

Good Monday Morning to all my family and friends. God bless you as you read this, the second in this series of seven Devotionals from the Book of Proverbs.

WHAT DO I LEARN ABOUT GOD FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS?

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

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“The LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the path of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.” (Proverbs 2:6-8)

There are many instructional passages carefully crafted by the Lord God relating to how to live a life that is pleasing to Him, winsome to others, satisfying to self, appropriate to society, serving God effectively and living for Him triumphantly in an ungodly world. Sometimes there is a bit of biting sarcasm, sometimes some kind humor, warm personal appeal, and urgency. These different approaches combine to make the Book of Proverbs a magnificent resource of excellent counsel for seeking after and living for Him a life of holiness. As we approach some of the Proverbs that will help us learn about God, we must bear in mind the possibility of asking each of four key questions. The fourth of these questions is subjective, in that it depends on the reader/scholar in the Scriptures state with integrity what he or she has learned and how that should affect how one lives before God.

1. What truth does it present?
2. What conclusions does it produce?
3. What applications does it propose?
4. What response should then prevail?

Using the first three of these questions, it is the responsibility of the student of Scripture to develop a composite of the answers. Perhaps one of the best ways to do so, is to follow this rather simple positive schematic: “observations → conclusions → applications.” When using this way of looking into Scripture, it is important that we follow the order indicated. Never try to reverse the order:

1. Look thoroughly at a passage in an attempt to discover every detail possible within the scope of our admittedly limited understanding and time constraints, (this is induction);
2. Carefully designate the obvious conclusions that indicate the response that should be made in our individual lives, and
3. Attempt to determine all possible resulting life applications that are indicated in the passage, (this is deduction).

With that approach to Scripture as our guide, let’s look at another Proverb in our quest to learn what the Bible teaches us about God. Let’s look at this one:

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” (Proverbs 21:1)

1. What observations can we make? (That is, what truth does it present?) From my study, I offer the following for our consideration. You may find more that have meaning as you study this proverb.

- a. There are human leaders in this world, sometimes known as “kings.”
- b. Earthly kings (representing presidents, queens, monarchs, emperors, etc.) are ultimately subject to the LORD’S command.
- c. The word “hand,” is an anthropomorphism, representing God’ control.
- d. The “heart” of the leader is the inner motivation for all that he does.
- e. The character of the king (leader) is in motion, like the water in a river.
- f. God has the authority to direct a king’s (leader’s) heart as He wills.
- g. There is no designation as to the spiritual condition of the king or leader.

2. What conclusive truths about God are evident in this Proverb? (That is, what conclusions about God are obviously taught in and through this Proverb?) I suggest at least these four:

- a. God acts in sovereignty over the affairs of human government. (In the hand of the LORD!)
- b. God is able to act independently from human influence as He so chooses. (Wherever HE wishes!)
- c. Earthly kings (leaders) should recognize God’s sovereign leadership and follow His direction for their personal and public lives. (A king’s heart IS in the hand of the LORD ... whether or not he acknowledges it!)

d. Every Christian should be encouraged to know that though the world appears dismal at many times because of sin, God is in charge and He will, according to His sovereign plan, alter the affairs of even the most powerful of earthly governments. (Just read Biblical history!)

3. What teachings for life can be drawn from this Proverb? (That is, what are the applications to our Christian lives that are proposed in and through this Proverb?) I believe the following are evident:

a. Christians need to maintain a proper focus on the sovereignty of God.

b. Christians need a rejuvenation of faith and confidence in the wisdom and power of God.

c. Christians need to be optimistic and not fall into the dregs of pessimism. God IS in charge.

d. Christians need not fear the future; God is sovereign over all, and His plans WILL prevail.

e. Christians need to thank God for His powerful rulership over His entire universe, including the affairs of the present world. Nothing takes Him by surprise. He DOES have the final word!

Proverbs 21:1 comes from the only person to whom God ever said "I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again." (1 Kings 3:12; HCSB) This does not mean God does not give needed wisdom to those who ask Him.

The Book of Proverbs does not conclude its teaching about God in Proverbs 21:1. Consider this fantastic list of 25 Proverbs calling our attention to gaining knowledge about God. Meditate on them, pray much, and let God direct you through the process of observations, conclusions, and applications. Then seek the Holy Spirit's enabling grace and power to make them alive and strong in your life.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones." (Proverbs 3:7-8)

"Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase;

So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine." (Proverbs 3:9-10)

"Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes;

For the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught." (Proverbs 3:25-26)

"Do not envy the oppressor, and choose none of his ways;

For the perverse person is an abomination to the LORD, but His secret counsel is with the upright." (Proverbs 3:31-32)

"The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just.

Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble." (Proverbs 3:33-34)

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way,

And the perverse mouth I hate." (Proverbs 8:13)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,

And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

"Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD,

But the blameless in their ways are His delight." (Proverbs 11:20)

"A good man obtains favor from the LORD,

But a man of wicked intentions He will condemn." (Proverbs 12:2)

"Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,

But those who deal truthfully are His delight." (Proverbs 12:22)

"The eyes of the LORD are in every place,

Keeping watch on the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3)

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,

But the prayer of the upright is His delight." (Proverbs 15:8)

"The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,

But He loves him who follows righteousness." (Proverbs 15:9)

"Better is a little with the fear of the LORD,

Than great treasure with trouble." (Proverbs 15:16)

"The LORD will destroy the house of the proud,

But He will establish the boundary of the widow." (Proverbs 15:25)

"The LORD is far from the wicked,

But He hears the prayer of the righteous." (Proverbs 15:29)

“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the spirits.” (Proverbs 16:2)

“When a man’s ways please the LORD,
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” (Proverbs 16:7)

“A man’s heart plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
The righteous run to it and are safe.” (Proverbs 18:10)

“The fear of the LORD leads to life.
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;
He will not be visited with evil.” (Proverbs 19:23)

“The great God who formed everything
Gives the fool his hire and the transgressor his wages.” (Proverbs 26:10)

“He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife,
But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.” (Proverbs 28:25)

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.
Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar.” (Proverbs 30:5)

While not a part of the Book of Proverbs, King David has given a powerfully true proverb to us. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105; NKJV) When a young person in Church, I recall singing a great old hymn composed by Ernest O. Sellers in 1936. At least the first verse and chorus is a part of it that has stuck with me, and I quote them here. This hymn is based on David’s great Proverb.

THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MY HEART

Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path alway;
To guide and to save me from sin, and show me the heavenly way.

CHORUS

Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee,
That I might not sin, that I might not sin, Thy Word have I hid in my heart.