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**Editorial Office:** 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

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<b>Principal Contributor</b>	Jacques Doukhan
<b>Editor</b>	Soraya Homayouni
<b>Contributing Editors</b>	George Belser, Esther Doss
<b>Publication Manager</b>	Lea Alexander Greve
<b>Editorial Assistant</b>	Sharon Thomas-Crews
<b>Art and Design</b>	Lars Justinen
<b>Line Drawings</b>	Jon Gilbertson
<b>Pacific Press® Coordinator</b>	Wendy Marcum
<b>E. G. White Estate Consultant</b>	Ivan Leigh Warden

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## Introduction



## Words of the Wise

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**M**any books of the Bible are filled with deep truths. But the book of Proverbs is filled with useful advice for daily living.

Short, wise, and often funny, the proverbs are for everyone. They are easy to memorize and make their points well. Sometimes they are better than long speeches and arguments.

For example: “You people who don’t [do not] want to work, think about the ant! Consider [study] its ways and be wise” (Proverbs 6:6, NIV). Or: “It is better to live in a desert than to live with a nagging [scolding] angry woman” (Proverbs 21:19, NIV). Or, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink. By doing these things, you will pile up burning coals on his head. And the Lord will reward you” (Proverbs 25:21, 22, NIV). Who is going to forget examples like these?

The book of Proverbs contains (holds) the wisdom of many generations. Its human authors are King Solomon (Proverbs 1:1–9:18; Proverbs 10:1–22:16; Proverbs 25–29); unknown “wise men” from the ancient Near Eastern world of long ago (Proverbs 22:17–24:22; Proverbs 24:23–34); and the non-Jew Agur (Proverbs 30:1–33). The book even recognizes King Hezekiah’s influence (effect) on the writings (Proverbs 25:1). In some examples, too, the book shows how it is influenced (affected) by the thinking of Near Eastern writings, such as those from ancient (very old) Egypt.

Yet the book of Proverbs *is* the Word of God. This is because it was with the Holy Spirit’s leading that the authors pulled their writings together. God is rarely spoken of in the verses. But He is always there. Wherever we are in the marketplace, or as we speak, eat, drink, work, buy, sell, the Lord is there. The God of Proverbs is not just the God

of a religious person. Godliness, or God-likeness (being like God), is put into working clothes in these verses.

The book of Proverbs also teaches about what it means *to fear (respect, love, and obey) God* (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 31:30). We should fear God not just in church but also in our daily lives. The reason for living this way is because the way we live speaks louder than the way we preach and pray (Proverbs 28:9; Proverbs 15:8).

Proverbs shows us that wisdom is putting the Lord first “in all your ways” (Proverbs 3:6, NKJV). Putting God first means that wisdom is living in us, helping us to lead lives of faith and obedience. It is about what it means to be human as we live for the God of Creation.

From the book of Proverbs we will learn how to be wise in our everyday lives. The book answers questions such as, *What and how should I teach my children? How can I be happy and successful? Why do I have money problems? How can I get a promotion in my job? How can I keep myself from sexual temptations? How should I deal with my anger or my tongue?*

Finally, wisdom is not the same thing as being very smart. As a matter of fact, the one who is sure of his or her brainpower is in the most danger of playing the fool. This is because even the smartest person knows so little. A person may think of himself or herself as already wise and not needing to gain more knowledge. But the important requirement for wisdom is to be humble, to feel our need, and then to ask for wisdom.

Proverbs is deep and rich. And it deals with many topics. Space is limited so we need to pick and choose carefully what we will cover. We cannot cover it all, but what we have is worthy of our prayerful study.

*Jacques B. Doukhan is professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis (how to explain the Bible). He is also director of the Institute of Jewish-Christian Studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. A French citizen (born in Algeria), Doukhan has a doctorate degree in Hebrew from the University of Strasbourg and a doctor of theology degree from Andrews University.*

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