

## PROVERBS: Bible Study Notes

### INTRODUCTION:

The Proverbs is a book of wise sayings inspired by God to men who brought this book together. **Chapters 1-29** were written by Solomon as indicated by **Proverbs ch1:1; ch10:1** and **ch25:1**. **Chapter 30** was written by Agur, son of Jakeh and the final chapter written by the mother of King Lemuel. We know little about these writers compared to Solomon, King of Israel. The Proverbs are part of the wisdom literature where there are short, sharp statements setting out what is right and wrong. The text shows many contrasts between righteousness (the right way to live) and wickedness (the evil way to live) as seen particularly in **chapters 10-15**.

The text seems to show a loving father giving instruction to his son. He urges him to pay attention to the word of God where he will find wisdom, knowledge and understanding (see **chapters 1-9**). The father shows very clearly the choice between the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness. He gives ample warning to stay away from wicked men and to avoid the attractions on offer from the strange, adulterous and immoral woman that ultimately lead to destruction and death.

Much stress is given on obedience to the word of God as shown by implication in the following verses in the Proverbs such as **Proverbs ch2:1; ch3:1,2; ch4:1,2,4,10,20,21,22; ch5:7; ch6:20-23; ch7:1,2,3,24; ch9:9; ch19:16a; ch22:17,18,20; ch23:12; ch24:32; ch25:11,12,13; ch30:5,6**. The way of the Lord is clear and summed up in the three verses that give the fundamental message of the Proverbs. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." (**Proverbs ch3:5-7**).

The book of Proverbs lays out for us the choice in which way we want to live. If we live God's way we can come to know God personally if we believe and receive Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour asking him to forgive us of all our sins. If we choose to live without God the way will lead to destruction incurring God's wrath and separation from him in hell forever. God's way will lead to eternal life. This book surely gives us the answer to live according to God's will and to enjoy fellowship and friendship with God forever.

## Bible Study exercises and questions

The writer of these notes assumes that for those who want to know more of this book, they are prepared to spend time in serious bible study whether individually or corporately. The intention should be to meet the Lord in studying the scriptures.

An attempt has been made to produce questions and other exercises to help the bible student to search out this book. You can pick out the relevant exercises and questions to study rather than attempt every section.

In view of Christians having many ways of approaching study of the scriptures the writer has tried to be sensitive in how to help people in bible study.

## Possible exercises and questions

### Section 1:

If possible in your own time read the entire book and try to find key words such as **wisdom, knowledge, understanding, wise, fool, foolish, Lord, righteous, wicked** etc. Some of these words appear more in Proverbs than in any other book of the bible. You may find it helpful to use a concordance such as Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible or Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible. You can look up the verses and find out what is known about each key word.

## Section 2:

The book of Proverbs can be divided into the following sections:

- 2.1) Introduction: The purpose and theme **chapter 1:1-7.**
- 2.2) Lessons on wisdom **chapter 1:8-9:18.**
- 2.3) Main collection of Solomon's Proverbs **chapter 10:1-22:16.**
- 2.4) More sayings of wise men: a) **Chapter 22:17-24:22.** b) **Chapter 24:23-24.**
- 2.5) Solomon's Proverbs which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah copied out in **Chapters 25-29.**
- 2.6) The words of Agur **chapter 30.**
- 2.7) The words of King Lemuel given to him by his mother **chapter 31:1-9.**
- 2.8) The excellent wife **chapter 31:10-31** an acrostic of all the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

You may wish to spend time on each section given above by considering the following questions.

**Q.1** What are we taught about wisdom in **chapters 1 to 9?** You may wish to continue to study the theme of wisdom through the other sections of the book.

**Q.2** Using a concordance, write down what you know about a wise man and a foolish man. You may wish to make a list of some of the verses. It is recommended that you look up the words wise, fool, fools and foolish.

**Q.3** Find out what you know of wickedness (wrongdoing or wrong) and righteousness (right) by using a concordance.

**Q.4** What can we learn from **chapter 30:1 to 31:1-9?**

**Q.5** Write down and discuss the qualities of an excellent wife in **chapter 31:10-31.**

## Section 3:

You may wish to study the Proverbs in chapters if you have the time available. It is suggested that you try the following questions:

**Q.1** Make a list of the important themes in the book.

**Q.2** Discuss and write down how you are shown the way to live.

**Q.3** Discuss and write down the evil ways that we are warned about.

**Q.4** What does the book reveal of who God is? See for example **ch2:6; ch3:12; ch15:3; ch16:2.**

**Q.5** Write down what you have learnt from each chapter. You could discuss with others in a small group what you have understood from each chapter.

## Section 4:

The Book of Proverbs shows a number of important themes. Using the biblical references discuss and/or write down what each theme can teach us.

**4.1** Fear of God: See **ch1:7; ch2:5; ch3:7; ch8:13; ch9:10; ch10:27; ch14:26-27; ch15:33; ch16:6;**

**ch19:23; ch22:4; ch23:17; ch24:21; 31:30.**

**4.2** Laziness: See **ch6:6-11; ch10:4-5,26; ch12:24,27; ch13:4; ch15:19; ch18:9; ch19:15; ch20:4,13; ch21:25; ch22:13; ch24:30-34; ch26:13-16.**

**4.3** Friendship: See **ch6:1-3; ch17:7; ch18:24; ch25:8-10; ch26:18-19; ch27:5-6,9-10,14,17.**

**4.4** Discipline: See **ch3:11-12; ch13:24; ch19:18; ch22:6,15; ch23:13-14; ch26:3; ch29:15,17,21.**

**4.5** Counsel: See **ch1:1; ch4:3; ch7:6; ch11:14; ch12:15,20; ch15:22; ch19:20,21; ch20:5,18; ch24:6.**

**4.6** The good wife: See **ch12;14; ch14:1; ch18:22; ch19:14; ch31:10-31.**

**4.7** Nagging wives: See **ch19:13; ch21:9,19; ch27:15-16.**

**4.8** Fathers: See **ch11:29; ch20:7; ch27:8.**

**4.9** Old age: See **ch16:31; ch17:6; ch20:29.**

**4.10** Household servants: See **ch17:2; ch27:18; ch29:19,21; ch30:10.**

**4.11** Humility/humble: See **ch3:34; ch6:3; ch11:2; ch15:33; ch16:19; ch18:12; ch22:4; ch29:13.**

**4:12** Pride/proud/haughty: See **ch8:13; ch11:2; ch13:10; ch14:3; 15;25; ch16:5,16-17; ch18:12; ch21:4,24; ch28:25; ch29:13; ch30:13.**

**4:13** The drunk: See **ch20:1; ch23:19-21,29-35.**

**4:14** The seductress: See **ch5:1-23; ch6:20-35; ch7:1-27; 22:14; 23:26-28; ch30:20.**

**4:15** The wicked and the righteous: The theme is extensive throughout the Proverbs and could take a considerable amount of time to study. It is recommended to start in **chapter 10-15**. You may find that in studying the wicked and the righteous you wish to describe the wise man and the foolish man (See again section 2:2).

**4:16** Attitude towards the poor including the widows and the fatherless: See **ch3:27-29; ch14:21,31; ch15:25; ch17:5; ch19:17; ch21:13; 22:9,16,22,23,28; ch23:10-11; ch28:3; ch30:14.**

There are further themes that you may wish to study such as: **1) The "better" verses: See ch3:14; ch8:11; ch12:9; ch15:16-17; ch16:8,16,19,32; ch17:1; ch19:1,22; ch21:9,19; ch25:7,24; ch27:5,10; ch28:6. 2) The "false witness" verses: See ch6:19; ch12:17; ch14:5; ch19:5,9; ch21:28; 25:28. 3) The "merry heart verses: See ch15:13,15; ch17:22. 4) The "liars" verses: See ch6:9; ch14:5,25; ch17:4; ch19:5,9,22; ch29:12; ch30:8. 5) The "mischief makers" verses: See ch4:16; ch6:14,18; ch10:23; ch11:27; ch12:21; ch13:17; ch17:20; ch24:2,16; ch28:14.** It is left to the bible student to discover more themes if time allows. See **section 2 Q1** for the theme of wisdom.

## Extension Work

It can be helpful to pursue some of the themes above in scripture elsewhere. The following scriptural references have been given for some of the themes from the previous section.

1) Pride: See **Isaiah ch2:10-22; ch10:12-14; ch47:1-15; Jeremiah ch50:29-32; Obadiah 3-4; Amos ch6:8; Zephaniah ch3:11-13.**

2) Drunkenness: See **Luke ch21:34; Romans ch13:11-14; 1 Corinthians ch5:11-13; ch6:10; Galatians ch5:21; 1 Timothy ch3:3; Titus ch1:7.** Is it wrong to drink wine or strong drink? See **Matthew ch11:18-19; Mark ch2:22; John ch2:1-10; Romans ch14:13-23; 1 Timothy ch5:23.**

3) The Poor: See **Exodus ch22:22-24; Deuteronomy ch10:17-18; Psalm 82:34; Isaiah ch1:23; ch10:1-2; ch25:4; Jeremiah ch5:28; Amos ch2:6; ch4:1; ch5:12; Matthew ch25:31-46; Luke ch16:19-26.**

Further themes can be pursued with the use of a concordance. What has been given above is there to encourage more study to appreciate that various themes can appear throughout scripture.

**Conclusion:** It is hoped that the questions and exercises will have provoked some detailed bible study. You may only have attempted part of one or more sections but if you have discovered more of the message of book of Proverbs then this study has achieved its objective. May the Lord direct you to what he wants you to know from this book.

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