

(S) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today we introduce the book of PROVERBS - PART 2. We will learn about the poetic nature and the practical use of the book of Proverbs.

POINT 5. THE POETIC NATURE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

First. 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:

One. 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."

Two. 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."

Three. 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."

Four. 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."

Five. 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."

Six. 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."

Seven. 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."

Second. 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.

POINT 6. THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

First. 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."

One. 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.

Two. God's law or the Bible is perfect.

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 chapter 19 illustrates this beautifully: God begins by saying, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." 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.*" 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 (1 Pet 1:14-16).

Three. 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 to an unholy and unrighteous life.

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 a chance 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.

Second. 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:

One. The following are practical applications of the fifth 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." And 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.

Two. The following are practical applications of the sixth 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. 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." And Proverbs 6:16-17 says that God hates the hands that shed innocent blood. This is a serious warning to all terrorists.

Three. The following are practical applications of the seventh 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 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.

Four. The following are practical applications of the eighth 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."

Five. The following are practical applications of the ninth 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."

Six. The following are practical applications of the tenth 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."

Third. 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!

Fourth. The book of Proverbs is a rich source of instruction.

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*:

One. We must choose our friends.

Proverbs teaches that we cannot be friends with anybody or everybody. We must learn to choose our friends. Proverbs 12:26 teaches us to be cautious in friendship, because bad friends would lead us astray (1 Cor 15:33). Proverbs 18:24 teaches us that we should not make friends with too many people, because a man of many companions may come to ruin. The following proverbs give valuable principles for choosing friends: Proverbs 12:26 and 24:1-2 teach that a good friend is a righteous person, because a wicked person would lead us astray and involve us in violence and trouble. Proverbs 13:20 and 14:7 teach that a good friend is a wise person, because a fool would cause us to suffer harm. Proverbs 14:4-7 teaches that a good friend is a sincere person, because a person who gives gifts in order to make friends has ulterior motives. Proverbs 20:19 teaches that a good friend is a trustworthy person, because a gossip betrays a confidence and talks too much. Proverbs 22: 24-25 teaches that a good friend is a self-controlled person, because a hot-tempered or easily angered person might teach us to become like him. Proverbs 23:6-7 teaches that a good friend is a sharing person, not a stingy person. Proverbs 23:20-21 teaches that a good friend is a temperate person, not a person who drinks too much wine or gorges himself on food. Proverbs 24:21-22 teaches that a good friend is a submissive person, because a rebellious person brings sudden destruction. Proverbs 25:19 teaches that a good friend is a faithful person, because an unfaithful person is like a lame foot in time of trouble. Proverbs 29:3 teaches that a good friend is a pure person, because a prostitute would squander one's wealth.

Two. We must avoid behaviour which damages friendship.

Proverbs 3:27-28 teaches that we should not withhold good when it is in our power to act. Proverbs 16:28, 17:9 and 25:9 teach that we should never gossip or betray another person's confidence. Proverbs 18:1 teaches that when we are selfish, we are unfriendly. Proverbs 18:19 teaches that when we offend a person, he becomes unyielding. Proverbs 24:17 teaches that we should never rejoice when another person stumbles or falls. Proverbs 24:29 teaches that we should never pay another person back for the wrong he has done to us. Proverbs 25:17 teaches that we should not set our foot too often in another person's house, lest he would hate us. Proverbs 26:18-19 teaches that we should never deceive another person jokingly (for the fun of it). Proverbs 27:10 teaches that we should not forsake our friends. Proverbs 29:25 teaches that we should not fear another person's criticism or rejection. Proverbs 30:10 teaches that we should never slander another person to his boss, leader, parents or friends.

Three. We must practise the responsibilities of a true friend.

Proverbs 17:9 teaches that when a good friend covers an offence, he promotes love. Proverbs 17:17 teaches that a good friend loves at all times, especially in adversity. Proverbs 22:11 teaches that a good friend has a pure heart and is gracious in his speech. Proverbs 25:19 teaches that a good friend is faithful, especially in times of trouble. Proverbs 27:5-6 teaches that a good friend will not hesitate to rebuke his friend when he is wrong. Proverbs 27:9 teaches that a good friend is always ready to give good counsel. Proverbs 27:17 teaches that good friends sharpen one another, thus helping one another to become their best for God and other people. Proverbs 27:18 and 25 teach that a good friend looks after those people who are above him and gives careful attention to those people entrusted to his care. 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.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read Ecclesiastes 1-6. Next week we will introduce the book of Ecclesiastes - part 1.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".