

Prayer

I thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for You have healed my body;
I thank You, Holy Spirit of God, for You have healed my spirit;
I thank You, Almighty Father, for You have healed my soul.
In Your great love, my Lord and God; You have made me whole!
HALLELUIAH!

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Scriptures

Pray today that God's people may rediscover their zeal for God's Word, and learn to love their heritage. Pray against Satan's work to try and separate the Word from the people.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for those who look after relatives with Alzheimer's disease*
- *Pray for young people who are deciding what to do with their lives*
- *Give thanks for those who work hard for the good of others*

Meditation

If my people would listen to me, says the Lord,
Then they would know how I answer their prayers.

If my people would turn to me says the Lord,
Then they would find through my touch that I love them.

If my people would read my Word, says the Lord,
Then they would not suffer through lack of knowledge.

If my people would love their neighbours, says the Lord,
Then they would find their own lives would be enriched.

If my people would do what I say, says the Lord,
Then they would discover that I am faithful to my word.

If my people would pursue the truth, says the Lord,
Then they would find themselves with me, in my Kingdom.

Life is a challenge for everyone, says the Lord,
And our souls find their peace when we rise to His call.

Bible Study - Proverbs 1:1-7

¹ The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ² To know about wisdom and instruction, to understand words of knowledge, ³ to receive discipline in wise conduct, in righteousness, justice, and honesty; ⁴ to teach sound judgement to the simple, and knowledge and direction to the young. ⁵ And let the wise also hear and continue to learn, and the discerning receive counsel ⁶ to understand proverbs and sayings, the words of the wise and the mysteries they pose. ⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Review

This is the wonderful beginning of the great book of Proverbs which comes after the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. Most of the book of Proverbs (chapters 9 to 29) contains typical Hebrew 'proverbs' or wise sayings, which are contained in brief two line verses and have no apparent logical order; for example 'For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no gossip, quarrelling ceases' (26:20). Many of these sayings are famous and many remain unknown, and the whole book of Proverbs is itself a collection of works (see 1:1, 10:1, 25:1, 30:1, 31:1f.) Our passage today is an introduction, but it is part of a long extended poem of wisdom literature which makes up the first nine chapters of the first book, in which short proverbs are placed together in a logical and fully explained book of instruction for a youth. This poem is attributed to Solomon (1:1) but it also tells us that wisdom is gathered by the 'elders' (4:1-4) and from experience (6:6-11).

Wisdom literature Wisdom literature in the Bible is all based on the Lord; our text says 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.' We might have expected this passage to tell us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of 'wisdom', but it says 'knowledge'. The reason is because wisdom and the instruction that flows from it are built upon what is known. For an Israelite who worshipped God, 'knowing' the Lord meant acknowledging Him as Creator and living in the light of this fact, and wisdom flowed from this knowledge. Wisdom is therefore the art of applying the knowledge of God to everyday life. We like to think today that what we experience of life is uniquely different from people in the past, so the wisdom we need today is different from that for past generations. This is a basic mistake, for wisdom rarely refers to the particulars of everyday life; how to plough a field or light a fire, for example; and if this were the case, Biblical wisdom would indeed be 'out of date'. The wisdom we read about in the Bible is largely focussed on the dynamics of human relationships and our relationships with 'good and evil' and with God. We cannot therefore turn this wisdom aside, for in this sense it is as true today as ever.

Lifelong learning from God This is very evident in the first few verses of Proverbs. Wisdom and instruction are defined as being about 'wise conduct ... righteousness, justice and honesty ... judgement ... direction for the young' (1:3-4). All of these are essential moral and godly qualities which are the bedrock of human relationships, whether private or social. What is genuinely interesting about this passage is that wisdom and instruction are not spoken of simply as required by the 'simple' and the 'young' (1:4). The principle of 'Continuing Professional Development' (as we would call it today) is clearly outlined in verse 5; 'let the wise also hear and continue to learn, and the discerning receive counsel'. I have been in a number of church meetings where preachers or clergy have resisted any kind of obligation to engage in continued training and assessment. Well, here is its Scriptural justification; and even the concept of accountable assessment is contained within the verse (my translation of the Hebrew of verse 5 may be different from available versions, but the phrase '... the discerning receive counsel' is abundantly clear about this).

This fascinating brief introduction to the book of Proverbs concludes with a clear indication that wisdom is not something we can ever come to know completely; it always has mysteries which take us further into God's Word (1:6), and it sets up the contrast which is essential for the whole book; between wisdom and folly (1:7). There is much more to come!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss what we mean by the word 'wisdom' today, and how close or how different it is to the definition of wisdom here in Proverbs.

2. Identify the key qualities of godly human relationship within this text. How does your own society measure up to these standards?
3. Discuss how 'fear of the Lord' can indeed be 'the beginning of knowledge'; or, how does knowledge grow out of knowing God?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

The book of proverbs is a profoundly disturbing book, because once we have found our way through the complexities of its manner speech and the apparently boring nature of a great deal of its content, then we discover that it is an immense store of teaching about real life the remains ignored and untapped by large numbers of Christians today. I have often heard people say 'the Bible does not say anything about X or Y', when in reality it does; it is just that we have not read Proverbs! We need the wisdom of this book, and we need to be careful that we do not dismiss what it says even though it appears to speak to people of ancient times.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Ponder the question of how your life measures against such principles as 'discipline in wise conduct ... honesty ... sound judgement' etc (1:3,4). You may feel you fall short somewhere in this list of godliness, so pray about what can be done about it.*
- *Seek the Lord prayerfully to find out what His wisdom is saying to us today about the world in which we live and what is happening within it. Share your reflections with others.*

Final Prayer

Bless those we love this day, Lord Jesus; keep them in Your care and protect them from all evil. If there are problems between us, may we be humble enough to let you heal us; and if we need to face challenges together, may we help each other with unfaltering love and persistence. Lord Jesus, we give You the glory, for You have given us each other. AMEN