

Introduction to the Book of Proverbs

I. Authorship:

Pro 1:1 the proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

A. Solomon.

1. The Scripture simply recognizes Solomon as the author.
2. There is no eulogy, or recommendation of him.

B. Why should we follow the teaching of Solomon?

1. The primary reason that is often put forth is the wisdom of Solomon
 - a. Solomon was very wise.

1 Ki 4:29 (NASB) Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.

1 Ki 4:30 (NASB) And Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. 1 Ki 4:31 (NASB) For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations.

- b. People came from great distances to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

1 Ki 4:34 (NASB) And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

1 Ki 10:24 (NASB) And all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart..

- c. Solomon's wisdom was extensive.

(1) It was extensive as to his output.

1 Ki 4:32 (NASB) He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.

(2) It was extensive as to the areas of his expertise.

1 Ki 4:33 (NASB) And he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.

2. The character of Solomon might be a reason that we would not be prone to follow his wisdom or teaching.

a. Although Solomon was quite wise, he departed from following the Lord.

1 Ki 11:1 (NASB) Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,

1 Ki 11:2 (NASB) from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love.

1 Ki 11:3 (NASB) And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

1 Ki 11:4 (NASB) For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

1 Ki 11:5 (NASB) For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

1 Ki 11:6 (NASB) And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

b. The reason we should pay heed to the book of Proverbs is not because Solomon wrote it. We should pay heed to it because it is inspired. We are not hearing Solomon's wisdom, but God's Wisdom.

II. The purpose of the book of Solomon. There is a threefold purpose to the book of Proverbs.

A. The first purpose is to identify wisdom

Prov 1:2 (NASB) To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,

The word "know" here is to point out, to mark or identify. Thus the purpose is to identify what wisdom consists of. What wisdom looks like.

B. The second purpose is to impart wisdom

Prov 1:3 (NASB) To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;

The goal of Proverbs is to have the hearer receive, or take or value the wisdom that is offered.

It is the ability to look at the heart of a matter, and to discern the differences at stake in the choices to be weighed. It is to properly evaluate the consequences of one's choices and thus enable the person to make the right choice.

C. The third purpose is to implement wisdom

Prov 1:4 (NASB) To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion,

1. The simple or the naive are the innocent. Those who do not have much experience.

Prudence is awareness.

2. The idea that is present in the implementation of wisdom is that one can learn and profit without having to have participated in the sinful acts themselves. It is the ability to learn not by experience but by instruction. The ability to learn not from one's mistakes but by God's directions.

- a. Thus the outcome is to get a grasp on human nature.

- b. Secondly, to spare the wise from having to learn the hard way.

III. Learning to apply the Proverbs

Prov 10:1 (NASB) The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

The understanding of this proverb is self-evident. The application of this proverb requires thought. This is the art of meditation.

A. First consider the two ways of Proverbs

Every Proverb explicitly or implicitly contrasts wisdom with folly; it commends the former and warns against the latter. This "behavior" can refer to acts, attitudes, or emotions. The first step of applying a proverb is to determine how it contrasts wisdom and folly - specifically, which aspect of life it addresses, and what it says about it.

Prov 10:1 (NASB) The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

The truth of this proverb then needs to be applied to the larger context of the book of Proverbs.

There are a host of situations in which a wise son makes his father glad. Likewise, there are a host of situations in which a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

B. Second consider the two directions of Proverbs.

1. External applications.

Another aspect of applying a proverb is to consider its truth externally. How this truth applies to those around us.

Prov 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

We can see the truth of this proverb in society. We can be sensitive to it in our dealings with friends co-workers and acquaintances.

We should be able to note the sadness of people's homes when sons behave "foolishly"

Conversely, we should note the joy that people have when their sons have behaved wisely.

2. Internal applications

Another aspect of applying a proverb is to consider its truth internally.

Prov 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad,

But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Which kind of child do we want to be to our parents?

What kind of children do we want ours to be to us?

What can we do to work toward this right answer?

What situation presently exists in our home and why?

C. Third consider the two realms of proverbs.

Proverbs is intended to be more than just man centered. Proverbs teach us about our relationship to God as well.

1. The earthly realm.

The truths of proverbs need to be applied in our earthly relationships with a recognition that there is a spiritual dimension that is required in the proverb.

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

What does this proverb teach us about our need for God?

2. The heavenly realm.

The truths of Proverbs have theological implications as well.

Prov 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

What grief we bring to the heart of God because of our foolish disobedience.

IV. Conclusion:

A. We need to value the wisdom that Proverbs supplies.

B. We need to apply the wisdom that Proverbs supplies to our society, to our personal lives, to our relationship with God.