

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The book of Proverbs, classified as wisdom literature, is the most intensely practical book in the Old Testament. It teaches skillful living in all aspects of everyday life - how to relate to God, parents, children, neighbors and government. The Hebrew word for "proverb" is *mashal*, which means to represent; something in the place of many words. It also has the idea of comparison or similarity. A proverb uses a figure of speech to make an observation. The key word in the book of Proverbs is wisdom. Wisdom literally means skill in living. Proverbs is a book that provides the practical application of godly wisdom to specific problems.

The book of Proverbs is a topical collection of sayings rather than a historical book. According to Jeremiah 18:18, three groups of people communicated to the children of Israel on God's behalf. The priests imparted the law, the prophets communicated the divine word, and the sages or elders gave counsel to the people. Solomon was the third king of Israel during the time known as the United Kingdom. He is the main author of the book. Under Solomon's leadership, Israel was at its spiritual, political and economic peak. The proverbs were probably written by Solomon before his character began to decline into carnality, materialism and idolatry. According to I Kings 4:32, King Solomon wrote 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. Only 800 of his proverbs are included in this book. No man was more qualified to be the principal contributor. In I Kings 3:5-9, Solomon asked God for wisdom. God granted him such incredible wisdom that people came from foreign lands to hear him speak. His knowledge of science and his tremendous wealth is mentioned in I Kings 3:16-28, 4:29-34 and 10:1-9.

Solomon also collected and edited proverbs other than his own. Ecclesiastes 12:9 states that "he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs." A collection of his proverbs are found in chapters 25-29. These were compiled by the scribes of King Hezekiah. Agur and Lemuel were the authors of Proverbs 30 and 31, respectively. There is no biblical information on these men.

INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

LESSON 1

You have heard of the faith of Abraham, the courage of Elijah and the patience of Job. our study of the Book of Proverbs will lead us to the wisdom of Solomon. The book of Proverbs is not only wise, relevant and timely - it is convicting and always up to date.

Proverbs is probably the most practical book in the Bible. It is our desire to take the practical wisdom of Solomon found in the book of Proverbs and work it into our hearts and lives. Digging deeply into the treasures of Proverbs will provide working solutions to our problems, protection from the enemy and a light for our path.

PREPARING FOR PROVERBS

To prepare yourself for the coming weeks of topical study in the Book of Proverbs it would be helpful if you first read through the book in its entirety. Reading three Proverbs in the morning and two at night is one way to read the whole book in one week. As you read, list the treasures and nuggets that you find there.

PROVERBS - ITS PURPOSE

Solomon provides us with his purposes for this book in Chapter 1:2-6. Within these verses, five reasons for the book are listed. Find them and list them below.

Proverbs 1:2a -
Proverbs 1:2b -
Proverbs 1:3 -
Proverbs 1:4 -
Proverbs 1:6 -

PROVERBS - YOUR PLAN

The best way to study a book of the Bible is to plan to *expect* something from it. List practical applications that you expect to experience from each of the five reasons you just listed.

PRAYER

Finish this week's study by spending some time in prayer. Pray for the leaders and teachers. Pray for the women in your small group. Pray that you will be enlightened and strengthened by this study of the Book of Proverbs.