

xOld Testament Survey
The Book of Proverbs

Introduction

- While Job and Ecclesiastes wrestle with the “*why*” of life; Proverbs addresses the “*how*” of life. It is a book of moral, ethical, and practical instruction.
- Proverbs are condensed maxims which refer to general *observations* of life rather than absolute *promises*. While it contains warnings of things that are illegal and immoral, it is primarily a practical handbook on living *well* and living *wisely*.

The word for wisdom/wise (*chokmah*) is used 45 times in the book and is a word used in connection with skilled craftsmen. Proverbs are designed to enable someone to become skilled in *godly* living.

Proverbs 1:2-6

- Proverbs (Hebrew = *mashal*) means to be like or in comparison. Using Hebrew poetry, a proverb draws upon a common experience to communicate a foundational truth.
- The title of the book attributes these proverbs to King Solomon (1:1). While Solomon is credited with writing over 3000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:29-32) the book is the accumulation of proverbs from a variety of authors over a longer period of time.

Song of Solomon – Solomon was a young king

Proverbs – Solomon was middle aged

Ecclesiastes – Solomon was an older man

- Foundational to all wisdom is a right relationship with God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (1:7; 9:10). To fear God is to hold Him in holy reverence while seeking to walk in faith and obedience to His commands.

Structure

- Proverbs is known as wisdom literature utilizing Hebrew poetry (parallelism) in the form of extensive discourse (chapters 1-9; 31) and pithy (brief, meaningful expression) sayings.

- The outline of the book follows a natural division:

Chapters 1-9 – Extended discourse contrasting wisdom and foolishness through the personification of two types of women.

Chapters 10-24 – Proverbs attributed to King Solomon

Chapters 25-29 – Additional proverbs gathered during the days of King Hezekiah

Chapter 30 – The proverbs of Agur

Chapter 31 – The proverbs of Lemuel

- The content of the proverbs reflect a variety of subjects:

“Proverbs is the most intensely practical book in the Old Testament because it teaches skillful living in the multiple aspects of everyday life. Its specific precepts include instruction on wisdom and folly, the righteous and the wicked, the tongue, pride and humility, justice and vengeance, the family, laziness and work, poverty and wealth, friends and neighbors, love and lust, anger and strife, masters and servants, life and death. Proverbs touches upon every facet of human relationships, and its principles transcend the bounds of time and culture.” -Wilkerson (Talk thru the Bible)

Proverbs

Here is a brief sampling of several proverbs that reflect the wisdom and wit of Solomon:

3:5-6; 3:9; 4:5-7; 8:10-11; 11:22; 12:1; 13:24; 14:34; 15:1; 15:17; 16:3; 16:18; 18:21; 18:24; 20:1; 21:23; 22:1; 22:7; 26:11; 26:14; 26:27; 27:15-16; 27:17; 28:13