

What is the point of Proverbs?

As we began this week reading the Proverbs we must keep in mind what we should always keep in mind when reading the Bible. This is a part of God's revelation of Himself to humanity. Many of the proverbs are very familiar sayings that are as like to be on refrigerator magnets as to be read in worship. We must avoid the temptation for our familiarity with them to allow us to pass over them without letting God's word speak. The following description of Proverbs should be helpful as read this rich book:

The teacher of wisdom "concerns himself with people as plain, ordinary individuals who live in the world, and with the wisdom and folly of their attitudes and actions in the common things of life." Accordingly, the sayings exhibit several distinctive characteristics. First, they focus attention on individuals rather than on the nation, setting forth the qualities needed and the dangers to be avoided by people seeking to find success with God. Second, they are applicable to all people at any period in history who face the same types of perils and have the same characteristics and abilities (1:20;

8:1-5). Third, they are based on respect for authority, traditional values and teachings, and the wisdom of mature teachers (24:21). Fourth, they are immensely practical, (1) giving sound advice for developing personal qualities that are necessary to achieve success in this life and to avoid failure or shame and (2) warning that virtue is rewarded by prosperity and well-being but that vice leads to poverty and disaster. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that Proverbs is a secular book; its teachings are solidly based on the fear of the Lord (1:7), making compliance with them in reality a moral and spiritual matter.

Ross, Allen P. "Theological Values of Proverbs" In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*: Volume 5. 889-890. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, © 1991.

Proverbs 15:1

¹ *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

This is an example of a proverb that gives a clear right and wrong response. Gentle should be thought of in terms of a consoling word or something said to calm or bring about reasonable thinking. It does not merely denote a tone of voice.

There can be very hurtful things spoken softly that are not gentle by the standards of this proverb. The word for harsh used here is the same Hebrew word used for pain. It is the sense that something is said to inflict hurt or fire a shot as it were.

QUESTIONS

1. When are your most likely to respond with a "harsh" word?
2. What kind of wrath do harsh words stir up?
3. Read **Judges 8:1-3**. How does this illustrate Proverbs 15:1?

Proverbs 15:2

² *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.*

QUESTIONS

1. What is the byproduct of spoken wisdom?
2. According to James 3:9 and following, what kind of speakers should we be?
3. Why are people tempted to listen to the "folly of fools?"

Proverbs 15:3

³ *The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good*

This verse is a description of God's all-knowing nature, commonly called omniscience.

QUESTIONS

1. How should this truth cause us to live differently?
2. What is the comfort of this verse?
3. How is it significant that it is the "eyes of the Lord keeping watch" instead of the "eyes of man?"
4. Compare this verse to Hebrews 4:13. What is the purpose of God's knowing and seeing everything?

Proverbs 15:4

⁴ *The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

James 3:1-12 is a great companion to this proverb as it speaks of the dual nature and dual possibilities of our speech.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a healing tongue or a deceitful tongue?

2. What are the consequences of each?

Proverbs 15:5

⁵ *A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.*

QUESTIONS

1. What does our response to discipline reveal about who we are?
2. Compare this proverb to Hebrews 12:4-6 and Proverbs 3:11-12. What is the purpose of the Heavenly Father's discipline?

Proverbs 15:6

⁶ *The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings them trouble.*

This verse is not exalting those with a low income as righteous, nor is it condemning those with a high income as wicked. It is using the language of wealth to speak of the benefits of pursuing the things of the Lord and the trouble that comes with pursuing our own desires.

QUESTION

1. What is the great treasure of the righteous?

Proverbs 15:7

⁷ *The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.*

QUESTION

What is the link between our lips and our heart? (See Proverbs 4:23)

APPLICATION

What we say and how we say it goes a long way in measuring our commitment to the Lord. It is unwise to speak in a way that brings pain and/or displays foolishness. The person, who learns to control their tongue, not just saying nothing but saying the right thing, is a complete person and we are called to being complete people. It's not that harsh words are just a bad idea they are sinful. We should repent of poor, hurtful speech and commit to guard our hearts and allow wisdom to spring out of us.

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

July 4, 2010

"The wise use of your words"

Cross References: Proverbs 3, 4 Hebrews 12, James 3

Brief overview of Wisdom Literature:

The Book of Proverbs is a marvelous collection of wise sayings and instructions for living a useful and effective life. The collection forms part of the larger group of biblical writings known as wisdom literature. This literature gives instructions for living while pondering the difficulties of life. Proverbial wisdom is characterized by short, pithy statements; but the speculative wisdom, such as Ecclesiastes or Job, uses lengthy monologues and dialogues to probe the meaning of life, the problem of good and evil, and the relationship between God and people. Ross, Allen P. "Background of Proverbs" In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 5*. 883. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, © 1991.

Central Idea: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." True wisdom is a gift of God's grace given as the follower of God matures in their relationship to the Lord. So, if we are going to grow up in our faith we must learn to love wisdom and know what it looks like.

Lesson Idea: There is great power in our speech. James compares it to the rudder on a large ship or a bit in the mouth of a horse. How we choose to speak is a direct reflection of our commitment to Godly wisdom.

Bible in a Year Daily Readings June 28th – July 4th, 2010

June 28th Psalms 134-140
June 29th Psalms 141- 150
June 30th Proverbs 1-3
July 1st Proverbs 4-7
July 2nd Proverbs 8-11
July 3rd Proverbs 12-14
July 4th Proverbs 15-17

Highlights of the Week

Psalms 134 The Final Psalm of Ascent
Psalm 136 His Love Endures Forever
Psalm 138 "the Lord will fulfill His purpose for me."
Psalm 139 "you knit me together in my mother's womb."
Psalm 142 A cry for mercy.
Psalm 145 "Great is the Lord"
Psalm 147-150 Praise the Lord
Proverbs 1 Introduction and the importance of Wisdom
Proverbs 2 The moral benefits of wisdom
Proverbs 4 Guard your heart
Proverbs 5 Warning against Adultery
Proverbs 8 "Does not wisdom call out?"
Proverbs 10 "Ill gotten treasures are of no value."
Proverbs 16 Commit to the Lord whatever you do.