

## The Half Hour That Changes the World

### Proverbs

### Book 20

#### Basic Question behind the book:

*Are there general principles that are true of all times and places that we can live by?*

#### Summary of book:

The book of Proverbs is a collection of short, pithy sayings that should make us think. They concern the quest for wisdom. The Hebrew word for Proverb 'maskil' can also mean oracle or taunt. The proverbs are wise sayings that challenge us to think. There are recurring themes such as seeking for wisdom, avoiding bad company, or being led astray into immorality, and avoiding lethargy and laziness. They are sayings for life on earth and generally do not contain great spiritual insights into eternity or of the history of salvation. It is wisdom for life now. We reap the consequences if we go against it, whether in health, lifestyle or relationships. The principles are true for all people and all times and beliefs. Wisdom is at the heart of the Proverbs. We are to seek it fully. It is in some places seen as a personification of God. In the New Testament Jesus is called the Wisdom of God.

#### Vital Statistics:

Purpose: The book of Proverbs seeks to teach people how to attain wisdom and discipline and a prudent life, and how to do what is right and just and fair – in short to apply divine wisdom to daily life and to provide moral instruction.

Author and Dating: Solomon is traditionally seen as one of the main contributors but there are others. It is possible that the present collection of Proverbs represents a collection that grew over not only years or decades, but even centuries.

Setting: This is a book of wise sayings, a textbook for teaching people how to live godly lives through the repetition of wise thoughts.

#### Other Reflections:

Proverbs sometimes feels like the sort of advice that wise parents give to their growing children and the children haven't got a clue what they're talking about. That's partly to do with the fact that the wisdom is spoken into a different culture, geography, culture, and historical setting. You have to do quite a bit of digging to get some of it. The message of Proverbs can be summed up under the following four headings:

- wisdom is better than wealth (and it lasts longer!)
- words do more damage than wars
- be nice to your neighbour
- work hard

Nothing changes, does it?

#### Key text:

*“The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (1:7)*