

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 44
Week 45 – Proverbs 17-31

Key Concepts: The key concepts in Proverbs are that there is wisdom out there in the world, it needs to be learned and practiced, that one can learn it and that if one practices it, life will go well...and if one does not learn and practice it, life will go poorly.

Stories: this section of Proverbs contains a long series of short pithy proverbs, followed by some short dialogue (30:1-9), a series of numerical proverbs (30:10-33), and a famous ode to the good wife (31).

Brief Summaries: The majority of this part of Proverbs is a series of proverbs which are not thematically arranged. However there are multiple themes contained within them. We will look at some of these.

Fear the Lord: for the writer/compiler the most important point wisdom makes is that fearing/being in awe of God become the foundation for all portions of one's life "The fear of the Lord is life indeed" (19:23) "The reward for...fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life" (22:4) "A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always continue in the fear of the Lord." (23:17).

Be honest and live with integrity: this concept is very much in line with the Torah and with God's nature. "Better for the poor walking in integrity than one perverse of speech who is a fool" (19:1) "The righteous walk in integrity, happy are the children who follow them." (20:7) "Better to be poor and walk in integrity than to be crooked in one's ways even though rich." (28:6) "One who walks in integrity will be safe, but whoever follows crooked ways will fall in the pit." (28:18)

Be kind to the poor: Once again we read proverbs that remind us that God desires that the poor be cared for and not mistreated. "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full." (19:17) "If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard." (21:13) "Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor." (22:9) "Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate." (22:22)

Work hard: there is a very clear call to diligence and hard work because that is what blesses individuals. "One who is slack in work is close kin to a vandal." (18:9) "Prepare your work outside...and after that build your house." (24:27) "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger." (19:15) "Love not sleep lest you come to poverty." (20:13) "I passed the field of a sluggard...and lo it was overgrown with thorns." (24:30)

Do not make wealth your aim: the dogged pursuit of wealth rather than wisdom is seen as a rejection of God which will not lead to a good end. "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist." (23:4) "The faithful will abound with blessings, but one who is in a hurry to be rich will not go unpunished." (28:20) "The miser in a hurry to get rich does not know that loss is sure to come." (28:22) "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty or riches; feed me with the food I need." (30:8)

A good wife is a great gift: family harmony is greatly praised in Proverbs. The writer/compiler encourages finding a good, industrious wife, rather than a contentious one. "...a prudent wife is from the Lord" (19:14) "A good wife...is far more precious than jewels." (31:10)

1. How do these themes align with what you have been taught in your life?
2. Which of these proverbs seem a bit out of date?
3. Which of these proverbs will you take to heart and try and live by?