

Proverbs

A book of Wisdom

1. Writers involved:

1. Solomon – King Solomon, the son of David, is traditionally regarded as the pace setter for the wisdom literature. Without doubt he is academic yet practical, literate yet simple, articulate yet not complex. His contributions are the most significant, probably because of his testimony recorded in I Kings 4:29-34.
2. Agur and Lemuel – These two are believed to be descendants of Ishmael, belonging to the tribe of Massa in northern Arabia. Some believe that their inclusion in this book demonstrates the value the Jews placed on wisdom from other regions and groups.
3. Hezekiah – Though Hezekiah didn't offer any contributions through writing, he is responsible for acting as editor and compiler for the book, including within its bounds works by anonymous contributors.

* Note * This book is a compilation of sayings dated between the 10th and the 6th centuries B.C.

2. The wisdom genre:

It seems quite obvious that Solomon would be particularly interested in wisdom because he was the king of God's people. Positions of leadership, authority, and influence demand understanding, and the godly application of the same. The assumption of the book is that wisdom can be taught and learned across generational lines. The heart of this wisdom is a fear of God, but the outworking of that fear is the righteous living of God's people. Results of living wisely are beneficial to anyone who apply the advice given. If one will pursue righteousness, justice, equity, and goodness, then there tends to come a resultant reputation with God and man. However, if people live foolishly, they bring themselves to ruination.

3. Organization of the book:

1) Major themes:

The fear of the Lord:

The theology of Proverbs is simple on this theme: to know God brings fear. Furthermore, it appears to be the gateway to wisdom itself. Without a fearful knowledge of God, appropriating wisdom is impossible. And ultimately, the fear of God brings an element of practicality which keeps wisdom's practice from being mechanical or an exercise in legalism. It is personal, and quite relational.

Retribution of living wisely:

There are two real results for living wisely before God: 1) an understanding and commitment to living well with others, and 2) an understanding that blessing upon the wise is a principle, not rule. Hardship, trial, and difficulty can and does come to those who are the wisest.

Human behaviors:

Our speech has great power for good or bad. Our vocabulary is important. Words can be great means of construction, or terrible means of destruction with others.

In similar fashion, our sexuality has immense effects on our lives. Proverbs champions the virtue of sexual intimacy between a man and a woman within a marriage relationship and blatantly warns of the corruptive result of free sexuality. The deduction of this is that wisdom will keep one from the perils of fornication and will bring blessing to those who honor God with their sexuality.

2) A basic outline:

- I. The wisdom of a father to a son – 1-9
- II. The wisdom of Solomon I – 10-22:16
- III. The wisdom of others – 22:17-24:34
- IV. The wisdom of Solomon II – 25-29
- V. The wisdom of Agur, King Lemuel, and an anonymous contributor – 30-31