



# PROVERBS

## MARCH 2020

Read on your own or with others,  
which ever you prefer.

This leaflet is just a brief overview of the 'big picture' of this book. If you have been reading the Bible for some time you will be aware there is much more to them than you'll find here.

If you are new to reading the Bible don't worry too much if there are details you do not quite get at the moment - focus on the 'big picture'.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings – proverbs. It is a book that contrasts the life of wisdom with the life of folly.

As we read the book, we discover that these sayings haven't been grouped in themes. Instead, sayings on each topic are sprinkled throughout the book. This can make it hard to read in big chunks.

Before you begin to read there are three general principles that are worth noting:

- a. Wisdom in Proverbs should not be equated to cleverness. The wise life described here is a life lived to the glory of God in a way that pleases him (Proverbs 1:7).
- b. The sayings in Proverbs are general principles, not divine promises. A wise life does lead to blessing, but this blessing is not always obvious nor does it always come in the way we think it should do. The book of Job shows us this.
- c. Be careful about taking a proverb in isolation. The proverbs often address extremes and are balanced by others on the same theme.

## **OUTLINE**

Although the book of Proverbs doesn't divide very easily into themes there is a clear structure to the book.

### **INTRODUCTION (PROVERBS 1-9)**

The first section of Proverbs encourages us to seek wisdom and reject folly. We are told in Proverbs 1:1 that these opening words were written by Solomon. The Bible tells us that he was a king who had been given great wisdom from God (1 Kings 10:23).

These early chapters are written from the perspective of a father instructing his son in the way he should live. It is helpful as we read to remember that these are words from God, who the Bible says is our Father through Jesus. We are not just listening in to a conversation that happened almost three thousand years ago.

Several of these chapters give a warning against the adulteress. There is certainly wise advice here for marriage and purity. Yet, there is also a

spiritual element to this warning. In Proverbs 8, wisdom is also personified as a woman. The book lays out a choice. Will we choose wisdom, or be enticed by folly?

### **PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (PROVERBS 10–22:16)**

These chapters are a collection of short sayings that cover multiple areas of practical day to day life. Each of these proverbs is a two-line saying, but they don't all work in the same way.

Chapters 10-15 contain proverbs that contrast the life of wisdom with the life of folly. Many of these begin with a statement about the wise way to live and the second line is a contrast that speaks of the life of folly. In Chapters 16-22 the second line expands what is said in the first line.

### **SAYINGS OF THE WISE (PROVERBS 22:17–24:34)**

Not all of the sayings in the book of Proverbs were written by Solomon. These 'sayings of the wise' could have been collected by him or added at a later time when the book was put together. They are more varied in style, but their theme is the same, an encouragement to live wisely before God.

### **MORE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (PROVERBS 25–29)**

In Proverbs 25:1 we are told that these are Proverbs of Solomon which were copied out for King Hezekiah. He reigned around 250 years after Solomon. A particular feature of these chapters is the number of proverbs that speak about kings and rulers in comparison to the rest of the book.

### **MORE SAYINGS OF THE WISE (PROVERBS 30–31)**

The last two chapters contain the sayings of Agur and King Lemuel. This is the only mention of these people in the Bible and we know nothing more about them. Agur raises an important question, who can discover true heavenly wisdom? (Proverbs 30:3-4). We need someone to come from heaven to show us – surely a pointer to Jesus?

The book ends with a description of 'A wife of noble character'. There are certainly practical lessons to be learned here, for men as well as women. Yet, is that all? In Chapters 1-9, Solomon gives his son a choice between folly or wisdom – personified as two women. The book ends with a reminder that if you choose wisdom you will not be disappointed.

## **ASKING THE QUESTIONS THE BIBLE WANTS YOU TO ASK**

What do these books teach you about Jesus? (Luke 24:45-47)

What do these books teach you about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you encouraged? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you corrected? (Romans 15:4)

What difference do the truths of these books make in your life? (Matthew 7:24-27)