

## Studying Proverbs

Proverbs are “short, pithy statements revealing God’s perspective on daily life”

Proverbs are generally true to life, but not absolute promises. “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6) is an encouragement to parents in their efforts to raise godly children. But we all know examples of godly couples who seem to have done everything right, but whose children have not followed the Lord. Or perhaps a better example: “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Proverbs 16:7), but Jesus (whose ways were pleasing to the Lord) had plenty of enemies who were not a peace with Him. Don’t mistake the general principle for an absolute promise.

Unlike most other parts of Scripture, most of the chapters in the book of Proverbs consist of individual verses or a few related verses. So studying a chapter in Proverbs usually is not about finding the common thread of an idea like reading one of Paul’s letters, or understanding a story about Jesus in the Gospels. Studying Proverbs can be overwhelming or even frustrating because of the variety of topics in a single chapter. But don’t avoid Proverbs – it is an incredible source of wisdom into what a godly life should look like.

There are a few suggestions that might help as you as you read Proverbs:

- Read a chapter – which verse speaks most clearly to your current life experiences?
- Look for common themes:
  - Home – Living with a spouse, children, parents.
  - Emotions – Dealing with anger, love, discouragement, etc.
  - Attitudes – Humility, greed, mercy, etc.
  - Relationships – Getting along with others.
  - Tongue – How our words affect others and their words affect us.

Don’t forget that Proverbs (like Psalms and other portions of Scripture written as poetry) should be *enjoyed* as well as studied: “In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly.” (Ecclesiastes 12:9-10) Work hard to learn God’s truth from His Word, but also recognize and appreciate the “delightful words” that He uses.

Some of these suggestions are from:

*Best Bible Study Methods*, Melissa Munro and Judith Couchman; NavPress, 2002.

*How to Study Your Bible*, Kay Arthur, Harvest House, 1994.