer it gives us a taste of what is going to come in the book it is a sampling of what the main entree that we're going to be served that those who read the book of proverbs will get as they get into this book it's our entry way into the book this handbook for living that's one of the ways of looking at the book of proverbs what we have here is it's like bite-sized kind of nuggets of wisdom you know those little miniature snickers or milky ways that you just sort of

pop in your mouth well these are so these are miniature power bars of sorts that's what these proverbs are they are really have something of substance for us who want to live well on this earth they deal with matters of wisdom of course and foolishness good and not so good relationships you hear about laziness and thriftiness right and wrong attitudes sex and food and drink integrity and honesty justice and injustice and other life related matters these are the kinds of things that those who are going into the world and those who are us who are already in the world as adults need in order to live well on the one hand but in that process glorify god on the other specifically in our text today we're going to look at three particular things the first thing you'll see in verse one we get there what kind of genre or classification of scripture that this is as well as the principal author in verse one in verses two through six we get a we get to see what i would call a clear purpose and then finally in verse seven you will see a foundational principle that we're going to look at the first thing that we encounter is the name of the book itself look at the look at the what we see in verse one the proverbs of solomon son of david king of israel this is this is common to the naming of the books in the old testament canon i love the old testament name the hebrew name for deuteronomy devereen these are the words and what we have here the proverbs mashal of of of of solomon it's what's here and we get the name from what we see in the text here the word translated proverb mashal can refer to a prophetic oracle we see that in numbers chapter 23 to refer to an object lesson we see that in deuteronomy chapter 28 a saying in verse first samuel verse chapter 10 verse 12 a poetic discourse is the translation of mashal in job chapter 27 verse 1 or what we have here you have these brief pithy sentences of ethical wisdom and what they do from you and me is they actually beg for a reflection and hearing and faith and subsequent obedience from all who hear that's what we see particularly in the book these proverbs are at least we see the principal author though solomon is not the sole author i think we look somewhat at that on last week but the principal author is solomon and that shouldn't surprise us should it because solomonic wisdom is absolutely legendary this man was uniquely gifted by god with wisdom he had this huge this broad capacity for uh for intellectual acumen i mean he knew so much as a matter of fact uh first first kings chapter 4 verses 29 through 34 just listen to me uh as i read it some but but you'll get an idea for the breadth and listen you will see uh the comparison uh with of solomon with some of the other

wise men of his day listen to this and god gave solomon wisdom and understanding check this out beyond measure and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore that's huge isn't it so that solomon's wisdom comparatively speaking surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of egypt he was wiser than all other men wiser than ethan the ezraite and he meant and calcal and dada the son of mahal and his fame was in all the surrounding nations and the and people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of solomon and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom solomon was a heavyweight in his day and what we see here there's the solomonic signature as it were on the proverbs huh again he didn't write them all but there were collections of some of his proverbs we saw that uh chapter 25 speaks about how the men of hezekiah had collected them what have you so much for the title of the book and its principal author look at chapter verse 2 where we see the clear purpose now the clear purpose that has to be sorted out uh it's interesting because as you get into these verses this is somewhat of a glossary of terms for wisdom and i'll talk a little bit about more about that later but the introduction not only helps us to see what we have as far as these wise words and who wrote it but it gives us the clear purpose for the entire collection of proverbs look at that you see that see the infinitives that go down the page there in in uh verse 2 what's the purpose it's to know wisdom and instruction it is to receive instruction in wise dealing it is to give prudence to the simple look at verse 6 to understand a proverbs proverb and a saying so again you have the purpose here but but i want to show you something here that really helps to amplify what i'm saying notice the words to know wisdom and instruction in the first part of verse 2 what's the purpose to know wisdom and instruction and instruction and secondly to understand words of insight that verse is like a summary statement for the purpose of the book of proverbs notice the key word in the last in the first part of verse 2 is instruction notice where you see that next you see it in verse 3 to receive instruction so what we have here is the key word instruction and we see this unpacked in verses 3 4 and 5 and what you're looking at there is the the goal moral skill through instruction that's one of the purpose but also to understand words of insight you see the word understand at the last part of verse 2 whereas the next place that you see understand you see it in verse 6 that is where it is likewise unpacked as far as what it means to understand words of insight how do you understand words of insight through proverbs you see that a proverb a saying the words of the wise and their riddles those are the means in the book of proverbs through

which understanding or mental discernment through words of insight that's the purpose the purpose of the book is for to know wisdom and instruction moral skill through instructions to understand words of insight mental discernment through words of insight why the collection of the proverbs so that the hearers and the readers of ancient times and today would gain moral skill and mental discernment embracing the teaching of proverbs enables one to do that of course the principal word is the word wisdom and proverbs is in fact wisdom literature and the word translated wisdom usually spoke of an unusual degree of skill in some given area it could refer to a speaker skill with words or a composer skill and putting notes together to make music or the ability of a craftsman is referenced in exodus chapter 31 and verse 6 so in the book of wisdom in the book of proverbs however this skill it's the ability to choose what is right and good in our daily lives isn't that something that you desire and long for to be able to live skillfully and this that that that's the skill that is primarily in view referred to as wisdom in the book of proverbs it's not just breath of intellect huh it's it's not simply to have a masterful mind and solomon certainly had all of those things it's not simply to be smart huh oh we have a lot of smart people in the world we have a lot of smart people doing wonderful things but if people were to embrace the very wisdom of god and skill for living even with their breath of intellect oh what a what a different kind of world it would be just because a person has that intellectual depth of breath there's no guarantee the person is wise in the primary sense that we see in the book of proverbs huh the skill that's in view is the ability to choose what is right and good and just in our daily lives that's the skill that's in view here huh now i want you to see something here this is very i found this very intriguing there are seven words or synonyms uh that are for wisdom in these particular verses look look at them with me as i just walk through them i want you to see this and then i want to show you something about them you see the word insight there in verse two huh speaks about words of insight that's the that's the ability to see between issues huh look at wise dealing that's another one of those words in verse three you see that there and then in verse four there is the word prudence that's another wisdom connected related word which means good judgment or good sense the word is knowledge in verses four and seven discretion also in verse four the ability to plan ahead and apply the course of action with foresight huh look at in verse five you see the word and to increase in learning and also finally you see the word guidance that there that's there one another way of viewing these words is these are wisdom connected words and we might see them as wisdom's attendance or wisdom's companions they're sort of like when you go to a wedding and you see the bride that's there and you've got you know whether you've got a big bridal party or a small bridal party you've got those who are dressed

and i mean of course they're not out doing the bride but still that they're they're you know looking nice and tasteful all of that so you've got these attendants there the the difference is that guess what i mean while i was sitting in in the uh the west side and and um paul and nicky saint albin were there of course they've just had a wedding within the last uh month or six weeks or so but guess what the attendance of their wedding were not there the bride and the groom were there the bride was there but the well see wisdom's attendance don't abandon her huh she's oh she remained they remain with her as a matter of fact listen to wisdom's words regarding these her attendance we see those in proverbs chapter 8 verses 12 through 14 listen to wisdom personified and again we're going to get in this is just an appetizer this is just a sneak preview into what's coming in the book but listen to the words i wisdom dwell with prudence and i and i find knowledge and discretion huh the fear of the lord is the hatred of evil pride and arrogance in the way of evil and perverted speech i hate i have counsel and sound wisdom i have insight i have strength these are wisdom's attendance attendance that we see here in these verses that are before us but notice from the vantage point of the student in verse 3 and following what's how are proverbs good for those who are in the position of learners huh you see that to receive instruction in wise dealing in righteousness justice and equity guidance and instruction will inform the young and not so young and to help them find their way in this world to do justice love and mercy to walk humbly with our god and see there there we see here the social implications of living wisely there in the verse to uh wise dealing where in righteousness doing what is right and what is fair and what is proper to to do justice to love mercy to walk humbly with our god wisdom will help us and inform us in how to do that in this world that you and i live in and you will see this relatedness you see it even in chapter 2 verse 9 you will understand righteousness and justice and equity and every good path those are the wise ways to live in this world giving the kind of time and attention to those kinds of efforts that are near and dear and precious in the sight of god as a matter of fact these are you might say columns are or pillars as it were in the very kingdom of god that those who are wise give attendance to uh what about from the vantage point of the teacher you see that in verse 4 to give so this is sort of like a syllabus what's in what what's what's in it for the student to receive or to attain instruction and wise dealing what about the teacher the teacher is going to give prudence how they're going to do that through the teaching of the proverbs guidance to those who are young and impressionable you see that word there to the simple that's a person who's like an empty container uh green gullible uh one translate it's they're they're naive they're like empty containers and not only to those but to the youth in general i was uh at a an event on yesterday where a uh a person who's probably in his 40s or 50s he was talking about his 86 year old dad who was in uruguay he was a pastor he retired at 60 something but he's continuing and he this this young man this man was talking about how he really respects his dad he said he didn't always do that you know what that is for

[ 20 : 17 ] this man it's a mark of maturity because when you're young and and and and like an empty container we don't always appreciate the people and life circumstances like we should but as we mature we gain added and mature perspective in life the proverbs are good for assisting those who are like many of you in our university community uh you had enough of what it took to pass your act and sat and you got in the university and you're you know in certain some some of you are beyond that but did you know skill in living demands more than that kind of sharpness of intellect you need more than that and sitting at the feet of wisdom as it were based on the fear of god that we'll talk about a little bit later that is where our position for life needs to be huh so it's there huh a good means of assisting those who have limited life and spirit life experience naive and untaught but they can help them make good sense judgment thus the proverbs are good for education and enlightenment and assisting those who are immature but it's also good for those look at the the verse five it's good for those who are wise let and this is a key verse let the wise or even the would-be wise hear and increase in learning and one who understands obtain guidance so the wide range you've got the young the gullible uh who who are the proverbs for the young the gullible the wise and also the foolish that we see in verse seven all of them are just right for the lessons that can be learned in proverbs so actually what you got here you got people and concepts here in this prelude in this preamble they're stepping onto the stage and they're just sort of taking a bow here initially but you're going to see these again as we continue in to the book of proverbs huh to strengthen those who have a reputation for being wise now no one never graduates from wisdom's academy so the clear purpose of proverbs is to help people the simple the wise and the foolish to live with moral and ethical and spiritual skill in other words to live wisely that's the purpose again that's what we gather from these verses in two through six that are before us what about the foundational principle the fear of the lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction you see the book ends there you see in uh verse two to know wisdom and instruction and we come back to that in verse seven huh for a but there's a different response for those who are wise want to embrace wisdom and instruction the fools reject and despise wisdom through instruction the fear of the lord comes into view in verse seven now introductions to wisdom literature in the ancient near east in that day we're common but what you see in verse seven is really unique in ancient near eastern literature preambles are common but this one includes the statement that about the fear of the lord so it's like

the writer or the editors of proverbs they put this in as far as letting you know this is these are guidelines for those who have faith in yahweh and for for for true wise living in this world it demands a relationship with the very god of wisdom huh so this statement anchors what follows in the context of faith faith in the god of israel honoring him and fearing him serving as foundational to the life of wisdom without that foundation there's no true or lasting life of wisdom so the theme of the book comes in view here the fear of the lord this grand theme that we see the book in here and look over at chapter 9 in verse 10 where we get a look at these whole relative kind of terms of wisdom and knowledge that are often used interchangeably changeably within the book we see in chapter 1 verse 7 the fear of the lord is the beginning of what knowledge yeah fools despise wisdom and instruction but in chapter 9 verse 10 the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the holy one there we have the words right there in the same and they are parallel okay and and and that's one of the features of wisdom literature that it either compares or contrasts or intensifies and what you have here you have sort of this intensification it is synonymous wisdom and knowledge are for the most part synonymous in chapter 9 and verse 10 so you have it book ending the first collection but you have it book ending the whole book if you look in chapter 31 and verse 30 it speaks about the woman who fears the lord again you've got the book ends chapter 1 and chapter 31 as far as it's fearing the lord huh the fear the fear the lord is too and i love what we've sung on this afternoon it's to stand in awe of him in wonder and respect and reverence and adoration of him if you know anything about the military there's a certain class of military man that when you see them particularly if you are an enlisted man you honor them with a salute whether you have double bars or all the way to stars, when you see a person with that kind of insignia, you are to give them the kind of respect that an officer in the military is due. Well, what kind of respect is due the God of the universe? Hey, folks, a simple salute, or some would say a nod to God just doesn't do. We are to bow the whole of our lives before him.

The fear of the Lord is this disposition of heart and mind and life that recognizes and acknowledges and honors God in a manner that is consistent with his being the God of the universe, his sovereignty and supremacy in all things. Oh, again, this is foundational for living life well, the beginning of wisdom, the beginning of knowledge, trembling before him. It's foundational. The fear of the Lord was the ideal of Eden. It was the pinnacle from which Adam first fell. It is the standard which the second Adam achieved perfectly. It's the foundational principle for wise living to recognize God as God and to live accordingly. Oh, that there would be a heart in all of us as God's people to live in that kind of way.

Those who fear the Lord are opposite of the fools that we see in verse 7, who despise wisdom instruction. A fool is someone who constantly, regularly, they're taking wrong moral turns.

Huh? Huh? Huh? They often do so even after being worn again and again. And Proverbs speaks about the person who heartens his neck continuously shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.

[ 29 : 12 ] He ignores God and contradicts God and thinks that he can do it or she can do it without penalty. Oh, but the pursuit of wisdom will take you and me from the path of foolishness. Huh?

And so what do we have here in chapter 1 verses 1 through 7? It's a fitting introduction. The words with the appetite hopefully creates the thirst. The words introduce the players in the book, the concepts in the book, and they are an invitation for those who are ripe for wisdom. Huh?

Preamble. The prelude. What's the takeaway for you and me? Look at verse 5. Now, it's simple, isn't it? Let the wise or let the would be wise. Let them hear. Huh?

Listen up. It's the call that we have right up front in this introduction, in this prelude. The Proverbs that follow will reinforce what we see in this introduction.

Listen and learn.

[ 30 : 44 ] But more so, we need those who are masterful and skillful and living with moral and spiritual and ethical skill that is promoted in this book.

People who fear God in these other spheres of endeavor. Huh? That should be our distinctive in the midst of this world. That should be a distinctive in the midst of the university community.

While you've got all of this intellectual firepower. That's great, but it's not good enough alone. We need those who have that intellectual firepower, but also are empowered in another way.

They're living skillfully because of the fear of God. There are gospel implications here. You better believe there are gospel implications.

The Queen of the South, Jesus says, will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to hear or to listen to the wisdom of Solomon.

[ 31 : 49 ] But Jesus says something greater than Solomon is here. These are the wise sayings of men. The principal person being Solomon, the son of David.

And so while Solomon epitomizes intellectual wisdom as one who had a masterful understanding of many things, his masterful understanding of many things did not fully translate into skillful living.

In the moral and the spiritual sense, you know his story. But the one who presented himself as greater than Solomon, he not only epitomized wisdom by the way that he lived, he personified wisdom and he majored, according to Isaiah 11 and 2, in the fear of God.

He lived in perfect harmony with his father. Perfect reverence. His life was founded on his love for his father. And wanting always to please him.

None lived so well and none lived so wisely as Jesus. And my prayer is that even as we hear these Proverbs, that we would also hear Jesus, who is wisdom personified and greater than Solomon.

[ 33 : 10 ] Another way of stating today is that we should live under the Lordship of Christ, what we've said today. The relationship, that's the relationship that becomes the compass for all of our life.

The foundational principle for all that we do. The guiding principle for our lives. The ground for all our decision making and relationships with others. That's what we're talking about.

Listen up. Listen to him. Listen to the Proverbs. But listen to the one who personified wisdom. And according to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, who God has made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Let's bow our heads even as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's table. Jesus, the one who was incarnate, God's Son from eternity.

And we're coming and these elements represent, in a sense, the incarnation of our God. God, who came and lived in perfect harmony, honoring God with the totality of his life.

[ 34 : 36 ] May we see him. May we see him afresh, even as we come on this afternoon and partake of him and be nourished through our partaking of this meal.

If you're a member of the body of Christ, if Christ is your Lord and Savior, come on this afternoon and be reminded in our partaking of this meal of our need to listen to him who became incarnate and lived in perfect wisdom and harmony with his Father and in reverence totally from God.

You remember his words early on to his mother? Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business? That is what he lived for.

So, Lord, help us even today as we come. Lord, may we be strengthened to live wisely in this world, even as we feast on the one, you, Lord Jesus, who did so perfectly for the glory of God.

Lord, may we be blessed to live in this world, Lord Jesus, we come to you today. Amen. Listen now to the words of institution in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, even as you continue your preparation.

[ 36 : 03 ] For I receive from the Lord what I also deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, through the■,