

# **Get Smart: A Study in Proverbs**

## **Growth Group Leader's Supplement**

### **Study 1 Living Beyond a Bumper Sticker**

#### Additional Notes

Authorship and Date:

It is not absolutely essential to have perfect answers to these questions, but if people are interested, feel free to explore this issue. What do we know about these issues.

1. Proverbs 1:1, 10:1 and 25:1 tells us that most proverbs are from King Solomon.
2. Proverbs 22:17 and 24:23 mention an unknown group simply called "the wise".
3. Proverbs 30:1 and 31:1 speak of two non Israelite, but otherwise unknown kings named Agur and Lemuel.
4. Given this diversity of authors and the fact of 25:1 it is clear that this book was edited by someone during or after the rule of Hezekiah.( circa 700 BC)
5. Editing does not diminish this books inspiration. God inspires both authors and editors. Books are not inspired merely because they come from a particular author.

#### Growth Point Insights

Questions are always guidelines. Never feel obligated to cover every one. Always put a stress on participation. If someone has a different question, by all means pursue it.

#### **Devotional Seed:**

The devotional seed is intended to stimulate conversation as an introduction to the discussion.

#### **Deeper Roots**

These questions are intended to promote study and deepen understanding.

1. What is the difference between intellectual ability and wisdom?

Reflect on the practical and moral aspects of wisdom. Notice how the prologue connects these ideas. Don't let people get hung up on thinking that a fool is someone silly or stupid.

2. Given what we know about the nature of Proverbs how can we interpret Proverbs 17:8. Does this proverb teach that we should use bribes? Why or Why not?

This proverb makes an observation without prescribing what to do. The fact is that bribes can work. Perhaps this is a sad testimony of reality and not a piece of advice. Look at 17:23 to see another comment on bribery. Proverbs require wisdom as to know when to apply them.

3. Is it contradictory to say that wisdom is God's gift, but we need to search for it?

As with many aspects of spirituality, we see human effort working in and through divine imitative. For example see Philippians 2:12-13 which tells us that we must work out our salvation (not work for salvation) Yet at the same time we are told that God is working in us.

Ask the group how each truth should influence our pursuit of wisdom. (Being God's gift we should be humble and prayerful. The need to search should inspire diligence and study.

4. Some have seen that the description of wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31 is an excellent description of Jesus. Do you agree? How do the two relate? How do they differ? (Refer to John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17)

There is a rich image in seeing the parallel in that the passionate pursuit of wisdom should compare to our passionate pursuit of Christ. Certainly also as wisdom is personified in Proverbs 8 it is sort of foreshadowing of Christ. Being called the Word in John 1, Christ is compared to personified wisdom. This does somewhat explain Christ's role in relation to the Father. The Father initiates and Christ accomplishes. We see this in creation where both Christ and Wisdom are portrayed as active in creation. At the same time Christ is not merely personified wisdom. He is not just an idea that is given human attributes. He is a real divine person. Furthermore we should not get too carried away in applying all the poetic attributes of wisdom to Christ. This would result in Christ being feminine and created. Christ transcends sexuality and is not a creature.

5. Why do you think wisdom and folly are personified as women and not men?

In general, women are considered to be valuable and seductive as is wisdom. Men usually have the role of pursuing the woman as we are called to pursue wisdom. We must also remember that the general perspective of the book is a father speaking to a son. As such we will see that much of the book takes a male perspective. So if the assumed reader is male and is encouraged to pursue wisdom, it is not surprising that wisdom is portrayed as female. Of course so is folly.

6. Given that many fools probably think they are wise, how can we know if we are pursuing wisdom? (See Proverbs 12:15 and 14:12)

This could be a difficult question to answer. Perhaps reflect on the connection between pursuing God and pursuing wisdom. One could know that they are following one, if they are following the other.

Proverbs 14:12 show the importance of not just fooling ourselves. We must never assume we are right, but be willing to be taught.

Proverbs 12:15 shows us the importance of receiving input from others especially those whom we respect.

The prologue of Proverbs 1:1-7 would tell us that the book itself will help us know what wisdom is?

### **Bearing Fruit**

These questions are designed to be a little more personal and application oriented. Use these questions to focus more on sharing. It helps if as a leader, you are willing to share your life with the group.

### **Branching Out**

Each month your group will be asked to focus some time on outreach and service. Plan to spend some time planning and thinking about how your group can reach out together. We will use this space to help your group integrate with the larger outreach efforts of the church.