

PROVERBS

Only your friends will tell you when your face is dirty.

Sicilian

When elephants fight it is the grass that suffers.

Kikuyu

A book is like a garden carried in a pocket.

Chinese

Fashion is more powerful than any tyrant.

Latin

Those that lie down with dogs, get up with fleas.

Blackfoot

What's a proverb? It's a **short saying** which is easy to memorize and easy to repeat when needed. Traditional cultures (such as the ones above) treasured their proverbs. They were a **fund of wisdom** which were used by **ordinary people** to make everyday decisions, and also by **judges** to decide legal cases. The Bible's book of Proverbs is a big collection of ancient Jewish wise sayings.

So what's the big theme of the book?

Proverbs is a **guide** to successful living. It gives lots of practical advice on **how to be wise** and what to do in different situations.

And it's written by King Solomon?

Many of the proverbs are credited to Solomon, although the book draws its sayings from many different sources. You can find these assorted proverbs from **chapter 10** onwards.



The proverb-makers wanted their sayings to stick in the mind. So they used **memory-tricks**...

- See Proverbs 30:15–31 for sayings using **lists of numbers**.
- In Proverbs 31:10–31 (which is a poem) the first letter of each new verse starts with the next letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**.
- Many Proverbs use **comedy**. Once you've read and laughed at them, they stay with you!