

Proverbs

In the introduction to his commentary on Proverbs, Warren Wiersbe wrote, "The Book of Proverbs is about godly wisdom, how to get it and how to use it. It's about priorities and principles, not get rich-quick schemes or success formulas. It tells you, not how to make a living, but how to be skillful in the lost art of making a life."¹ He's right.

Our lives are run by computers, smart phones, and other high tech devices that are designed to give us the world at our finger tips. But, these devices, with all their capabilities to store and process information, cannot give us the ability to use that information wisely. We need wisdom for that, and it's found in the the book of Proverbs.

A Simple Theme

The main theme of Proverbs is surprisingly simple: to describe and instill wisdom in God's people, a wisdom that is founded upon the "fear of the Lord" and that practically works itself out in a godly life through everyday situations and relationships. One group of commentators has argued that this theme is supported by four main truths, which are:

1. The source of all wisdom is God and he has revealed his wisdom in the Bible for humans to learn.
2. The reverence of God is the only context in which true human wisdom can be gained.
3. Children need their wiser mothers and fathers to instruct them in the ways of wisdom.
4. It is essential that the leaders of God's people be schooled in the ways of wisdom.²

A Book for Parents by Fathers

King Solomon is credited with authoring the majority of the book. This should not surprise us, for we know that he was a man of great wisdom. 1 Kings 4:29-34 tells us that God gave him "wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore," and that "he spoke 3,000 proverbs and his songs numbered 1,005." Chapters 25-29 also claim to be Solomon's words as copied by the "men of Hezekiah." Presumably, then, these were proverbs of Solomon that had been passed down for 200+ before being recorded at King Hezekiah's direction. The remaining two chapters claim different and otherwise anonymous authors -- chapter 30, Agur and chapter 31, King Lemuel.

Though all of these authors appear as different as night and day -- Solomon was the wisest king in human history and Agur and Lemuel have no historical significance -- they write for the same purpose: to provide a resource for teaching wisdom to Israel's youth. In all likelihood, this resource would have been used within the royal family and then would have been disseminated to the other households in Israel so parents could teach their children the ways of

¹ Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Skillful: Tapping into God's Guidebook to Fulfillment*, preface.

² *Reformation Study Bible*, Proverbs

wisdom. By divine design, the father and mother were the primary instructors of their children in the matters of God's law (Deut. 6:7-9) and of his wisdom (Prov. 4:1-9), and that remains true today. Therefore, for this reason alone, Proverbs is an incredibly valuable resource for contemporary Christians.

Questions of Application

1. What is wisdom and where do I find it?
2. Where in my life do I reveal my need to grow in wisdom?
3. Am I looking for wise people to follow and encourage me as I grow in the Lord and his wisdom?
4. Am I making sure that my life is lived in a way that I can teach and/or lead others in gaining wisdom in their lives?