

**The Fear of the Lord Is
the Beginning of Wisdom**

Proverbs 1:1–7

Introduction

- COVID-19 is causing everyone to rethink the way we approach life

Introduction

- The Old Testament wisdom tradition is one of the rich resources that we can draw from (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs)

Proverbs 1:1–7 (CSB)

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 For learning wisdom and discipline; for understanding insightful sayings;

3 for receiving prudent instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity;

4 for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion to a young man—

5 let a wise person listen and increase learning, and let a discerning person obtain guidance—

6 for understanding a proverb or a parable, the words of the wise, and their riddles.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Proverbs 1:1–7

1. The Call to Wisdom
2. The Source of Wisdom
3. The Retrieval of Wisdom

1. The Call to Wisdom

- Prov 1:1–7 is the prologue of the book of Proverbs
- Proverbs is traced back to the wisdom sayings of Solomon
- The book's purpose is to impart wisdom

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4 for **teaching** shrewdness to the inexperienced, **knowledge** and **discretion** to a young man—

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1. The Call to Wisdom

- Wisdom is skillful living in God's ordered world

Proverbs 1:1–7 (CSB)

- Structure of the prologue:
 - Verses 2–3 are addressed to the general reader
 - Verse 4 is addressed to the young
 - Verses 5–6 are addressed to the wise

Proverbs 1:1–7 (CSB)

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Proverbs 1:1–7 (CSB)

- Verse 7 is the book's motto or main point

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Proverbs 1:1–7 (CSB)

- Prov 9:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
- Prov 15:33, “The fear of the Lord is what wisdom teaches, and humility comes before honor.”

Proverbs 1:1–7 (CSB)

- Prov 15:33, “The fear of the Lord is what wisdom teaches, and **humility** comes before honor.”
- The key virtue associated with wisdom is humility.

Proverbs 1:7

- The **fear of the Lord** is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.
 - The Lord refers to Yahweh (God's covenant name)
 - Negatively: "terror" causing one to run/hide
 - Positively: "awe" causing one to listen/obey

Proverbs 1:7

- Gen 3:10, “And [Adam] said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”
- Gen 22:12, “[God] said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you **fear** God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

Proverbs 1:7

- The fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.
 - “Beginning” can mean *starting point* or *basis*.
 - The fear of the Lord is the *first principle* or *essence* of wisdom.

Proverbs 1:7

- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; **fools despise wisdom and discipline.**
 - The same truth from the opposite perspective

Proverbs 1:7

- Can only believers obtain wisdom? Why fear and not love?

2. The Source of Wisdom

- Proverbs advocates several sources of wisdom:
 - Experience
 - Observation
 - Reason
 - Revelation

2. The Source of Wisdom

- Prov 20:12, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.”

2. The Source of Wisdom

- Daniel Estes: “If everything in the universe is dependent upon Yahweh, the sovereign creator, then nothing should be interpreted independently from him.”¹

¹Daniel J. Estes, *Hear My Son: Teaching Learning in Proverbs 1–9*, NSBT 4 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), 36.

2. The Source of Wisdom

- Anselm (11th ce theologian): God is “something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought.”²

² Anselm, *Proslogion 2* (Major Works, 87).

2. The Source of Wisdom

- He is “the fullness of Being itself, the absolute plenitude of reality upon which all else depends.”³
- He has an unlimited degree of knowledge and wisdom
- Matthew Barrett: “God’s essence is unbounded, immeasurable, unfathomable, and inestimable in every way.”⁴

³ David Bentley Hart, *Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 122.

⁴ Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 78–79.

3. The Retrieval of Wisdom

- Daniel Estes: “The fear of Yahweh produces a new way of looking at all of life, for it ‘sees each moment as the Lord’s time, each relationship as the Lord’s opportunity, each duty as the Lord’s command, and each blessing as the Lord’s gift.’”

¹Daniel J. Estes, *Hear My Son: Teaching Learning in Proverbs 1–9*, NSBT 4 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), 38.

3. The Retrieval of Wisdom

- Anselm spoke of Christianity as *faith seeking understanding*.
- “I pray, O God, to know thee, to love thee, that I may rejoice in thee.”⁵

⁵² Anselm, *Proslogion* 14