

Proverbs and a Song

The book of Proverbs was in large part written by Solomon. 1 Kings 4:32 says that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. Proverbs 1:1 refers to it as the proverbs of Solomon. Later, we find, however, that there were other authors who wrote proverbs in this book, but Solomon was a primary author.

A *proverb* is generally a short, compact statement that expresses some truth about life or human behavior. These statements are typically meant to be “truisms,” or generalized observations about various aspects of life. While one should not be surprised to find an occasional exception, wisdom requires that we seek out and hold to the truth of the statements.

Proverbs find their strength in using comparison. By comparing what is similar, we may draw conclusions about the way we should approach other situations that may be comparable. Why are the proverbs written? The best answer is to let the wise man tell us:

To know wisdom and instruction,
To discern the sayings of understanding,
To receive instruction in wise behavior,
Righteousness, justice and equity;
To give prudence to the naive,
To the youth knowledge and discretion,
A wise man will hear and increase in learning,



And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,
To understand a proverb and a figure,
The words of the wise and their riddles.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:2-7)

Notice up front that the purpose is to provide wisdom, to instruct readers on how to discern and live life with prudence and understanding, to help all to fear the Lord so that true knowledge will be possible. Then we see the contrast, which is made throughout the Proverbs, that fools despise wisdom and instruction. We are immediately confronted with the challenge of whether or not we want to be wise or foolish. Wisdom is a choice that can be made; folly can be avoided through understanding and discernment. This is not just about one's intellect; it is about one's heart. "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Proverbs covers a range of topics, including: wisdom, folly, morality, parental responsibility, righteousness, wickedness, life, conduct, etc. These writings describe how to be wise, how to avoid immorality, and generally how to please God. They describe the character of righteous people, such as is found in the Proverbs 31's description of the worthy woman.

Because of its nature, and even though it was written so long ago, Proverbs is one of the most practical books in the Bible. It deals in depth with the “art of living.” Wisdom is based completely upon a proper respect and fear of the Lord. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

By living according to the principles found throughout the book, one is assured success in service to God. For practical instruction on attaining wisdom, knowledge, and understanding about life, turn to Proverbs. The book is a blessing to read and learn.

Song of Solomon

The Song of Solomon is unique among the books of Scripture. Was this written by Solomon or was it written for Solomon? There are many unanswered questions. There are questions not answered relative to the characters in the song, and because of this the work has been subjected to many and varied interpretations. Are there just two main characters (Solomon and his bride)? Are there three (adding a shepherd boy)? How is this meant to be read? The inspired text contains none of the markers of characters often found in Bible versions. However, none of this means that we cannot find high value in the book. It is, after all, inspired Scripture; and it is beautiful.

I will suggest that the book is meant to be read as a series of poems praising the physical love shared between a husband and wife. Because of this, the work is unique in that it really does touch upon a significantly important issue in marriage that is not spoken of so directly through the rest of the Bible. While Scripture is clear that the marriage bed is to be undefiled and marriage

to be held in honor (Heb. 13:4), the Song of Solomon presents beautiful imagery that helps us understand that such love between husband and wife is not only to be desired, but is directly given by God as a blessing.

The theme is seen toward the end (8:6-7):

“Put me like a seal over your heart,
Like a seal on your arm.
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
The very flame of the Lord.
‘Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor will rivers overflow it;
If a man were to give all the riches of his
house for love,
It would be utterly despised.’”

Love is as strong as death. May this book give us a great perspective on what marital love is all about, and may we teach our children the honor of godly marriage.

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