

Proverbs 1:1-7 – Meeting Wisdom

The aim of this weekend: to equip you to read Proverbs and to make you want to read Proverbs.

Three grey scenarios...

1. You have a colleague who is intensely annoying. They don't know when to stop talking about the most ridiculous, often disgusting things, they're loud and they snort when they laugh. Working with them is like working a couple of desks down from an obnoxious, talkative, truffle hunting hog. One day as you're in the kitchen making a nice cuppa and enjoying a moment of peace you see them heading in your direction...what do you do?
2. At university this coming week you find yourself in the midst of a particularly boring chemistry lecture / at work you find yourself in the midst of a very dull finance meeting. The sky outside is grey and the air in room is greyer. Someone is talking but all you can hear is the dull hum of tedium. Your mate leans over and whispers something pretty insulting about the speaker to you...what do you do?
3. You wake one morning feeling particularly chipper. You've slept well and the day ahead seems full of promise. You make your way downstairs to put together a bit of breakfast and you find at the table your housemate. Bleary eyed, dishevelled, they look like they've just come from wrestling a grizzly bear, and they didn't enjoy it one bit...what do you do?

'Is it a sin to...?'

'Is it a sensible or a stupid thing to...?'

[1 Corinthians 1:30] - WWJD

Proverbs 1:1-7

- 1) **Wisdom from Solomon (v1)**
- 2) **Wisdom for all (v2-6)**
- 3) **Wisdom fears the Lord (v7)**

Proverbs – Finding our bearings

Session outline:

- 1) the structure of the book of Proverbs - how does it fit together.
- 2) the setting of the book of Proverbs – who was it written for and why.
- 3) the style of the book of Proverbs - how it works and how to read it.

1) Structure

The structure of Proverbs may not be crystal clear...

...but the structure of Proverbs is not totally chaotic

Section	Passages	Designation	Development
1	Chapter 1-9	Prologue	Intro
2	Chapter 10-15	Solomon 1A	Introductory wisdom
3	Chapter 16-22:16	Solomon 1B	Intermediate wisdom
4	Chapter 22:17-24:22	Sayings of the Wise 1	Vocational wisdom
5	Chapter 24:23-34	Sayings of the Wise 2	Vocational wisdom
6	Chapter 25-27	Solomon 2A	Advanced wisdom
7	Chapter 28-29	Solomon 2B	Advanced wisdom
8	Chapter 30	The Words of Agur	Conclusion
9	Chapter 31	The Words of Lemuel	Conclusion

Choose one of; [Proverbs 16:8-6] or [Proverbs 26:1-16] or [Proverbs 23:12-28]

- what topics can you see coming up in those verses?

- what do they have in common?

- what strikes you as you read them?

2) Setting

Training servants of the king

[Proverbs 25:4-7]

The evangelistic edge of Proverbs

[James 3:17-18] – to the church

[1 Peter 2:9-12] – to the world

3) Style

How do we approach Proverbs?

Purposefully

Prayerfully

Practically

Persistently

How do the Proverbs work?

Simplistically

Repetitively

Formulaically

- Parallel

[10:26] [11:25]

- antithetical parallels, or parallels of opposites. [10:1]

A brief study in Proverbs 10

Questions for group time

- What would your friends / peers consider good sources of wisdom?
- What impact will it have if we neglect the book of Proverbs?
- What impact could it have if we took seriously the book of Proverbs?
- Can you think of one way that you could, as a group, help each other grow in wisdom?

Proverbs – Wisdom on Friendship

[Proverbs 27:5-17]

The gospel according to friendship

Friendship is tough

- *Friendships are hard to find*
[20:6]
- *Friendships are fraught with difficulty*
[25:16-17]
[25:20] & [27:14]
[26:18-19]
[24:26] – how to hold friendships together
- *Friendships are fragile*
[16:28] & [17:9] – the problem
[17:14] – the response

Friendship is to be treasured

- *Friends stand by you, especially in difficulty*
[17:17], [18:24], [27:10]
[19:4, 19:6-7] – warnings of fair weather friends
- *Friends tell you the truth*
[27:6], [28:23], [29:5]
[28:13] – we must tell our friends the truth
- Friends provide wise counsel
[27:9], [27:17].

Friendship is found in Christ

[John 15:13-16]
[1 Corinthians 13:12]

Questions for group time

- How would you define 'friendship'?
- Consider one way in which Proverbs should shape how you *think* about friendship.
- Consider one way in which Proverbs might change how you *live* in terms of friendship.

Proverbs 25

These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.

- ² It is the glory of God to conceal things,
but the glory of kings is to search things out.
- ³ As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth,
so the heart of kings is unsearchable.
- ⁴ Take away the dross from the silver,
and the smith has material for a vessel;
- ⁵ Take away the wicked from the presence of the king,
and his throne will be established in righteousness.
- ⁶ Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great,
- ⁷ for it is better to be told, "Come up here",
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.
What your eyes have seen
- ⁸ do not hastily bring into court,
for what will you do in the end,
when your neighbour puts you to shame?
- ⁹ Argue your case with your neighbour himself,
and do not reveal another's secret,
- ¹⁰ lest he who hears you bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute have no end.
- ¹¹ A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
- ¹² Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise reprover to a listening ear.
- ¹³ Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
is a faithful messenger to those who send him;
he refreshes the soul of his masters.
- ¹⁴ Like clouds and wind without rain
is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.
- ¹⁵ With patience a ruler may be persuaded,
and a soft tongue will break a bone.
- ¹⁶ If you have found honey, eat only enough for you,
lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.
- ¹⁷ Let your foot be seldom in your neighbour's house,
lest he have his fill of you and hate you.
- ¹⁸ A man who bears false witness against his neighbour
is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.
- ¹⁹ Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble
is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.
- ²⁰ Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart
is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day,
and like vinegar on soda.
- ²¹ If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat,
and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,
- ²² for you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.
- ²³ The north wind brings forth rain,
and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.
- ²⁴ It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.
- ²⁵ Like cold water to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country.
- ²⁶ Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain
is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.
- ²⁷ It is not good to eat much honey,
nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.
- ²⁸ A man without self-control
is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Questions

- 1) Do you see any common themes in these Proverbs? What values and virtues are being promoted / discouraged here?
- 2) How do we see these values and virtues in the life of Jesus? Give thanks for his perfect wisdom and obedience.
- 3) Take just one or two of the proverbs that particularly strike you and think about how they apply to you. How would you put the lesson of this proverb(s) into practice? What would be difficult about that?
- 4) Ask God to help you become more like Christ in the areas you've been thinking about.

Proverbs 31:10-31 – Watching Wisdom in action

Keeping Proverbs 31 in Proverbs!

[4:7-8]

[3:15-17]

[8:10-11]

1. **Wisdom is infinitely valuable [v10-12]**

2. **Wisdom works hard [v13-19]**

3. **Wisdom generously provides [v20-22]**

4. **Wisdom brings honour [v23-25]**

5. **Wisdom speaks well [v26]**

6. **Wisdom looks after the family [v27-28]**

7. **Wisdom fears the Lord [v29-30]**

8. **Wisdom in Christ [v31]**