



Bible Reading Guide May 2015

Proverbs

Note: This set of readings is slightly different to the previous months. There is a summary of the daily passage given and then a thought/discussion/comment question.

Introduction

The book of Proverbs has come more into focus for Christians in the last decade or so. Our age has become aware that relationships may be soured and even turn into violent ones if we fail to communicate wisely with an understanding of human personality and behavior. It's not surprising that the book of Proverbs provides a God given help in our personal and church community relationships.

Even though the book does not contain any outline of the saving acts of God in history nor to the covenant of God with man, it is a deeply theological book. It is a book of practical advice given in the context of the "fear of the Lord". As we explore this book more deeply, we shall see how sound advice only makes sense under the umbrella of a total respect for God; that to please God and He alone is a prerequisite.

Day 1	<p>Read Proverbs 1:1-19 Solomon had a major role in writing and putting the book together. (1) What is the purpose of the book (vs 2 - 6)? (2) What is the target audience (vs 1 - 7)? (3) Avoid all bad associations is the key to verses 9 - 18. Is that a danger for us?</p>
Day 2	<p>Read Proverbs 1:20 -2:22 (1) don't resist wisdom 1:20 - 33 (2) The value of wisdom 2:1-22 Please comment - "it's only afterwards people discover that pain and loss of sinful acts are not worth the pleasure."</p>
Day 3	<p>Read Proverbs 3:1 - 35 (1) attitudes to God that are good and right (vv 1 - 12) (2) the blessing of wisdom (vv 13 - 20) (3) what makes a good neighbour (vv 21 -35) Pray over the attitudes to God we ought to have - verses 3-4 love and faithfulness, verses 5-6 trust and lean in our dependence on Him, verses 7-8 humble, not wise and sufficient in our own eyes, verses 9-10 generous in our giving and verses 11- 12 submissive in trials.</p>

<p>Day 4</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 4:1 – 5:23 (1) 4: 1-9 embrace wisdom - she will not let you down. (2) 4:10 -19 Stay on the right path (3) 4:20 – 27 Guard your heart (4) 5: 1- 23 Avoid sexual laxity, love your wife. For discussion: is it realistic to love the same marriage partner for the rest of your life?</p>
<p>Day 5</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 6:1 – 7:27 (1) 6:1 – 19. The three "I's " loans, laziness and lying and other sins (2) 6: 20 – 35 - the danger of adultery - avoid it. The cost is too high (3)7:1 – 27 - resist any temptation to adultery What actions would combat this temptation (6: 20 – 24)?</p>
<p>Day 6</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 8:1 – 9:18 (1) 8:1- 36 Wisdom's autobiography – she draws attention to herself. (2) 8:1- 11 pay attention to wisdom. She is attractive (3) 8:12 – 21- she is rewarding, vs 22 – 31 - she is ancient, vs 32 – 36 – she is NOT optional. Wisdom is a matter of life and death. (4) 9:1- 18 - food for thought - an invitation from madam wisdom and one from madam folly –which one do we follow?</p>
<p>Day 7</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 10 :1 - 11: 31 (1) Proverbs 10:1 – 22 sayings on wealth and on words. (2) Proverbs 10:23 - 11:8 Righteousness and wickedness. (3) Proverbs 11:9 -14 words in the community (4) Proverbs 11:15 -31 Wealth Respond by praying that wisdom would transform how we use words.</p>
<p>Day 8</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 12:1 - 13:25 (1) Proverbs 12: 1 – 28 - more on words and work. (2) Proverbs 13: 1 – 25 - desire wealth and wisdom. What ideas here show that wealth is an ambiguous achievement? It solves problems and brings problems as well.</p>
<p>Day 9</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 14: 1 – 15:1 (1) Proverbs 14:1- 18 folly is destructive, self-deceptive, self-expressive , stubborn, reckless, unpopular, quick tempered, self-imposed (2) Proverbs 14: 10 – 15 - the inner person of the heart. (3) Proverbs 14 :19 - 15:1 - Life in society The foolish do not care about putting relationships right when they are in the wrong. The upright of heart are concerned for mutual goodwill. Reflect.</p>

<p>Day 10</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 15:2 – 16:19</p> <p>This passage has many sayings which tell of God's involvement in human life. From the king to the heart of each person. The challenge once again is to side with wisdom and avoid folly. This chapter comes right in the middle of the entire book and sets God at the heart of this book's teaching about wisdom. God defines and gives wisdom.</p> <p>(1) Proverbs 15:2 -15:9 - the inner person and the eye of God. (2) Proverbs 15:20 -33 - wisdom and reverence for God. (3) Proverbs 16: 1-19 divine and human sovereignty.</p> <p>Reflection: What does this section tell us about God's determination as to :</p> <p>(a) how our actions are assessed vs 2, (b) how far our plans successful vs3 (c) how perceived negative factors fit into a purpose vs 4 (d) how far the arrogance of power gets away with things vs5 (e) trouble is avoided vs6 (f) diplomacy is effective vs7 (g) ideas work out in practice vs 9 (h) Fair standards work in business vs 11</p>
<p>Day 11</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 16:20 – 18:1</p> <p>(1) Proverbs 16:20 – 30 the blessings of wisdom. (2) Proverbs 16:31 – 18:1 - relationships – family and community - beware and be wise. There is a price to pay for foolishness. Chapter 17:24 – 26 silence is a good choice (vs 27 ,28)</p> <p>Reflection: What blessings in the many sayings here are relevant to you? What situations mentioned in this section is a particular warning to you.</p>
<p>Day 12</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 18: 2 – 19:10</p> <p>(1) Proverbs 18: 2 -8 Watch your mouth (2) Proverbs 18: 9 - 21 Matters of power and influence (3) Proverbs 18:22 - 19:10 the hardships of the poor . The poor man who begs for mercy is already the object of God's grace through the gift of a good wife where applicable (vs 22).Another encouragement for the poor is that one close friend may be better than acquaintances and even closer than family (v24) and further It is better to be poor and honest than a scheming or activist fool who blames God for self created problems(19: 1 – 3).</p> <p>Reflection: what does this section teach us about pride, honour and humility?</p>

<p>Day 13</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 19:11 – 20:19</p> <p>(1) 19: 11 – 19 Discord at home may amuse outsiders but is deadly within the family (v 13). Real glory lies in being able to resolve conflict in patience literally slow anger (v11) and therefore avoid strife (20:3).</p> <p>(2) 19: 20 – 20 :3 true Wisdom - human wisdom does not always have the last word. Reverence for God is as important to a successful life, as intellectual application (19:21). Human relationships count as well (19:22) as does justice (19:28).</p> <p>(3) Proverbs 20 :5 – 19 - appearances and truth . A righteous man lives a life of personal integrity (vs 7). It is however difficult to find an example (vs 6,9)! Openness is not common (vs 5). This is illustrated in the area of business life (v14) and human evasiveness is difficult to see through (v15).Wisdom is a key to penetrating this screen (vs 5). It is God's gift to have ears that hear below the surface of an action and eyes that see the trail of deceit so as not to be fooled by it (v12). God hates deceit (v10). Deceit may be sweet as long as we get away with it (v 17), but it's a matter of time.</p> <p>Reflection: How discerning are we in detecting our own foolish schemes? Do we allow ourselves to get away with our own sinfulness? Do we point the finger out there to conceal our own deceitfulness? Pray for openness and a patient wisdom.</p>
<p>Day 14</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 20:20 – 22:16</p> <p>(1) Proverbs 20: 20 – 21:4 - further references to God:</p> <p>(a) Trust God when wronged (20:22).</p> <p>(b) God is aware and concerned for honesty and justice (20:23).</p> <p>(c)God even directs the powerful. The word "man" used here is not an ordinary man (20:24) but refers to a powerful figure.</p> <p>(d) God understands how human beings tick (20:27)</p> <p>(e) God's judgement is unmistakable. He sees inside out (21:2).</p> <p>(f) The king is meant to be God's representative to rule with steadfast love (20:28)</p> <p>(g) to bring the wicked to account(20: 26) trusting that punishment will mean purging the heart as well (20:30).</p> <p>(h) young and old have their glories and they should respect each other(20:29)</p> <p>(2) Proverbs 21:4 - 29 - wickedness has pride as its guiding light (v 4). It results in violence (v 7- 8) is graceless and desires the ruin of others (v10), is proud and arrogant (v 24), religious but hypocritical (v27).</p> <p>(3) Proverbs 21:30 -22:16 .Wisdom wealth and God.</p> <p>Human wisdom and effort is important (22:3,6,10,15). These mean nothing aside from God's will. In fact They require God's input (21:30-31)</p> <p>Question: Of what importance is reverence for God when we assess wisdom?</p> <p>Reflection what is the character of a leader after God's own heart?</p>

<p>Day 15</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 22:17 – 24 :22 This section is made up of two collections of the sayings of the wise. We will look at the first collection today. the first collection 22:17 -24:22 - thirty wise sayings Question (1)How do these thirty sayings illustrate “common sense “in our service for God. (2) What does it teach about wasting time on fools, taking notice of good examples, avoiding wrong influences, how easily power may be abused ;? Food for thought: Do we envy the quick success of those who cut corners in being unscrupulous ?</p>
<p>Day 16</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 24: 23 – 34 This second collection section has some mixed sayings of wisdom. Questions (1)How should we appreciate those who talk “straight”? (2) What is expected of judges and witnesses in court and why? (3) One of the most often repeated characters in Proverbs is of the idle lazy person. What problems do they bring upon themselves? Why are the Proverbs so harsh in judgement on the idle person (see Proverbs 10:26,15:19,19:15, 20:4, 22:13, 26:13) (4) Contrast the person who works hard (See 12:24 ,27,13:4, 16:26, 21:5). Pray for the wisdom to work hard and avoid the temptation to laziness</p>
<p>Day 17</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 25:1 – 27:27 Chapters 25 – 29 parallels chapters 10:1 – 22:16. These sayings overall take a positive view of human wisdom. However they also warn against leaving God out of consideration. Questions (1) What does 25:2-7 teach about kingship? (2) What is the nature of conflict and the way to avoid or to resolve it (25:8 – 28)? (3) What is a fool and how should we take seriously the complexity of life and find a wise way forward? (4) What does 26: 17 - 27: 22 teach us about keeping good friendships? (5) What are we advised about keeping safe long term assets (27:23 – 27)?</p>
<p>Day 18</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 28 :1 – 29:27 Chapters 25 – 27 are made up of word pictures . There are few references to righteousness or to God. Here the themes of morality and theology return. Consider (1) What happens when people ignore God's standards and fail to seek Him. (2) Prosperity may result from hard work. What happens when it becomes a quest in itself (28:20)? (3) What are some guidelines as regards the use of power and righteousness (28:28 – 29 :27)? Pray for humility and wisdom with a great dependence on God.</p>

<p>Day 19</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 30:1- 33 We do not know who Agur was, however we know that these words of his are an oracle. Even though Agur himself admits to his own utter inadequacy as with the rest of mankind, God nevertheless gives His word through his prophet.</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>(1) How should we regard the words of God and what care and use should we make of them (vs 5-6)?</p> <p>(2) What are the two things that Agur asks of God and for what reasons (vs 7 – 9, 30 : 10 – 17)?</p> <p>(3) What warnings are there for people who believe that they have a right take matters into their own hands (vs 11 – 14,17)?</p> <p>(4) How are the greedy pictured in verses 15, 16?</p> <p>(5) who is our ultimate King and how should we refine our lives to please Him (vs 32, 33)?</p>
<p>Day 20</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 31 We know nothing about this king. He is not an Israelite king.</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>(1) what are the three instructions that Lemuel's mother gave him (vs 1-9)?</p> <p>(2) In what ways does the capable woman serve her family (vs 10 – 19)?</p> <p>(3) What character does she demonstrate in what she does (vs 17 ,20 ,25, 27)?</p> <p>(4) What teaching role does she have (vs 26, see also Proverbs 1:8, 6:20)?</p> <p>(5) How does she parallel Ms Wisdom mentioned in Proverbs chapter 3:13 – 18 and 9:1-6?</p> <p>(6) what ultimate quality are we to have as men and women if we are to be wise and capable (vs 30)?</p> <p>Food for thought: have we overemphasized the practical role of the woman of Proverbs 31 and missed the point that she has the role of a teacher of wisdom pointing all who hear to fear the Lord.</p>

Next month: John