

# INTRODUCTION TO 20<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## PROVERBS (compiled before 685 B.C.)

A. The Book of Proverbs is a part of biblical poetry	1
B. The origin of the Book of Proverbs	1
C. The purpose of the Book of Proverbs	3
D. The division of the Book of Proverbs	4
E. The poetic nature of the Book of Proverbs	5
F. The practical use of the Book of Proverbs	5

### A. THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS A PART OF BIBLICAL POETRY

Biblical poetry is found in the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, but also in parts of the Prophets and even in the sayings of Jesus Christ.

#### **1. Ancient wisdom literature.**

Wisdom literature was extensively cultivated among all the near Eastern peoples. Archaeologists have found outstanding examples of collections of wisdom in the ancient Egyptian-, Akkadian-, Aramean-, Ugaritic- and Arabian languages. These collections are dated between 2250 and 669 B.C. These facts compel us to conclude that the Hebrews not only memorised their poetry and passed it on orally, but must have committed their poetry to the written form at the time they were produced.

'Wisdom literature' is all kinds of practical principles and precepts for how to live. It is based on clever observations of human nature and human behaviour. It records all kinds of rules how to succeed in social, commercial and political life. The wisdom literature of the Hebrews was of a practical rather than a theoretical-philosophical nature. *The wise man* was a person who feared God and had knowledge of God (9:10). He knew how to do things with knowledge, ability and skill<sup>1</sup>. He was also a person who could come up with the right answer in critical situations<sup>2</sup>.

Wisdom in Israel was applied to the art of getting along successfully with all kinds of people: Wisdom was the art of knowing how to relate to the rich and the poor, to kings and servants, to your neighbour and to people of the opposite sex. Among the Hebrew people, much of the ancient wisdom found among their own people and among other Eastern people have become a vehicle of God's inspiration. *Through the wisdom literature in the Bible, God revealed what he regards as wisdom and what he regards as foolishness.*

#### **2. The book of Proverbs is wisdom literature.**

The proverbs are didactic poetry, that is, poetry with the purpose to instruct God's people in wisdom. The wise people in Israel with their minds illumined by the Holy Spirit sought to understand God and his ways, as well as to understand life by studying the consistencies in human experience. The understanding of life in the book of Proverbs was that 'practising wisdom or righteousness brings prosperity and life', while 'practising foolishness or wickedness brings suffering and death'. The only practical way the believers during the Old Testament period could understand the blessings of wisdom and the pitfalls of foolishness, was by pointing to the prosperity of wise people and the disasters of foolish people. The book of Proverbs is a guidebook for successful living: it contrasts the results of living a life of wisdom with the results of living a life of folly.

### B. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

#### **1. The name of the book.**

In the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament, the book is named after its beginning words, 'The proverbs of Solomon' (Hebrew: Misle Shelomoh) or (Greek: Paroimiai Salómóntos).

- The word 'proverb'<sup>3</sup> means *representation of something* and probably means representations of events in ordinary daily life.
- In Ezekiel 12:22 and 18:2 it means *a proverb*.
- In Ezekiel 17:2 and 24:3 it means *a parable or a riddle*<sup>4</sup>.
- In Isaiah 14:4 it means *a taunt or song of mockery* and in Ezekiel 14:8 it means *a byword or word of ridicule*.

The proverbs contain hints or allusions, comparisons and contrasts, proverbs and parables, and sayings with a deep meaning.

#### **2. The writer of the book.**

The book of Proverbs did not have one writer.

- Proverbs 10:1 to 22:16 as well as 25:1 to 29:27 were all proverbs of king Solomon.
- Proverbs 22:17 to 24:22 as well as 24:23-34 were all sayings of *the wise*.
- Proverbs 30:1-33 were proverbs of Agur.

---

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 31:3

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 41:39

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew: mashal

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Matthew 13:13

- Proverbs 31:1-9 were proverbs of king Lemuel, which his mother had taught him.
- Proverbs 31:10-31 is an acrostic hymn in which each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Because the majority of the book was written by king Solomon, Proverbs 1:1 says that the book contained the proverbs of king Solomon.

### 3. How the book of Proverbs was written and compiled.

1 Kings 4:32-34 says that king Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs and composed 1005 songs! He described plant life, ... and taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Also other people wrote proverbs, for example, the proverbs of *the wise men*, of Agur and of Lemuel. Agur and Lemuel were probably non-Israelites, who believed in the Lord (30:6)<sup>5</sup>. Their *oracles* were a *burden*, which the Holy Spirit had laid upon them to speak to the people, just like the prophets did.

### 4. Smaller collections of proverbs.

Ecclesiastes 12:11 speaks of ‘the collected sayings of the wise’ and shows that collections of wisdom existed at a very early time. On the whole, the collection of proverbs in the book of Proverbs do not show any logic classification or order.

But making an association between two thoughts must have guided the writers or compilers in ordering the proverbs in their collections. For example, Proverbs 6:1-19 does not seem to fit between Proverbs chapter 5 and 6:20 onwards. While Proverbs chapter 5 and 6:20 to 7:27 deal with practical warnings against adultery, Proverbs 6:1-19 deals with putting up security, with laziness, with a deceiver and with seven things that God hates. These things do not seem to fit in chapter 5 to 7. But on closer examination, there is an association of thought between these passages: *Proverbs chapter 5 speaks of practical situations that deal with the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.”* Proverbs 5:10 warns against adultery that could incur a heavy financial loss.

This thought reminded the writer or compiler of other evil things that could also incur heavy financial losses. For example, putting up security and being lazy. These speak of practical situations that deal with *the eighth commandment*, “You shall not steal.”

The thought of issues related to the seventh and eighth commandment reminded the writer or compiler of issues related to *the ninth commandment*, “You shall not give false testimony” and *the sixth commandment*, “You shall not kill.” “A man going around with a corrupt mouth” and “hands which shed innocent blood” are transgressions of the ninth and sixth commandments.

Thus, a thought in one section of Proverbs could be the bridge to related thoughts in the next section of Proverbs.

### 5. Larger collections of smaller collections of proverbs.

When smaller collections of proverbs are compiled into larger collections, one might expect repetitions of certain proverbs. Even within one larger collection, there are repetitions. Compare Proverbs 2:16 with 7:5, 3:15 with 8:11, 10:1 with 15:20, 14:12 with 16:25; 14:20 with 19:4. Thus, even our present identifiable larger collections were collections of even smaller collections. Finally, the book of Proverbs emerged as one collection of all the other larger collections of proverbs.

### 4. When the book of Proverbs was written and compiled.

King Solomon reigned as king from 971-931 B.C. Thus, his proverbs were written before 931 B.C. When the other proverbs of Agur, Lemuel and the other wise men were written, we do not know. However, the spiritual and moral evils described in the book of Proverbs were the same evils, which the prophets during the period of the kings of Israel and Judah preached against. There is no evidence against the theory that Proverbs was written before the time of king Hezekiah. According to Proverbs 25:1, “these proverbs of Solomon” were copied by the men of king Hezekiah.

King Hezekiah reigned as king of the southern kingdom of Judah from 726-685 B.C. (of which the first 13 years under a guardian and the last 11 years together with his son).

Three factors may have contributed to the collection of the proverbs:

- The prophet Isaiah, who prophesied from about 740-680 B.C., must have had a great spiritual impact on king Hezekiah and his people.
- The extraordinary defeat of the mighty army of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, in about 701 B.C. by an angel of God, must have deeply moved the spiritual life of many in Israel.
- The northern kingdom of Israel was invaded and deported to Assyria in 721 B.C. Therefore, it is quiet understandable that the godly king Hezekiah ordered that as much as possible of the wisdom of Israel as a whole at that time be collected in order to preserve it for posterity.

We therefore conclude that all the proverbs were written before the time of Hezekiah, and were collected in smaller collections of proverbs. The book of Proverbs was finally compiled from the various smaller collections of proverbs in the days of king Hezekiah, thus before 685 B.C.

### 5. The place of the book of Proverbs in the Canon - the list of inspired books of the Bible.

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 4:2

- The Hebrew Canon was arranged in three parts.
  - *The Law*, which consists of the 5 books of Moses.
  - *The Prophets*, which consists of the Early and the Latter Prophets. The Early Prophets are Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, and the Latter Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 Minor Prophets.
  - *The Writings*, which contain the rest of the Old Testament books.

The book of Proverbs belongs to this last part, called *the Writings*. According to a reliable source (Ben Asher, died 960 A.D.), the order of the books in this third part of the Hebrew Bible were originally: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles. That order probably reflected the order in which these books were considered to belong to the Canon, that is, the list of inspired books of the Bible.

- The present canon is arranged in five parts.

Although it consists of the same books as the Hebrew Canon, it is ordered in a different way and is based on the division and order in the Greek and Latin translations of the Hebrew Old Testament Bible. Our present Old Testament Canon consists of five parts:

  - *The 5 books of the Law*, which consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
  - *The 12 historical books*, which consist of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, two books of Samuel, two books of Kings, two books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.
  - *The 5 poetical books*, which consist of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.
  - *The 5 major prophets*, which consists of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations and Daniel.
  - *The 12 minor prophets*, which consist of the 12 last books of the Old Testament.

### **C. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

#### **1. Wisdom is highly exalted but nevertheless attainable.**

On the one hand, *wisdom* is so highly exalted that it stands on the side of God himself. “The LORD brought wisdom forth as he first of his works, before his deeds of old. Wisdom was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began” (8:22-23). On the other hand, *wisdom* is attainable here on earth, because she calls aloud to people in the streets (1:20-33) and invites people to come and sit at her feast (9:1-6).

#### **2. Every person must choose between wisdom and foolishness.**

The book of Proverbs deals with the two ways between which people must choose: The one way leads to death, while the other way leads to life. Proverbs 8:35-36 says, “Whoever finds me finds life and receives favour from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death” (1:32-33).

#### **3. Wisdom is associated with godliness and righteousness.**

The unrighteous people are fools and their way certainly leads to death. The righteous people are wise and their way certainly leads to life (15:24). And because real wisdom is given from above by the Lord (2:6)<sup>6</sup>, and *because real wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (1:7; 9:10), the righteous are not just those who do righteous things, but are those who stand in the right relationship to the Lord and the Lord’s revealed truths. Because real life begins with the fear of the Lord (14:26), ‘the righteous’ is a synonym for ‘believers in the Lord’.*

Those who fear the God of the Bible are contrasted with those who are godless. The holy God of the Bible is contrasted with perverse people (3:32; 8:13; 11:20). The people who fear the God of the Bible are contrasted with the people who despise God (14:2). The righteous are contrasted with the wicked (10:24,30; 11:5-6; 12:3). And the wise are contrasted with the fools (12:16,23; 13:20; 22:3). Those who love are contrasted with those who hate (10:12; 13:24). Those who are diligent are contrasted with those who are lazy (6:6; 10:4). Proverbs 10:24 says, “What the wicked dreads will overtake him; what the righteous desire will be granted.” And Proverbs 10:30 says that the wicked will never remain in the land, but the righteous will never be uprooted!

In short, the purpose of the book of Proverbs is to attract people to a life of godliness and righteousness, and to frighten them away from a life of godlessness and wickedness.

### **D. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

The theme of the book of Proverbs is Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10: “**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, godliness and righteousness; and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**”

The book of Proverbs may be divided into 8 parts:

#### **1. Proverbs is 1:1 to 9:18. A long introduction and collections of proverbs.**

<sup>6</sup> James 1:17; 3:17

- Chapter 1 describes the purpose and theme of Proverbs and calls people to avoid the way of wicked people, and instead to respond to the call of wisdom.
- Chapter 2 describes the benefits of wisdom.
- Chapter 3 recommends to submit to wisdom.
- Chapter 4 admonishes in a fatherly way to acquire wisdom.
- Chapter 5 warns against adultery.
- Chapter 6 warns against putting up security for others, laziness, deceivers and the seven things that God hates.
- Chapter 6 and 7 give more warnings against adultery.
- Chapter 8 describes the exalted nature of wisdom.
- Chapter 9 contrasts the invitation of wisdom with the invitation of foolishness.

## **2. Proverbs is: 10:1 to 22:16. The proverbs of king Solomon.**

- Although the proverbs cannot be adequately classified, the following is a help to remember in which chapters proverbs are written:
- Chapter 10 deals with diligent work, righteous wages and self-control in speaking.
- Chapter 11 deals with honesty, humility, faithfulness, trustworthiness and generous giving.
- Chapter 12 deals with correction, women of good character, unpretentious realism, care of animals and self-control in speaking.
- Chapter 13 deals with unpretentious realism, accepting advice, honesty with regard to money, making friends with the wise and discipline of children.
- Chapter 14 deals with evaluation and planning - with considering one's personal ways and the outcome of every way and with planning what is good.
- Chapter 15 deals with wisdom in speaking - with thinking before answering and speaking gently.
- Chapter 16 deals with planning and the sovereignty of God.
- Chapter 17 deals with friendship and no corruption in justice.
- Chapter 18 deals with friendship and listening before exercising justice.
- Chapter 19 deals with relationships with one's marriage partner, children, offenders, advisors and the poor.
- Chapter 20 deals with honesty in business, faithfulness and discipline of children.
- Chapter 21 deals with the right and wrong way of giving money.
- Chapter 22 deals with money and children.

## **3. Proverbs is 22:17 to 24:22. The proverbs of the wise.**

- Chapter 22 deals with friendship and justice.
- Chapter 23 deals with personal restraint and the responsibility of children.
- Chapter 24 deals with avoiding wicked people, rescuing weak people and diligence in work.

## **4. Proverbs is 24:23-34. More proverbs of the wise.**

## **5. Proverbs is 25:1 to 29:27. More proverbs of king Solomon.**

- Chapter 25 deals with patience and doing good.
- Chapter 26 deals with wisdom in speaking.
- Chapter 27 deals with friendship and care.
- Chapter 28 deals with law and order.
- Chapter 29 deals with discipline, self-control and not fearing man.

## **6. Proverbs is 30:1-33. The proverbs of Agur.**

It deals with interpersonal relationships.

## **7. Proverbs 31:1-9. The proverbs of king Lemuel.**

It deals with the responsibility of rulers.

## **8. Proverbs 31:10-31. An acrostic hymn.**

It sings about the wife of noble character.

## **E. THE POETIC NATURE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

### **1. Parallelism.**

The main feature of Hebrew poetry is called *parallelism* and consists of a correspondence of thought between the first and the second lines of a verse. Hebrew poetry is written in couplets, usually consisting of two lines that are related to each other in some way.

The book of Proverbs contains various kinds of parallelisms:

- There is the synonym kind of parallelism in which the thought contained in the first half is *repeated* in other words in the second half. For example, Proverbs 11:25 says, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

- There is the *progressive kind of parallelism* in which the same thought in the first half is *expanded* in the second half. The word *and* is used. For example, Proverbs 10:22 says, “The blessing of the Lord brings wealth; *and* he adds no trouble to it.”
- There is the *synthetic kind of parallelism* in which the thought in the first half is expanded with *a new thought* in the second half. For example, Proverbs 26:4-5 says, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.”
- There is the *climatic kind of parallelism* in which the thought in the first half reaches a *climax* in the second half. For example, Proverbs 1:16 says, “Their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood.”
- There is the *antithetical kind of parallelism* in which the thought in the first half is *contrasted* with its opposite in the second half. The word *but* is used. There are many examples in chapters 10-15. For example, Proverbs 10:1 says, “A wise son brings joy to his father, *but* a foolish son grief to his mother.”
- There is the *comparative kind of parallelism* in which the thought in the first half is *explained* with something known in the second half. The words *as...so ...* or *like* may be used. For example, Proverbs 10:26 says, “As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, *so* is a sluggard to those who send him.” And Proverbs 11:22 says, “*Like* a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.” Sometimes two things are compared with one another and the excellence of the one above the other is pointed out. The words *better than* may be used. For example, Proverbs 12:9 says, “*Better* to be a nobody and yet have a servant, *than* pretend to be somebody and have no food.”
- There is the *numeric kind of parallelism* in which the thought expressed together with a number in the first half is intensified by expressing it together with *one number higher* in the second half. This is done to capture the attention. They are found in Proverbs 6:16, 30:15,18,21,29, Job 33:29, Ecclesiastes 11:2 and Amos 1:3 to 2:8. For example, Proverbs 6:16 says, “There are *six* things the Lord hates, *seven* that are detestable to him.”

## 2. The book contains an acrostic hymn.

Proverbs 31:10-31 contains an acrostic hymn in which each one of the 22 verses begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Of course, this cannot be seen in any translation. Psalm 119 is also an acrostic poem, in which each one of the 22 stanzas begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and all 8 verses of each stanza begin with that same letter.

## F. THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

### 1. The book of Proverbs is useful to practise personal godliness.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 says, “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to attract people to a life of godliness and righteousness, because those who fear the God of the Bible and practise righteousness will certainly inherit life in the fullest sense of the word.

But the purpose of the book of Proverbs is also to scare people away from a life of godlessness and wickedness, because those who despise the God of the Bible and practise wickedness will certainly inherit death in the fullest sense of the word. The book of Proverbs is full of practical wisdom which can help Christians to practise godliness.

James 1:21-25 says, “Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man, who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into *the perfect law that gives freedom*, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does.”

- God’s law gives new birth and continues to save.

Against the Old Testament background, *God’s law* is *God’s Word*, that is, the whole Bible, which God designed for obedience. It is ‘the preaching or teaching of God’s Word’, which happens at home and in the Church.

According to James 1:18, it is the Word of God that God uses to give us new birth, and according to James 1:21, it is the Word that God implants in us in order to save us. James 1:25 says that God’s law is God’s Word that will continue to save us from wickedness and foolishness and continue to bless us, if we continue to accept it into our hearts and lives.

- God’s law or the Bible is perfect and exhorts believers to be holy and righteous.

James 1:25 says, “*God’s law* is perfect”. The Bible as a whole, but especially the Ten Commandments, is God’s *perfect Word*, because *it perfectly expresses God’s holy and righteous nature* and it will make us perfect if we live according to it. In the Ten Commandments God has taken what is true about himself and has expressed that truth in teachings or rules for how to live as God’s saved people. *When we obey the Ten Commandments, we express to the world what the God of the Bible is like.*

Leviticus 19 illustrates this beautifully: God begins by saying, “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.”<sup>7</sup> Then God gives all kind of commands for us to obey and adds, “I am the Lord your God.” The collection of widely varying laws in Leviticus 19 finds common ground in the recurring assertion, “I am the LORD” (19:10,12,14,15, etc.), that is, “I am what I am”. Every commandment and every group of laws is therefore saying, “*You Christians are to be like this, because the God of the Bible is like this.*”<sup>8</sup> *The divine nature of the God of the Bible determines what the God of the Bible commands people to be and to do.* The law of God is given to us so that we may be like the God who gives it to us. God’s Word, whether it is expressed as commands or precepts, principles or examples of wisdom, brings out what the God of the Bible is like and what we Christians should be like<sup>9</sup>.

- God’s law or the Bible brings freedom.

James 1:25 says, “God’s law is the perfect law that brings freedom”. *God’s law or the Bible expresses our true humanity when we obey it.* When we obey the commandments and wisdom of the God of the Bible we are truly free, that is, free to live a holy and righteous life. But the opposite is also true: when we disobey or neglect the commandments and wisdom of the God of the Bible we are not free, that is, we will be slaves of an unholy and unrighteous god and consequently live as slaves of unholiness and unrighteousness.

The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 begins with the words, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of ... the land of slavery.” God gave the Ten Commandments to people *only after he had saved them!* God did not give the Ten Commandments to people in order to give them an opportunity to save themselves by keeping the commandments. No, God gave the Ten Commandments to people after they had been saved, in order to teach them how to live as the saved people of God! God gave the Ten Commandments to people, *not to bring them back into another kind of bondage by imposing the law upon them, but to safeguard the freedom he had secured for them.* Both the Old and the New Testament teaches that God did not give the Law as *a means* of salvation, but as *a life-style* for those who have already been saved. God’s law is a means to live a holy, righteous and free life. The book of Proverbs is full of practical applications of God’s Commandments and is therefore designed to teach us how to live a holy, righteous and truly free life.

## **2. The book of Proverbs is useful to preach and teach the Ten Commandments.**

Many proverbs are directly related to God’s Commandments in the Bible, especially the Ten Commandments. The proverbs reveal practical applications of doing what God commands and of avoiding what God forbids. For example:

- The following are practical applications of the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment, “Honour your father and mother”.

- Proverbs 1:8, says, “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”
- Proverbs 23:22-25 says that children should learn truth, wisdom, discipline, understanding and righteousness from their parents.
- Proverbs 23:13-14 teaches parents, “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.”
- Proverbs 29:15,17 teaches parents that the rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. Parents must discipline their children. If they do, their children will give them peace and joy.

- The following are practical applications of the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You shall not kill”.

- Proverbs 1:10,15 exhorts young people not to give in to the enticement of sinners and not to go along with them, because they plot to harm and kill other people (for example: producers and dealers of drugs).
- Proverbs 4:14-15 teaches people, “Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.” (for example: members of a gang).
- Proverbs 6:16-17 says that God hates the hands that shed innocent blood. This is a serious warning to all terrorists.

- The following are practical applications of the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You shall not commit adultery”.

The following proverbs deal with prostitutes:

- Proverbs 2:16-17 says that God’s wisdom will save you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, from the woman who has left the partner of her youth and has ignored the marriage covenant she made before God.
- Proverbs 5:8-23 says, “Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house”, because she will steal your strength, shorten your years of life, steal your wealth and take away your health. And finally, you will die for lack of discipline and wisdom.
- Proverbs 6:25-29 says, “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys on your very life.” The one who touches a prostitute, will get burned and will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 7:21-27 warns that the prostitute uses very persuasive words to lead a man astray and she uses smooth

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew: qedoshim tihu, ki qadosh ani JaHWeH Elohechem = “Be holy, for holy AM I the LORD your God.”

<sup>8</sup> Likewise those who make and worship idols (man-made gods) become like them! Psalm 115:8!

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 1:14-16

talk to seduce him. “Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths”, because she brings many victims down to death.

- The following are practical applications of the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You shall not steal”.
  - Proverbs 3:27-28 says, “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbour, “Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow” when you have it now with you.”
  - Proverbs 10:2 warns, “Ill-gotten treasures are of no value”.
  - Proverbs 11:24 warns that a person who gives freely, gains more, but he who withholds unduly will come to poverty.
  - Proverbs 13:11 warns, “Dishonest money dwindles away.”
  - Proverbs 16:8 says, “Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.”
  - Proverbs 19:17 says, “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.”
  - But Proverbs 21:13 warns, “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.”
- The following are practical applications of the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You shall not give false testimony”.
  - Proverbs 4:24 says, “Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.”
  - Proverbs 10:19 says, “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.”
  - Proverbs 11:13 says, “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”
  - Proverbs 13:3 says, “He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.”
  - Proverbs 15:1,23,28 says, “ A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. A man finds joy in giving an apt reply - and how good is a timely word! The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.” Proverbs is full of practical wisdom with regard to speaking.
  - Proverbs 21:28 says, “A false witness will perish and whoever listens to him will be destroyed forever.”
- The following are practical applications of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You shall not covet”.
  - Proverbs 11:6 says, “The unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.”
  - Proverbs 12:11-12 says, “He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgement. The wicked desire the plunder of evil men, but the root of the righteous flourishes.”
  - Proverbs 13:4 says, “The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”
  - Proverbs 21:25 says, “The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.”

### **3. The proverbs in the book of Proverbs may serve as wall texts.**

There are many very wise and beautiful sayings in the book of Proverbs. Christians may use these proverbs as their personal motto or even put them on a wall in their house to remind them of God’s wisdom!

### **4. The book of Proverbs is a rich source of instruction - for example: friendship.**

The proverbs teach about many practical issues of everyday life. You could read through the book of Proverbs and find all the proverbs that deal with a specific topic. Then you could arrange them in a way you could remember them and put them into practice in your life.

Here is an example about *the topic of friendship*:

- Choose your friends carefully.

Proverbs teaches that you cannot be friends with anybody or everybody. You must learn to choose your friends carefully. Consider the following characteristics:

  - Be cautious in friendship, because bad friends will lead you astray (12:26)<sup>10</sup>.
  - Do not make friends with too many people, because a man of many companions may come to ruin (18:24).
  - A good friend is righteous, because a wicked person would lead you astray and involve you in violence and trouble (12:26; 24:1-2).
  - A good friend is wise, because a fool would cause you to suffer harm (13:20; 14:7).
  - A good friend is sincere, because a person who gives gifts in order to make friends has ulterior motives (14:4-7).
  - A good friend is trustworthy, because a gossip betrays a confidence and talks too much (20:19).
  - A good friend is self-controlled, because a hot-tempered or easily angered person might teach you to become like him (22:24-25).
  - A good friend shares. He is not stingy (23:6-7).
  - A good friend is temperate. He does not drink too much wine nor gorges himself on food (23:20-21).
  - A good friend is submissive, because a rebellious person brings sudden destruction (24:21-22).
  - A good friend is faithful, because an unfaithful person is like a lame foot in time of trouble (25:19).
  - A good friend is pure, because a prostitute squanders your wealth (29:3).
- Seek wisdom in order to avoid behaviour which damages friendship.
  - Do not withhold good when it is in your power to act (3:27-28).
  - Never gossip or betray another person’s confidence (16:28; 17:9; 25:9).
  - A person pursuing selfish ends cannot be friendly.

---

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:33

- Do not offend a person, because he will become unyielding (18:19).
  - Never rejoice when another person stumbles or falls (24:17).
  - Never pay another person back for the wrong he has done to you (24:29).
  - Do not set your foot too often in another person's house, lest he would hate you (25:17).
  - Never deceive another person jokingly (for the fun of it)(26:18-19). Do not forsake your friends (27:10).
  - Do not fear another person's criticism or rejection (29:25).
  - Never slander another person to his boss, leader, parents or friends (30:10).
- Practise the responsibilities of a true friend.
    - A good friend covers an offence and promotes love (17:9).
    - A good friend loves at all times, especially in adversity (17:17).
    - A good friend has a pure heart and is gracious in his speech (22:11).
    - A good friend is faithful, especially in times of trouble (25:19).
    - A good friend will not hesitate to rebuke you when you are wrong (27:5-6).
    - A good friend is always ready to give good counsel (27:9).
    - Good friends sharpen one another, thus helping one another to become their best for God and other people (27:17).
    - A good friend looks after those people who are above him and gives careful attention to those people entrusted to his care (27:18 and 25).

In summary, Proverbs 3:3-4 teaches that a good friend loves and is faithful, because love and faithfulness is the way to make good friends.