

Proverbs – The Book Of Wisdom

A proverb is a saying that sums up a life experience in a pithy and memorable way. We use them all the time, and it is surprising how many people quote Bible proverbs without realizing where they come from – “pride comes before a fall”, “a friend in need is a friend indeed”, and “you reap what you sow”, for example. It is only when you try to compose a proverb yourself that you realize how much wit and observation of human nature goes into these sayings. King **Solomon**, as we saw in the book of Kings, was gifted with extraordinary wisdom. Most of the Book of Proverbs can be attributed to him. He must have had secretaries who wrote down his observations as they rolled off his lips; later they came to be compiled into the collection we have in our Bible.

The Book of Proverbs begins with an extended allegory, occupying nine chapters, that is based on two symbolic women. One is **Wisdom**, who stands in the street and calls to passers-by to appreciate that we only have one existence, warning them not to waste time on empty attractions that quickly pall and fade, but to serve God, who can truly reward us. In contrast there is **Folly**. She is portrayed as an alluring adulteress, who invites young men to turn aside into her chambers to enjoy brief and illicit pleasures, that end in death. We are meant to see the contrast between serving God, or pursuing the way of the world, obsessed with money and pleasure. It anticipates Jesus’ brilliant parable of the two roads – the narrow, exhausting one that leads to eternal life, and the broad, easy way that goes down to destruction.

From chapter ten onwards, we are treated to a glorious miscellany of often amusing but powerful rules and warnings that cover all aspects of life. They are just as true today as they were in the time of Solomon - indeed some of them are bang up to date.

Take the repeated warnings about neglecting the discipline of children, for example. We see the fruits of “*spare the rod and spoil the son*” in our society, with teenage gangs terrorising our big cities.

The hurt that comes from telling tales behind the back, the wisdom of consulting a range of advisors before taking action, the danger that pride leads us into hasty actions we later regret – all these and more are waiting for your attention in this amazing book.

And time and again Solomon returns to the point that if we base our lives on God’s commands, we will find happiness now, and future blessing. “*In all your ways acknowledge him*”, he insists, “*and he will make straight your paths*”.

© Copyright David Pearce, used with permission.