

## Text: Prov 1.1-7

In 2012 I taught the book of Proverbs as a block class at Foundations Bible College in Edmonton. It was a great experience, and I taught some of the lessons here as well.

The first lesson was about the textbook. In introducing the book, I discussed other books and why they didn't make the cut. I thought you might benefit from the discussion. The principles discussed might help you when looking for Bible study books.

As we did this morning, we will again read Prov 1.1-7

In a way, what we are doing in this lesson is starting with the application of wisdom from Proverbs before we have really looked into Proverbs to understand it and consider its wisdom fully.

## I. Types of Bible study books available for an individual book

### A. Introductions

1. Usually on more than one book of the Bible or at the beginning of a commentary
2. Deal with study of the 'situation' of a Bible book
  - a. Date of writing
  - b. Author
  - c. Circumstances in which it was written
  - d. Special considerations of the kind of literature used in the book and other unique details
3. Examples:

Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes: An Introduction to Wisdom Literature* [ISBN: 9780877844051]

Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Proverbs* [ISBN: 9780877849421]

Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs* [ISBN: 9781934952146]

### B. Commentaries

1. Usually include an introduction – information 'about' the book

2. Focus on explaining the content of the book – information ‘from’ the book

3. Examples:

Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries) [ISBN: 9780830842179]

Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* (The New American Commentary) [ISBN: 978005401141]

Allen P. Ross, “Proverbs” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 [ISBN: 0310364701]

Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament – NICOT) [ISBN: 9780802825452]

Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15-31* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament – NICOT) [ISBN: 9780802827760]

## II. Problems in modern Christian publishing

### A. General problems

1. Many of the larger publishing houses controlled by secular corporations
2. Almost all publishers controlled by people whose views of the Bible are:
  - a. Somewhat weak, or at least willing to keep quiet on certain points
  - b. Or completely liberal, treating the Bible as a human book
  - c. Or points in between
3. Money
  - a. Publishers are in business to sell books – so popular books tend to get published, not necessarily the best
  - b. More conservative church groups have less money to devote to publishing and marketing good books

## B. Problems specific to books related to Proverbs

1. Tremper Longman's book under consideration as a text – reputation as skilled in Proverbs, introduction generally good, has some good material

a. First thing noticed: "Did Solomon know Amenemope and Ahiqar" (Chapter 6)

1) "Though at first surprising, it should not unsettle us that the Bible is not a totally original book."<sup>1</sup>

2) Does a comparison of other cultures' proverbial literature: "... it will also uncover a place where the similarity is so close that it is possible that the Bible directly borrowed from its Egyptian source."<sup>2</sup>

3) Open to debate about when parts of Proverbs was written and by whom

4) Open question as to whether Prov 22.20 should be influenced by Amenemope (Egyptian wisdom lit.)

a) "Have I not written to you excellent things" NKJ, also NAU, KJV

b) "Have I not written thirty sayings for you" NIV, ESV

The reading 'thirty' is possible, but it is chosen because Amenemope has thirty sayings and is thought to have influenced this section of Proverbs.

5) From Longman's conclusion to this chapter:

"Does this tell us something about how we should view our own, non-Christian culture, as well as other cultures worldwide? Many Christians react strongly against today's culture and the literature it produces — reading only Christian literature, going only to Christian schools, avoiding movies, and so forth.

<sup>1</sup> Tremper Longman, *How to Read Proverbs* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

Certainly the prophets of Israel issued important warnings about the seductive power of pagan culture. The sages, though, are the counterbalance. They are a model of thoughtful observers, reflecting on the world around them. Perhaps we should be better observers ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

- What does this tension between ‘prophets’ and ‘sages’ imply about the divine character of the inspired word?
- What does this equivocation, ‘perhaps’, ‘maybe’, etc., say about inerrancy?

## 2. Second observations

### a. Longman’s recommended commentaries

- 1) Includes one by Michael Fox in the Anchor series [Anchor is noted as a liberal series]
- 2) Michael Fox is a Jew – not a Christian!
- 3) Longman calls Fox an “excellent commentary”, doesn’t mention his religion

### b. Suspicion’s aroused, began to check out commentators

- 1) Longman: believes in an old earth, denies that Adam is an historical figure – just a biblical figurehead
- 2) Waltke: believes in an old earth, was let go from Reformed Theological Seminary over his views
- 3) Kidner: [my beloved] believes in an old earth

These views might not be present in writings on Proverbs, but they make me uneasy in using them as a textbook.

Kidner makes me unhappy because he is so insightful, yet this compromise makes me wary of his writing.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 77.

3. Final note: though many books are problematic, some can still be used with care

### III. Strengths of *God's Wisdom in Proverbs*, by Dan Phillips

Recommended to me by Dr. Fred Moritz as “worth having”.

#### A. Style

1. Written for the average reader
2. Displays skill in the Hebrew and other academic aspects

#### B. Solid conservative theology

1. Dan is a “Pyromaniac” – a conservative Christian blog [but not quite as conservative as me]
2. Personal correspondence: believes in a 6 day creation, not so long ago (6,000 to 10,000 years)
3. Adamant that Solomon certainly could have written the whole (or at least collected it)

#### C. Excellent helps in several categories

1. Ch 1: Essentials for understanding Proverbs
2. Ch 2: The stated design of Proverbs
3. Ch 3: The foundation of Wisdom
4. Ch 4: Wisdom: seeking and finding
5. Ch 5: Relating to God by Trust and Worship
6. Ch 6: Skill in Godly Relationships
7. Ch 7: Skill in Godly Marriage
8. Ch 8: Skill in Godly Child-rearing
9. Epilogue: A Word to the Wise
10. Appendix One: Who Wrote Proverbs and What Difference Does It Make?
11. Appendix Two: Words Related to Teaching in Proverbs
12. Appendix Three: Proverbs 22.6 — Promise ... or Threat?
13. Appendix Four: Preaching and Teaching the Book of Proverbs
14. Bibliography – with helpful comments on commentaries

## Conclusion:

We are embarking on a voyage of discovery where we should grow in wisdom as a result.

We are going to find that Wisdom is Knowledge plus Skill

Wisdom, if you apply your heart to knowing her, will aid you in selecting good books with discernment.

- Some you will say: No
- Others you may say: OK, but be careful
- Still others (few): Really good, edifying