

## Proverbs

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at [www.openarms-communityofchrist.org](http://www.openarms-communityofchrist.org).*

Proverbs is a collection of many sayings. There are basically seven of these collections gathered together:

1. Proverbs of Solomon (1)
2. Proverbs of Solomon (2)
3. Words of the wise
4. Sayings of the wise
5. Words of Agur
6. Words of Lemuel
7. Acrostic poem on the “good wife”

Although the entire book is generally attributed to Solomon (because of his legendary wisdom), the sayings and poems were gathered together over a period of many years. Some of these sayings may come from before the exile, but the book was pulled together post-exile and, in some ways, draws on the writings of an Egyptian teacher, Amen-em-ope.

Chapters 1-6 present the underlying foundation of the book—that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The purpose of this large collection was to pass on from one generation to the next wisdom that could help a young person learn how to cope with life. There are some key emphases: honesty, diligence, trustworthiness, the ability to obey, control of one’s appetites, correct attitudes towards riches and poverty. There are long wisdom poems, short staccato sayings, plays on words. There is also a section that contrasts Wisdom and her proclamation of “life” with Dame Folly, presented as a “strange woman” or prostitute.

The sayings attributed to the sages—the wise—present a perspective that wisdom/righteousness will generally bring success; folly/wickedness brings destruction. However, even in these writings, there is acknowledgment that life can be ambiguous and not easily understood.

The final verses of the collection are a poem in praise of a good wife, calling her “far more precious than jewels.”