

DISCOVERY

A Collection of Proverbs



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Proverbs 25:1 through 31:31

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

BACKGROUND

Proverbs 25:1 marks the conclusion of proverbs of the wise men of Israel and the beginning of the third and final section of the Book of Proverbs. According to this verse, the final proverbs authored by Solomon (chapters 25 through 29) were collected and copied by the aides of Hezekiah, King of Judah (715-686 B.C.), who restored the Temple some two hundred years after the time of Solomon. The word translated *copied* in this verse literally means “removed from one document to another,” likely indicating that by the time of Hezekiah, the original documents were in poor condition and needed to be copied in order to preserve the teachings. It is possible that these men also incorporated some of the oral proverbs attributed to Solomon into their collection, along with those that had been written down. Chapter 30 was written by Agur, of whom little is known except that he was a wise teacher who may have come from the kingdom of Massa in northern Arabia. Chapter 31 was written by King Lemuel, who is believed to have been from the kingdom of Massa as well.

This portion of the book contains a special emphasis on wisdom for leaders: it stresses the king’s role and covers topics associated with royal responsibility and appropriate behavior of officials. Rather than reminding leaders what good conduct entails, many of these proverbs instruct the court in what behaviors to encourage in their leaders. Relationships with others is another common thread that runs throughout these chapters, with insight offered regarding one’s association not only with rulers, but with fools, scoundrels, the poor, the wicked, and the righteous.

Chapters 25 through 29 vary somewhat in style and form from the portions of the book attributed to Solomon. These proverbs are arranged more frequently by topic; at times several sequential verses may address the same subject. While chapters 30 and 31 were authored by individuals other than Solomon, it is significant that their words were considered

worthy of inclusion in this collection. The Book of Proverbs ends with the beautiful portrait of a virtuous wife and mother written in the style of an acrostic poem—each of the twenty-two stanzas begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What advice is given in Proverbs 25:6-7, and how does it apply to us today?

2. Proverbs 25:11-12; 27:5-6; and 28:23 refer to the benefits of wise counsel and encouragement. Give an example of a time when the good advice of a godly friend helped you or someone you know avoid making a harmful mistake.

3. The counsel given in Proverbs 25:21 is straightforward: we are to treat our enemies with kindness by meeting their basic needs of food and water. Bible scholars differ somewhat in their explanations of how doing so will “heap coals of fire” on the heads of our adversaries (verse 22). It may indicate that kindness will melt hardened hearts or angry feelings. Others suggest that kindness will shame our enemies into contrition and repentance. However the original meaning is explained, Solomon was indicating that the most effective response to animosity is to do good in return. Why is this response so effective?

4. Proverbs 26:13-16 contains a series of four warnings regarding indolence. What descriptive word picture of a lazy person is given in Proverbs 26:14? What principle is developed in these four verses?

5. We are warned in Proverbs 27:1 against assertively stating what we will do in the future. How can realizing we have no guarantee of tomorrow help us have a proper respect and humility before God?

6. Solomon has much to say about fools. According to Proverbs 28:26, what causes a person to become a fool? How can we avoid that and be wise?

7. In Proverbs 31 we find a beautiful tribute to a godly woman. Outer beauty is not mentioned as being important, but inner beauty is highly commended. While godly women of our day will not necessarily perform every activity in this description, they will exemplify the character from which these activities originated. Given that the Book of Proverbs is a challenge to seek and find true wisdom, why do you think a composite picture of virtuous womanhood is included in this final chapter?

CONCLUSION

A person who heeds the wisdom offered in the Book of Proverbs will have a successful and fulfilling life.

NOTES
