

Bible Challenge 2018

Week 24: June 10-16

Outline:

Proverbs 1:1-7: Introduction

Proverbs 1:8-8:36: A Wise Father's Counsel

Proverbs 9: Wisdom vs. Foolishness

Proverbs 10-24: The Wise Words of Solomon

Proverbs 25-29: The Proverbs of Solomon Collected by the Men of Hezekiah

Proverbs 30: The Wise Words of Agur, son of Jakeh

Proverbs 31: The Wise Words of King Lemuel

Outlining the book of Proverbs is always a bit of an arbitrary endeavor due to the nature of the book. Herein is contained wise sayings either that Solomon spoke or that he had collected from other wise individuals. These words are organized by motif, but mostly in smaller thematic sections (or even in couplets), which makes ordinary approaches to outlining a bit cumbersome.

While ordinary approaches to outlines may not always be helpful, it should not be thought that this book is just a hodge-podge of random sayings. There is a rhyme and a reason to the layout of this book which becomes more apparent the more time is spent reflecting on its sayings.

There are many recurring themes, for example that of the father warning his son or of the contrast between the house of wisdom and the house of the wicked woman. There are also animal themes that can be found throughout the text, and many figures of speech and word pictures that give us a better picture of the wisdom that Solomon is imparting to us.

The most important thing to remember, though, is that the book of Proverbs contains what we might call, "normative principles." In other words, there is not always a one-to-one relationship between doing this thing right and gaining the blessing that follows. Indeed, the blessing might be the normative effect of the right action, but there are times where it is not the case. For example, Proverbs 22:8 states that "whoever sows injustice will reap calamity..." This is indeed a true principle, but at the same time, there are times when the sower of injustice gets away with his wickedness and never sees calamity in life. Does this mean that the proverb fails? No. It means that this instance there is an exception to the rule that exists for God's purposes. Proverbs contains wisdom for life, but it does not contain the iron-clad promises of the salvation or eternal life. It is wisdom for living well on earth.

Introduction

Proverbs has a straightforward purpose. It was written:

- to teach wisdom, instruction, and insight
- to teach one to receive wise dealings
- to give prudence to the simple
- to give knowledge and discretion to the youth
- to teach the wise to hear
- to give guidance to the one who understands

And even more basically, Solomon has collected these things to teach an even more basic principle...that all knowledge begins with the fear of the Lord (the fool, who rejects God, also rejects wisdom and instruction).

A Wise Father's Counsel

The next section of the book of Proverbs contains a series of wisdom statements punctuated by phrases like: "Listen my son, to your father's instruction." One can only imagine how many times

that Solomon must have made this very statement (remember, there were 700 wives and 300 concubines). Then again, as one looks at the way Rehoboam divided his father's kingdom, one is also forced to ask, did Solomon not teach these lessons to his sons well enough or did his sons simply resent their father's role or reputation so greatly that they were looking for any opportunity to rebel.

If you were to sum up this father's counsel to his sons (and by extension, to us), it would be to walk with integrity, to seek out wisdom, and to avoid those who practice wickedness — avoid the "forbidden woman" who will tempt you to wickedness. And such is wise counsel to give to your children in any generation.

Wisdom vs. Foolishness

Chapter 9 functions essentially as a summary of what Solomon has put together in the previous 8 chapters. It also sets a contrast between the Wise Woman (sometimes called, "Sister Wisdom") and the Woman of Foolishness (or the harlot). What is the main difference? Verse 13 answers that question...both have parties, but the foolish woman is seductive but knows nothing, while (verse 10), the wise woman offers knowledge of the Holy One.

The Wise Words of Solomon

The words in the chapters that follow are the words of Solomon himself as he pontificates about life. Once again, for most of this section, what we find are short and pithy statements about life, often connecting physical things to spiritual things.

The Proverbs of Solomon Collected by the Men of Hezekiah

It seems that many of the words of Solomon had not been written down in one place during Solomon's lifetime, and so, during the reign of king Hezekiah, he set his wise men and scribes to the task of compiling as many more of the sayings of Solomon as they could, hence adding them here. It can be argued then, that Solomon's original text ended with chapter 24, but God chose to use others to add to this text and so he superintended others to write by the Holy Spirit. Thus too, we also find here the words of Agur and Lemuel. We do not know for sure who these two men are, but it seems that the Holy Spirit spoke wisdom even through these two men.

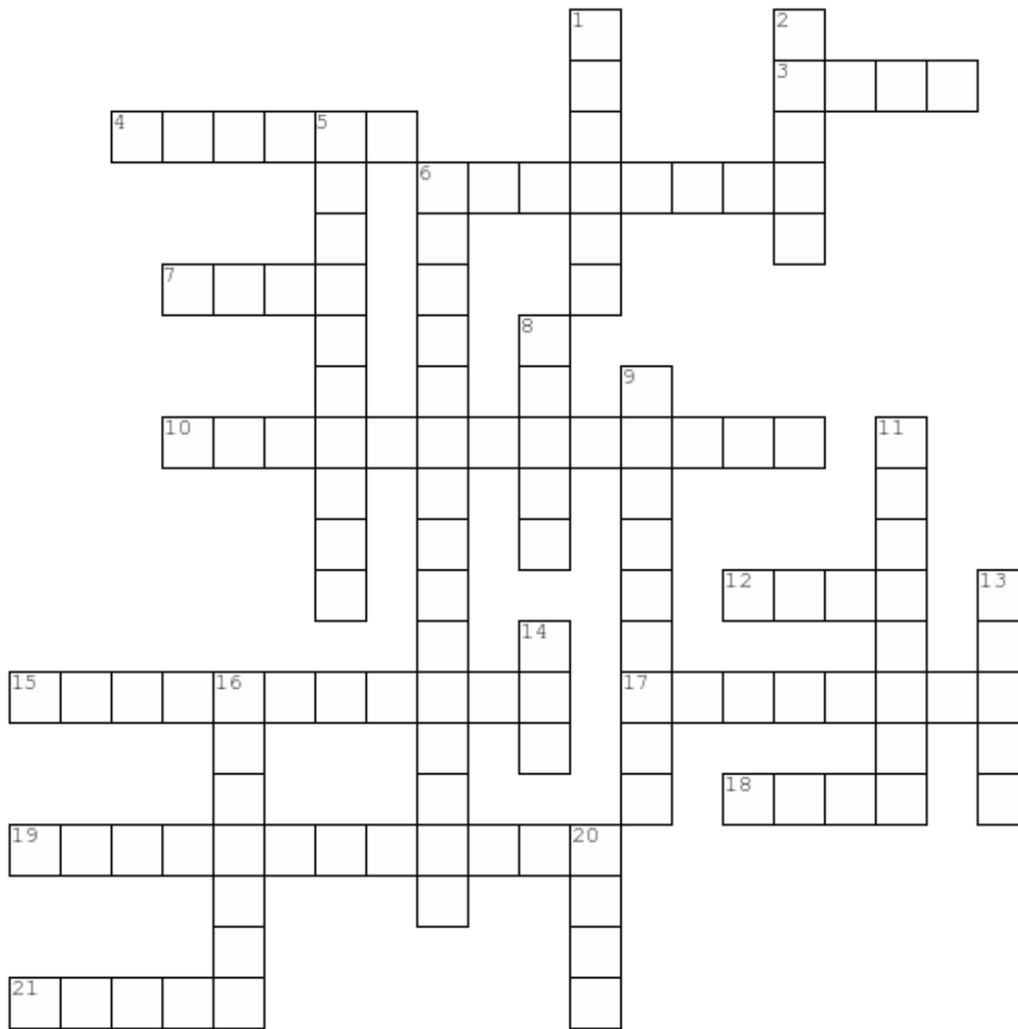
The Woman of Noble Character

The woman of Noble Character is arguably one of the best known sections of the Proverbs. This is an oracle given to King Lemuel by his mother...and again, we know nothing of Lemuel's origin.

In principle, this poem speaks of a woman who manages her household well enough that her husband can sit in the gates with the other Elders of the city. Or, perhaps in other words, she lives with such integrity that her husband can devote his time to the governance of the town.

Many read this last chapter and think that there is no way that anyone can live up to this set of standards, but that is not the Hebrew mindset. In the Hebrew mindset, not only was this "woman of noble character" the lived out "Woman of Wisdom," but Ruth was the paradigm of this woman lived out...so, she does exist. How do we know that Ruth is the example? It is because in the Hebrew Bible, Ruth follows the book of Proverbs, thus linking the two together.

Week 24: Proverbs



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Across

3. This will make your bones rot.
4. This kin was taught a poem about a woman of character.
6. Solomon hopes to give this to the simple.
7. This son of Jakeh also contributed proverbs.
10. This exalts a nation.
12. The commandments of God are ____ to those who receive them.
15. There are six things that God hates and seven are an _____ to him.
17. The Lot is cast in the lap but its every ____ is from the LORD.
18. Who is the paradigmatic Woman of Noble Character
19. If you are kind to your enemy, it will be like pouring this on his head (2 words).
21. Trust in the Lord with all your ____ and lean not on your own understanding.

Down

1. She cries aloud in the street to those who are simple.
2. How many pillars does the wise woman's house have?
5. The simple believes ____ but the prudent gives thought to his steps.
6. Where there is none of this, the people cast off restraint. (2 words)
8. From the Lord's _____ come knowledge and understanding.
9. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of this.
11. This king had Solomon's proverbs discovered by his sages.
13. My son, eat this for it is good.
14. The sluggard is to look to this insect for wisdom.
16. Knowledge of the Holy One is this.
20. Hope deferred makes the heart _____.