**PROVERBS**

**Practical, Ethical Wisdom**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

The Older Testament contains five books of wisdom and poetry. In our walk through this section of the Scriptures, we have seen that the book of Job explores the universal experience of evil and human suffering asking the philosophical questions, “If God is good and all powerful, why does human suffering still exist?” and “Why do the righteous and the innocent suffer?”

We then explored the Psalms which is a collection of sacred songs, poems, prayers and honest confessions of the highs and lows of the human faith-journey. We concluded that the Psalms are an important addition to the Scriptures as they provide a template of emotional honesty in our relationship with God. They teach us that God is big enough to handle our honest questions, struggles and feelings. In fact, it’s in the lives of the relationally transparent that He is able to craft a growing and prevailing faith.

**What you need to KNOW:**

The book of Proverbs is the third of the Older Testament’s five books of wisdom and poetry. A proverb is a short, pithy saying that is meant to convey a bit of wisdom. As such, the book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings that are meant to provide the reader with a rightly calibrated moral compass to navigate in a world of choices.

Like the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs is divided into five parts. Chapters 1-9 and 10-24 are two separate collections of the proverbs of King Solomon; chapters 25-29 are a third anthology of Solomon’s advice which were compiled by the men of King Hezekiah; chapter 30 contains the sayings of Agur; and chapter 31 are bits of wisdom King Lemuel learned from his mother.

There are some sections of Proverbs that contain sustained teachings on specific themes, but most of the book is filled with disjointed, pithy expressions and sayings that are meant to give us insightful observations about human nature, psychology and collective behaviors, as well as, practical advice.

The subject matter is broad but emphasizes that the beginning point of all wisdom is the fear of God. From this foundation, the Proverbs teach us how to craft a life that is rich in faith, knowledge, righteousness, diligence and self-control. There is also much material about how to handle money, how to parent children, how to control our tongues, and how to avoid the moral traps associated with pretty girls, bullies and the company you keep. Other topics include commonsensical advice on the value of hard work, honesty, helpfulness, and happiness. It’s real-world advice about steering clear of danger and charting a course to a well-lived life.

This collection of soundbites and teachings has stood the test of time. Obviously, it doesn’t speak to every situation but it does address a wide array of circumstances and potential outcomes. Proverbs provides many helpful strategies and principles to apply to the real-life choices we all are required to make. In a situationally-driven way, it describes choices and habits that will tend to either cause us to shipwreck our lives, or help us navigate to a safe destination.

**GET GOING!**

**Continue your personal Walk Through the Bible by reading Proverbs.**

**Be sure to read, in full, the sustained teaching contained in chapters 1-9. After that, if time is short, you might consider taking a hop, skip and a jump through chapters 10-29 – there’s a lot of good stuff in there! Then, finish your journey by reading Agur’s advice in chapter 30, as well as, what King Lemuel’s momma taught him in chapter 31.**

**By the way, because the 31 chapters of Proverbs align nicely with the number of days in a month, there are some people who follow a monthly routine of reading a chapter a day. After all, “a proverb a day keeps foolishness away!”**