

A Proverbs Challenge

I have promised a few articles that will encourage us 'to' read and study our Bibles but also teach us 'how to' read and study our Bible.

Even a casual reading of scripture tells us that there are different kinds of writings in the Bible. There are poetic sections and narrative sections. The poetry of Psalms is different than the Proverbs or the prophets. Likewise, the narrative of Genesis or Joshua is considerably different from the gospel narratives. So, there are different kinds of writings and different styles of writing. The different books of the Bible also differ in purpose and content.

The purpose in this series of articles is not to approach the Bible as an academic subject, but to help us become better readers and listeners of God's word.

The Challenge

I would like to challenge you to read the entire book of Proverbs over the next month. Beginning December 1st, read Proverbs 1. On December 2nd, read Proverbs 2. On December 3rd, read Proverbs 3. For each day of the month read the chapter in Proverbs that corresponds to the calendar date. December has 31 days and Proverbs has 31 chapters. So, we should all finish the book of Proverbs on New Year's Eve.

Why Proverbs?

- Proverbs is easy to read and generally easy to understand. (There are some tricky proverbs.)
- You will see things you already know, and some things you don't.
- Proverbs is about life...now; it is practical.
- Proverbs presents the *ideal* when wisdom is applied to circumstances in life.
- The wisdom of Proverbs is timeless and applicable to both young and old.

Things to Know about the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs is primarily a writing from a father to his son. The father pleads with his son to listen to wisdom and follow the instruction of his father and mother. In doing so he is assured a good life.

The first nine chapters in Proverbs have an overall theme. They flow together with connected thoughts. Then, in chapter ten, the writing changes.

"**The proverbs of Solomon**" begins the more familiar portion of the book comprised of individual sayings of only one or two verses in length.

While individual proverbs seem to stand alone, recurring themes appear throughout the book, such as: poverty, foolishness, righteousness, honesty, wealth, wisdom, laziness, generosity, good/bad speech, etc.

It is common for the second line of a proverb to extend or emphasize the thought in the first:

**The generous man will be prosperous, and
He who waters will himself be watered.**

Strong contrast is often used in the second line:

**The merciful man does himself good,
But the cruel man does himself harm.**

Truth is sometimes taught by stark illustration:

**Like vinegar to the teeth and
smoke to the eyes,
So is the lazy one to those who send him.**

As you read The Proverbs enjoy the memorable ways that truth is presented. Then each day, pick out one verse or thought to remember and ponder throughout the day.

Mark Stinnett