



Proverbs & Song of Solomon

Wise Livin' & Wise Lovin'

Session 18

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- State the nature of wisdom and give five characterizations of it from Proverbs.
- Describe what is revealed about God from Proverbs.
- State the purpose of Song of Solomon and relate it to the message of Proverbs.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of wisdom has fallen on hard times. Our world no longer looks to time-honored wisdom or any sort of wisdom tradition for guidance. Things that take time to acquire and which have traditionally been considered essential to the “good life,” like wisdom and virtue, are abandoned for the expedient and convenient, and the “good life” is stripped of God, social obligation to others, and legacy. The Bible, however, presents wisdom as God-given, tradition-shaped and indispensable to the good life. Outline of Proverbs:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Introduction: Wisdom & Folly (1-9) | • More Proverbs of Solomon (25-29) |
| • Proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16) | • Words of Agur (30) |
| • Sayings of the Wise (22:17-24:34) | • Words of King Lemuel (31) |

The tool that Proverbs gives us for life is _____.

WISDOM 101

Traditionally, Solomon is credited with collecting the wisdom in Proverbs. He didn't write everything in the book, but is its greatest contributor and is remembered as Israel's greatest sage who passed along thousands of wise sayings (1 Kgs. 4:32). **Where does the pursuit of wisdom begin?**

HEAR, HEED

Chapters 1-9 are a lengthy introduction to Proverbs. In this portion, the value of wisdom is upheld as incomparable and worthy of wholehearted pursuit. If you seek wisdom, Solomon says, you must do so with more effort than you seek anything else. Half-hearted effort will not do here. Two instructors dominate this section:

The _____ & _____

How are Lady Wisdom & Woman Folly contrasted?

PROVERBS

Chapters 10-29 are what we typically associate with Proverbs: Individual wise sayings dealing with a variety of topics which are arranged in no particular order. It is here where we discover how multi-faceted wisdom truly is. Wisdom, according to the Bible, is not an ethical theory or branch of theological study. Nor is it primarily concerned with ideas and concepts, but with on-the-ground realities.

“Wisdom is about the ways of things—how they are meant to exist and work—and so we find it popping up all over the Bible.” – Craig Bartholomew & Ryan O’Dowd

“Wisdom is about the paths that lead to life, shalom (peace) and flourishing—whether among humans, creation, cities, farms, families, schools, governments or whatever else we can imagine.” – Craig Bartholomew & Ryan O’Dowd

This is where we find our second wisdom principle: _____.
What does this mean?

The third wisdom principle: _____.
What does this mean?

Proverbs ends with the famous ch.31 describing the godly woman. **What's significant about this?**

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROVERBS

Principles for interpreting Proverbs:

- (1) Proverbs are often parabolic (parable-like in nature; figurative).
- (2) Proverbs are not promises. They are not guarantees from God. They are wise sayings that are generally true.
- (3) Proverbs are worded to be memorable, not comprehensively true.
- (4) Proverbs should be read as a collection. Read all the proverbs about a certain topic to gain greater wisdom about that topic.
- (5) Proverbs are not intended to support selfish living, but the opposite!
- (6) Proverbs does contain theology, but the book is meant to be intensely practical, not theological.
- (7) Where the meaning of a proverb is lost due to cultural or historical distance, it needs to be "translated" to our modern context (ex: proverbs with kings mentioned, living on a corner of the roof, etc.).

SONG OF SOLOMON

In Proverbs, consorting with prostitutes or loose women was the chief danger. Since handling sexuality poorly is the chief danger, then handling it rightly is the chief delight. The book explores the themes of love and sexual desire. Young Jewish kids weren't allowed to read it for fear of "awakening love too early" (2:7; 3:5; 8:4), but it explores the adventure of seeking out love and the delights of physical attraction. The whole Song is poetry showing the power of love and how it can be a force for life or death (8:6-7).

The tool that Song of Solomon gives us is _____.

There have been some different interpretations of this Song throughout history. Some believe it's an allegory for the love between Yahweh and His people Israel, while others think it's a metaphor for Christ and the church, and some think of it simply as ancient love poetry celebrating the divine gift of love. There is imagery in the Song, however, that tells us there could be a combination of these. Garden imagery is used throughout, and the relationship between the man and the woman is described as one of vulnerability, selflessness and nakedness without shame—remind us of Eden.

“So ultimately the Song holds out hope that even though our own relationships are so often distorted by selfishness, love is a transcendent gift. And it's meant to point us to something greater—to the gift of God's love that will one day permeate and transform His beloved world.” – The Bible Project

CONCLUSION

Consider these thoughts this week:

- In what area of your life is God calling you to seek greater wisdom? What does Proverbs have to say about it?
- If taken as a metaphor for God's love for His people, does Song of Solomon make you think differently about God?

HOMEWORK

- Read pp.439-454, 463-469 in *Old Testament Theology* by Paul House
- Watch The Bible Project's videos on [Proverbs \(Wisdom Collection\)](#) and [Song of Songs](#)
- Engage with Proverbs 1-10, 30-31 and Song of Solomon

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