

Feasting on Proverbs

One of the goals for this sermon series is to equip all of us to read wisdom literature with confidence. We want you to be able to go to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job and understand what God is saying to you through the text. God has provided all Scripture for us to feast upon. But how we feast on the Gospels or one of Paul's letters is very different than how we feast on wisdom literature. Today, we are considering how Proverbs is a distinct type of feast. It is a feast in which we must think carefully about what we find there and how to take it in.

Opening Discussion: What is one of your favorite meal experiences you've ever had?

Note: Because Steve used a seminar approach on how to study Proverbs rather than teaching through a specific passage this study guide will be different than a typical guide. We hope that this discussion will give you principles and perspectives that will help you feast on Proverbs.

In his sermon, Steve gave three perspectives that must inform how we approach the book of Proverbs.

Perspective 1

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This reality - that you cannot be wise if you do not fear the Lord - has to inform the way we feast on the book of Proverbs. As we've discussed in recent weeks, the fear of the Lord involves relating to God as he really is. This means that as we come to Proverbs, we consciously need to remember that he is infinitely perfect in all his attributes AND radically for us in Christ Jesus.

1. When we sit down to eat, we often pause and give thanks for the food before us. How might doing a similar thing before you sit down to feast on proverbs be a way to express fear of the Lord?

Perspective 2

Some proverbs are circumstantial (not universally true). This perspective is a caution against taking one proverb and applying it in every circumstance. Wisdom involves discerning when one proverb applies and not another.

2. Read Proverbs 26:4-5. How do you see this principle modeled here in these two proverbs that seem contradictory?
3. How might remembering this perspective keep our dependence on God rather than on rule-keeping?

Perspective 3

No single proverb tells you everything you need to know about a topic. This is a bit different than the previous perspective. This is a caution against reading one proverb and concluding that you know everything you need to know about a topic.

4. What are some implications of this perspective?

5. If we forget that no single proverb tells us everything we need to know on a topic, how might we wrongly understand a proverb such as Proverbs 10:4?

6. Steve gave two things that we should seek to notice as we study proverbs: (1) notice the point of the parallelism in each verse; and (2) notice whether the proverb is descriptive or prescriptive. How would noticing such things be important as you study Proverbs?

Steve said:

I'd like to encourage you to make a simple plan for feasting on Proverbs. Many people have made it their practice to read a chapter of Proverbs every day. You basically read the entire book once a month. Many people have found that plan to be profitable. If you adopt that plan, I'd encourage you to pick a proverb or two each day in that day's chapter and spend some time savoring those two proverbs in light of the things we've talked about today. Don't let your objective be to read a chapter of Proverbs a day. The objective is to become wise as a result of feasting on Scripture.

7. How can becoming wise be maintained as your objective for feasting on Proverbs and not just reading a chapter a day?

8. How are you thinking about developing a plan to feast on Proverbs?