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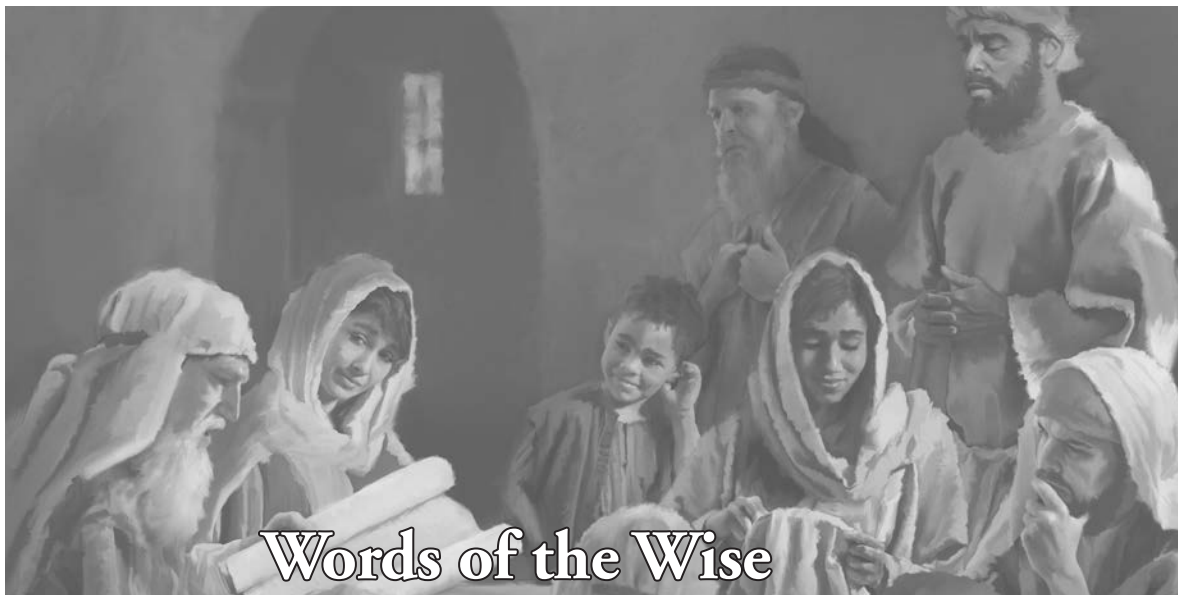
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Words of the Wise

While many books of the Bible are filled with deep spiritual and theological truths, the book of Proverbs is filled with practical and down-to-earth advice for daily living.

Brief, well-balanced, poetic, salty, and often humorous, the proverbs are universal, easy to memorize, and make their points well, sometimes even more efficiently than do eloquent speeches and rigorous argumentation.

For instance, “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise” (*Prov. 6:6, NKJV*). Or, “It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman” (*Prov. 21:19*). Or, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you” (*Prov. 25:21, 22, NIV*). Who is going to forget those types of images?

The book of Proverbs is a witness to the wisdom that had been accumulated over generations. Its human authors are referred to as King Solomon (*Prov. 1:1–9:18, 10:1–22:16, Proverbs 25–29*); as unidentified “wise men” from the ancient Near Eastern world (*Prov. 22:17–24:22, 24:23–34*); and as the non-Israelite Agur (*Prov. 30:1–33*). The book even acknowledges King Hezekiah’s editorial contributions (*Prov. 25:1*). In some cases, too, the book reflects other ancient Near Eastern texts, especially those from ancient Egypt.

Yet, the book of Proverbs *is* the Word of God, because it was under divine inspira-

tion that the authors pulled their materials together. Although God is rarely explicitly mentioned in the texts, He is always present: wherever we are in the marketplace, or as we speak, eat, drink, work, buy, sell, socialize, and love, the Lord is there. The God of Proverbs is not just the God of a religious person, whether a priest or a worshiper in the pew. Godliness is here put into working clothes.

The book of Proverbs also teaches about what it means *to fear God* (*Prov. 1:7, 31:30*), not just in church but as we go about our daily lives, because the way we live speaks louder than the way we preach, pray, or even sacrifice (*Prov. 28:9, 15:8*).

In Proverbs, “wisdom” is revealed when you acknowledge the Lord “in all your ways” (*Prov. 3:6, NKJV*); that is, wisdom is living in faith and in obedience; it’s about what it means to be human before the God of Creation.

From the book of Proverbs, we will learn how to be wise, but concretely, in practical ways. The book answers such questions 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 resist sexual temptations? How should I cope with my anger or my tongue?*

Finally, wisdom isn’t necessarily intellectual might. On the contrary, the one who is sure of his or her brainpower is in the most danger of playing the fool, because even the smartest person knows so little. One may think of oneself as already wise and therefore as having no need to seek more knowledge. The prerequisite for wisdom is, instead, to be humble, to feel our need, and then to ask for wisdom.

Proverbs is deep and rich, and it deals with many topics. Because of the limitations of space, we’ve had to pick and choose which material we could cover. We can’t cover it all, but all that we have is, indeed, worthy of our prayerful study.

The book of Proverbs is a witness to the wisdom that had been accumulated over generations.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.