

A LOOK AT A BOOK: Proverbs

February 23, 2014

INTRO:

Thank you for the Children's choir

The Bible has much to say about children. The book of Psalms tells us that they are a blessing from God. The book we'll study tonight also says a great deal about children. How we should interact with them, teach them. Our kids often teach us as well.

In fact I read of a 1st grade teacher who gave a portion of a proverb to her students and asked them to finish the saying. I thought the results of this experiment were profound:

ILLUS: READ KIDS PROVERBS

One thing that unites you and I and Uncle George....:) is that we desperately need wisdom. Not just some good advice from friend or a link to an article that will help us make better decisions, but I'm talking about wisdom from the very source of truth.

GOD'S WORD IS FULL OF WISDOM. ALONG WITH JOB, PSALMS, ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SOLOMON, PROVERBS IS ONE OF THE 5 WISDOM BOOKS. THERE ARE NO GREAT EVENTS IN THESE WORKS, NO LAWS SET FORTH. I LOVE WHAT ONE AUTHOR CALLS THEM, "THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT." BUT EVEN WITHIN THIS GREAT VOLUME OF WISDOM LITERATURE, PROVERBS IS UNIQUE. IT'S NOT A NARRATIVE LIKE JOB OR A LOVE STORY LIKE SONG OF SOLOMON, IT'S NOT A SONGBOOK LIKE PSALMS. THE PROVERBS WERE INTENDED FOR PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. IN FACT THE GREAT EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM HAS SAID THAT HE READS A CHAPTER A DAY. CONVENIENTLY PROVERBS HAS 31 CHAPTERS.

WHAT IS A PROVERB?

A good definition of a biblical proverb is "a short saying that expresses a general truth for practical, godly living." The word *proverb* means "to be like"; thus, the book of Proverbs is full of comparisons showing us how various images illustrate the fundamental truths of life.

AUTHORSHIP

SOLOMON, AGUR AND KING LEMUEL ARE MENTIONED BY NAME along with a group referred to as "the wise" wrote Proverbs.

INTERPRETATION

Some have mistakenly read the book of Proverbs as a book of promises: if you raise your children correctly, they will be godly and will never rebel (22:6); if you are diligent in your labor, you will be rich (10:4); if you act wisely, you will receive long life (3:2). The reality, however, is that some godly people have struggling kids, and some ungodly people have amazing children; some hard-working Christians fight to make ends meet; fools get rich; and good people in our life have left too soon to disease and

accident; some who abuse their bodies live to a ripe old age.

So it's no wonder that some of us have found these bite-sized truths hard to swallow.

I like how author Dr. Jim Newheiser puts it, "The maxims of the book of Proverbs express general principles of how God runs the world. Those who live wisely are generally blessed with success in parenting and finances and with long life. Fools, on the other hand, can generally expect trouble in this life because of their defiance of God's principles of wisdom. The exceptional cases do not nullify the wisdom of these sayings."¹

PROVERBS IS UNLIKE SOME OTHER BOOKS, WHERE THERE MIGHT BE A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OR CLEAR PROPHECY,

PROVERBS ARE often ULTIMATELY TRUE.

"When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD,
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

WELL, I CAN THINK OF A FEW TIMES WHEN JESUS DID NOT HAVE PEACE WITH HIS ENEMIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE UNDERSTAND GOD WILL CAUSE JESUS' ENEMIES TO HAVE PEACE WITH HIM, FOR EVERY KNEE WILL BOW.

THERE IS ALSO A LOT OF IMAGERY,

PROVERBS 10:20
The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;
the heart of the wicked is *worth* little.

PROVERBS 25:15
By ^{1a}forbearance a ruler may be persuaded,
and a soft tongue breaks the bone.²

So we have to use some care and common sense as we read Proverbs

THEME

RIGHT FROM THE START PROVERBS STATES IT'S INTENTIONS. THE THEME OF THIS BOOK IS TO INSTILL WISDOM. A WISDOM FOUNDED IN THE "FEAR OF THE LORD" LIVED OUT IN PRACTICAL EVERYDAY CIRCUMSTANCES.

TIMELINE

¹ Newheiser, J. (2008). *Opening up Proverbs*. Opening Up Commentary (13–14). Leominster: Day One Publications.

² Dever, Mark. *The message of the Old Testament: promises made*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2006. Print.

The book took its final form at least as late as Hezekiah's time (because of 25:1). Whether his men compiled the entire book is uncertain. The final date of compilation is generally considered to be around 700 B.C., assuming Agur and Lemuel wrote before then. ³

EVEN THOUGH PROVERBS IS A BOOK THAT MIGHT SEEM ANTIQUATED, A COLLECTION OF SIMPLE SAYINGS TO AN AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY a really long time ago, and THE WISDOM IS UNIVERSALLY APP-LICABLE. So MANY YEARS LATER NEW TESTMANT WRITERS MADE REFERNECE TO PROVERBS AND STILL TODAY GOD'S WORD HOLDS TRUE.

This practicable book shows us we need wisdom, how we get wisdom, and show us what it looks like.

There are 3 big themes I want you to see in Proverbs the first is:

1. AN INVITATION TO WISDOM

If you don't have your Bible open to the book of Proverbs, go ahead and turn to Proverbs chapter 1.

Read verses 1-7

MY SON HEAR MY INSTRUCTION, REMEMBER WHAT MOM TAUGHT YOU. IT'S BEAUTIFUL, IT LIKE A CROWN ON YOU HEAD AND A PENDANT. THEY ARE NOT CUMBERSOME; BURDENSOME THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL, LOVELY.

VERSE 20-24 – **A CALL**

WISDOM IS SHOUTING, PLEADING, CRYING IN THE STREETS TO HEED HER.

IT'S VALUABLE (CHAPTER 2:1-4, 7:1-3)

PAY ATTENTION (CHAPTER 4:1)

Hear, *O* sons, the instruction of a father,
and give attention that you may ^[a] gain understanding,
² For I give you ^[b] sound teaching;

CHAPTER 5

My son, give attention to my wisdom,
Incline your ear to my understanding;

INVITATION

SON LISTEN TO ME, HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY, IT'S IMPORTANT

ILLUS: BEND DOWN AND ACT LIKE YOU ARE LOOKING INTO THE EYES OF A CHILD.

³ Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), . *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (900–901). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

“NOW LISTEN TO ME YOU NEED TO HOLD DADDY’S HAND WHEN WE CROSS THE STREET.”

“DON’T PUT YOUR HAND ON THAT, IT WILL BURN YOU.”

“DON’T RAISE YOUR HAND DURING PASTORS PALS, YOU MIGHT SAY SOMETHING THAT WILL GET DADDY in TROUBLE SHHHH

We all understand a father’s invitation to do the wise thing. This is a large theme in Proverbs.

ILLUS: We’ve all received a phone call with someone inviting us to do something. You didn’t know them that well and you know how awkward that’s going to be. So we just let the phone ring or we think of an excuse. I have a thing that day.

We’ve gotten the invitation to the wedding you’d like to avoid at all costs. Uncle George is going to be there and we’ve been very clear how he is. You’ve also received invitations you couldn’t say yes too quick enough. They are the people you love and are close to your heart.

The way we respond to peoples invitations say a lot about our relationship with them.

The way we respond to God’s invitations reveals much about our relationship with Him as well.

How do you respond to God’s letter to us, his calling to wisdom, his invitation to walk in the way of the wise? God breathed his truth into the authors and through their pen He invites us to wisdom.

Proverbs doesn’t just invite us to wisdom, but it also instructs us in wisdom

2. INSTRUCTION FOR WISDOM

Proverbs give general wisdom that applies to all of us, but it also is specific in its instruction. It reveals to us two paths. A foolish path that leads to death and a wise path that leads to life. So in the instruction of wisdom of proverbs we have both what to do and what not to do. It gives us instructions for all seasons in life.

THE FAMILY

- Marriage
(Faithfulness 6:15-18)
(Satisfaction in your spouse 6:32-34)
- How children should respond to their parents (6:20-23)
Notice, roll your eyes, pshhhh and whatever...didn’t make the list ☹
- Parents

The majority of instruction to parents in proverbs deals with disciplining or training your children.

Proverbs 19:18

¹⁸ Discipline your son while there is hope,

Proverbs 22:15

¹⁵ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13

¹³ Do not hold back discipline from the child,

Proverbs 29:15

¹⁵ The rod and reproof give wisdom,
But a child ^{1a}who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Illus: All parents have received that shame. You've been at the store when the child is screaming in the basket because they didn't get their way. And you just shake your head. "I'll tell you what he needs!" You may be right. But a funny thing happens. Most of us in our pre-kid wisdom says to ourselves I'll never let my kid act like that. Fast forward a few years, you're in a hurry trying to check off all the items on your list when, your child decides to pitch a fit there in front of God and what seems like everyone in the world. You think the devil himself has indwelt your 2 year old and his head might spin around, and shoot fire from his mouth at any moment. And as the rooster crows for the 3rd time you think.....how did a rooster get in here...no you think, this parenting thing is much harder than it looks.

Aren't you grateful God gives us instruction.

Did you know the Hebrew word most used in Proverbs for wisdom carries the idea of training for technical skill? It occurs 45 times in Proverbs. Much like a carpenter would be skilled in woodworking, a sailor could skillfully navigate the seas or a musician would be skilled in music. A parent who lovingly trains or disciplines their child is training them to be skilled at making wise decisions.

Harvard graduate and Professor of Sociology at Notre Dame Dr. Christian Smith published a book entitled "Soul Searching, the religious and spiritual lives of American Teenagers" the book also spurred a very interesting documentary. The 4 year study on which they were based showed that by far the greatest contributing factor of teens that were active and grounded in their faith was because that had parents that taught them in their faith.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Scripture is clear that we are to be involved in church. We need each other and it's His plan to build His kingdom, but even the church can't fulfill the role of a parent that teaches their child to be skilled in wisdom.

Friends

Proverbs tells us that good friends are selfless, forgiving, and truthful
It tells us bad friends should be avoided.

Proverbs 24:1 Do not be envious of evil men,
Nor desire to be with them;

Words

We should choose our words wisely

ILLUS: LINCOLN “Better to be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

12:18

We all remember where we were when those words were said that were like a dagger to our heart. You also remember when someone took you aside and spoke healing words.

Proverbs gives us wisdom for our words

The instruction in wisdom doesn't just come in the form of what to do, but also what not to do.

Proverbs tells us about the:

Scoffer

1. Proverbs 9:7

He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, And he who reproves a wicked man *gets* insults for himself.

2. Proverbs 9:8

Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

3. Proverbs 13:1

A wise son *accepts his* father's discipline, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

4. Proverbs 14:6

A scoffer seeks wisdom and *finds* none, But knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.

5. Proverbs 15:12

A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, He will not go to the wise.

The one who mocks and ridicules the beliefs of another is an ambassador for foolishness.

Sluggard

1. Proverbs 6:6

Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,

2. Proverbs 6:9

How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?

3. Proverbs 13:4

The soul of the sluggard craves and *gets* nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.

4. Proverbs 19:24

The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, *But* will not even bring it back to his mouth.

5. Proverbs 20:4

The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

6. Proverbs 21:25

The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands

7. Proverbs 26:14

As the door turns on its hinges, So *does* the sluggard on his bed.

The authors of Proverbs warn against the lazy ways of the sluggard.

The Fool

1. Proverbs 1:22

fools hate knowledge.

2. Proverbs 1:32

And the complacency of fools will destroy them.

3. Proverbs 3:35

fools display dishonor.

4. Proverbs 10:1

But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

5. Proverbs 10:14

Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.

6. Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

7. Proverbs 13:20

He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

8. Proverbs 14:7

Leave the presence of a fool, Or you will not discern words of knowledge.

9. Proverbs 14:9

Fools mock at sin, But among the upright there is good will.

10. Proverbs 14:33

Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding, But in the hearts of fools it is made known.

Foolishness is hard to hide.

ILLUS: STORY OF THE PAPER CUTTING RACE

BY THE WAY, I WOULD'VE HAVE TOTALLY BEEN THERE HACKING AWAY IF I WOULD HAVE HAD THE CHANCE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN ME GIVING HIGH 4 ½ 'S THE LAST 25 YEARS. HE JUST HAPPENED TO GO FIRST. UNDOUBDETTLY WE ALL HAVE STORIES THAT ARE SIMILAR

As much as we try and hold our hand over the mouth of foolishness, eventually a shout rings throughout for all to hear. Often the shout of foolishness echoes for generations to come.

Proverbs gives us an Invitation for wisdom, Instruction for Wisdom and in proverbs we see

3. ILLUSTRATIONS OF WISDOM

Turn to chapter 31 of Proverbs and we'll read a familiar illustration of wisdom together.

Look at verse 10

God has placed illustrations of wisdom in your life. They're often the things we lament in our youth and treasure in adulthood.

If you have someone in your life that has illustrated wisdom to you, you should rise up and bless them, praise them for speaking truth into your life allowing you to watch wisdom displayed.

The Lord has spoken to us through the authors of Proverbs. He's given us an invitation to wisdom, instruction in wisdom and illustrations of wisdom. Here's what you need, here's how you do it, here's what it looks like.

So how will you respond to the invitation, receive the instruction, will you replicate the illustrations of wisdom?

Illus: Cairns

God has used Proverbs and much of the Old Testament to point us to the way of wisdom.

I want you to turn with me to 1 Cor 1:18-24

If you're looking for wisdom, look no further than Jesus. Proverbs paints a beautiful outline of the perfect picture of wisdom that was fulfilled in full color in the person of Jesus Christ.

He's not a pointer, like Proverbs and much of the Old Testament, a cairn to lead us to the way, HE IS THE WAY. Christ Himself proclaimed I am the way the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father, but by me.

We certainly have no hope of wisdom without Him, but far greater still, we have no hope of Salvation without Him.

Until we come to Him empty handed, recognizing our foolish ways, and trust in Him as the Only way to salvation are we really able to experience wise living.

CONCLUSION

God's not holding back wisdom from us, in fact the book James says He gives it our liberally. He's given us a wealth of wisdom in His word and the book of Proverbs is no exception. I don't know your heart tonight, only you and God know its condition. Maybe your feet are firmly planted on the way that leads to life. Keep moving forward one step at a time, keep stacking rocks. Maybe, you're here tonight and you need to remember the monuments set up before you that show the way. Maybe tonight is your night to put your faith and trust in Jesus the wise way that leads to life everlasting. Whatever your need tonight, I pray you choose wisely.