

Seeking Wisdom in Proverbs

The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings.

–Prov. 1:2, NLT

Are you looking for “ancient wisdom” with a modern application? Look no further; the book of Proverbs contains your answer! Proverbs is a unique collection of short, pithy sayings designed to impart wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

Proverbs is undoubtedly one of the most practical books in the entire Bible. Why? Because it deals with the practical, everyday issues of life. Oddly enough, little if any mention is made in the book about heaven or the afterlife. Rather, it is packed with information about living in the here and now.

According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon composed most of the book by writing more than 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. Scholars believe Solomon started the book about 970 B.C., and Hezekiah completed and compiled it approximately 200 years later (see Prov. 25:1). Other authors include Lemuel, Agur and other wise men of the time.

The Scriptures give us glimpses of Solomon’s influence and wisdom. He was believed to have been a

botanist, zoologist and lover of animals. He was also an architect,
statesman, orator, ambassador, poet, judge and counselor. Finally, he
was a “marriage expert”!

One of his royal visitors
affirmed Solomon this way: “‘Everything I heard in my country
about your
achievements and wisdom is true! I didn’t believe it until I
arrived
here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the
half of it!
Your wisdom and prosperity are far greater than what I was
told’” (1
Kings 10:6-7, NLT).

The style of the book of
Proverbs places it in the section of the Bible scholars label
“Books of
Poetry.” This does not mean poetry as we know it in the
Western world,
with rhyme and meter. Rather, it means a simple setting forth
of the
truth in parabolic manner. Most ancient cultures in the Middle
East had
what is called “wisdom writings.” The book of Proverbs falls
into this
category.

Don’t let the idea of a Hebraic
proverb throw you. The style is common to every language. The
Hebrew
word for proverb, masal, means “to be like, to compare to, or,
is like.”
As we study language or people groups, we find that each one
has its
proverbs.

Have you ever heard someone use statements such as “dumb as a rock” or “stubborn as a mule”? These are contemporary examples of the use of proverbs. We use them daily.

Much more could be said about the book of Proverbs, but it's time to start reading. Are you ready?

Pick up your Bible and dive in!