

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 17 w/Answers

Proverbs

This week we will take a quick look at the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a significant book of wisdom writings by a variety of people over several hundred years. It is often mistakenly assumed that Proverbs is solely a collection of Solomon's wisdom; this is not the case, as we will see in our study this week. Similar in construction to the book of Psalms, the book of Proverbs is a collection of writings by several people over a long period of time. The result of this work is what God provides to the Jews as a book of leadership - a King's Manual if you will - a leader's book on how to rule and reign.

As Christians, Proverbs teaches us how to be leaders and how to deal with situational ethics and the "gray areas" of life that confront us on a regular basis. As we study this book, we will quickly see that the book of Proverbs uses real life examples, and the contrasts of wisdom and folly, to show us the key to living "the good life" in God's eyes.

To get a head start on the questions below, you may wish to skim the book of Proverbs in advance (or not).

1. Read Proverbs 1:1-4 and verse 6. For what purposes was the book of Proverbs created, as presented in these verses?
 - a. ANSWER 1: "For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight."
 - b. ANSWER 2: "For acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair."
 - c. ANSWER 3: "For giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young."
 - d. ANSWER 4: "For understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise."
2. If we want to gain knowledge and wisdom, God promises that we can have it; but what does Proverbs 1:7 tell us is the first step? What do Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10 also tell us regarding "wisdom"?
 - a. ANSWER 1: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."
 - b. ANSWER 2: "The fear of the Lord" is also the beginning of wisdom. We cannot have either without God and having a fear of Him, a healthy respect for his Holiness.
3. We can deduce from the variety of proverbs and authors contained within the book of Proverbs that it was written over several hundred years. For example, we know that Solomon died after reigning as King for forty years, in approximately 920 BC. What then does Proverbs 25:1 tell us about the potential length of time covered by all of the proverbs in the book?
 - a. ANSWER: Hezekiah's court would place the writings of Chapters 25-29 at about 700 BC, and approximately 250 years after Solomon's death.
4. While the book of Proverbs contains a wealth of wisdom, it is not easily applied to every situation. The proper application of the writings in the book requires wisdom -- wisdom that can only come from God, not man. This difficulty is addressed in Prov. 3:5-8, and man's wisdom is described in Prov. 26:12. Summarize below what these verses teach us:
 - a. ANSWER 1: Trusting in our wisdom is a big mistake. If we want true wisdom, we need to put our trust in God and His infinite wisdom. Thinking about it for a moment, why would you want to limit your wisdom to your finite mind when the very God who created you is ready to give you His wisdom?
 - b. ANSWER 2: When you see someone who only trusts their own wisdom, you should avoid that person and their wisdom completely; because you will be following a fool no matter how wise you may think that this person is.

5. There are eight divisions, or groups, of writings contained with Proverbs. The following groups are defined by the verses listed. Look up the first verse in each group and see if in it, or above it, you can infer the name of that division.
 - a. Chapters 1:8-9:18
 - i. ANSWER: A Father's Praise of Wisdom
 - b. Chapters 10:1-22:16
 - i. ANSWER: The Proverbs of Solomon
 - c. Chapters 22:17-24:22
 - i. ANSWER: The Words of Wise Men
 - d. Chapter 24:23-34
 - i. ANSWER: Further Words of Wisdom
 - e. Chapters 25:1-29:27
 - i. ANSWER: Hezekiah's Collection of Proverbs
 - f. Chapter 30:1-33
 - i. ANSWER: The Sayings of Agur
 - g. Chapter 31:1-9a
 - i. ANSWER: The Words of King Lempel
 - h. Chapter 31:9b-31
 - i. ANSWER: Examples of Wifely Excellence
6. Read the following groups of verses: Proverbs 1:8, 5:1-23, and 6:1-35. Identify the topic that they addressing.
 - a. ANSWER: These writings address the topic of raising and teaching youth. Addressed in these verses, we see the typical challenges facing youth as they enter the world; and the wisdom that should be passed on to them. Covering everything from the importance of listening to your parents and obeying their teaching, to the importance of learning and applying discipline in their young lives. He warns against adultery and foolishness that can so easily tempt the youth, including (in chapter 6) the traps and snares involved in managing finances, putting up security for another, or making a pledge that they should not be tricked into making. Through the use of real world examples, the wisdom of the book is presented in a way that is easy to understand for both parents and their children.
7. What are the eight steps that lead to wisdom identified in Proverbs 2:1-5?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Accept God's words
 - b. ANSWER 2: Store up God's commands within us
 - c. ANSWER 3: Turn our ear to wisdom
 - d. ANSWER 4: Apply our heart to understanding
 - e. ANSWER 5: Call out for insight
 - f. ANSWER 6: Cry aloud for understanding
 - g. ANSWER 7: Look for wisdom as if we're looking for silver
 - h. ANSWER 8: Search for it as though we're looking for hidden treasure

As we can see from our brief study, the book of Proverbs has a wealth of wisdom for us, but it requires God's wisdom to understand and apply. And, as our last question shows us, gaining that wisdom is possible, but not easy. It requires us to seek out God's wisdom above all else, and to seek it with the same intensity and zeal that we would use in looking for something of extreme value. Then, when we acknowledge and fear God, He will reward our search by granting us wisdom.

I can personally attest to God's faithfulness in hearing our calls to Him for wisdom, and I imagine that many of you can as well. I can also attest to the fact that once you have God's wisdom, you will not want, or need, yours. God's wisdom is so great, and it goes so far beyond our own understanding, that we cannot comprehend it. When God grants me His wisdom, I am in awe of it, and of Him. What a great and glorious God we serve! May He grant you His wisdom and multiple blessings as a result of your study of Proverbs this week.

Have a great weekend everyone!

In Christ,

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