

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

How to Study Proverbs

Lesson #8 (Answers to Homework)

I. HOMEWORK

Without looking at any commentaries, using only your sharpened hermeneutical skills from this lesson and previous lessons, seek to observe, interpret, and give practical applications of the three proverbs listed below.

A. Prov. 6:28 -- Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

1. Helpful observations of what the text does and doesn't say. The proverb above, comes from a section of proverbs dealing with the consequences of sexual immorality, specifically adultery. The text is not talking about literally walking on hot coals, just as the preceding verse isn't talking about putting literal fire into your bosom. The two figures of speech are used to make a point, committing the sin of immorality and specifically adultery will bring with it very painful consequences. The following verse makes it plain and says, "he will not go unpunished."
2. Interpretation of what the author meant by what he wrote. The author is merely saying that adultery is a sin that brings painful consequences and judgment as certainly as walking on hot coals will burn your feet.
3. Application ideas for how this proverb might apply to every Christian's life. The application is plain, don't commit adultery in specific, immorality in general, or any sin in principle. Sin carries with it painful consequences and sinners will be judged by God.

B. Prov. 15:8 -- The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.

1. Helpful observations of what the text does and doesn't say. This text is saying that God isn't pleased with the sacrifices of wicked people. This can't mean "sinners" in a general sense, since there are some sinners whose sacrifices are acceptable to God. Thus it must be referring to those people who are living in unconfessed sin, who will not repent of their sin, and yet approach the altar to offer sacrifices for sin that they are making no effort to repent of. Such hypocrisy in worship is an abomination to God. Antithetical to those who worship with unconfessed sin, are the upright. These people are sinners too, but they strive against their sin, repent of their sin, and confess their sin. Thus when they worship the Lord in prayer, he hears their prayers.

2. Interpretation of what the author meant by what he wrote. The proverb teaches the important principle that if we are going to worship God in an acceptable way and have our prayers heard, we must come with a repentant heart, having our sins confessed.
 3. Application ideas for how this proverb might apply to life. Before you approach God in worship, make sure you confess your sins, and don't try to hide unconfessed sin from God. Make sure you are pursuing righteousness when you worship and pray.
- C. Prov. 30:15-16 -- The leech has two daughters, "Give," "Give." There are three things that will not be satisfied, Four that will not say, "Enough": Sheol, and the barren womb, Earth that is never satisfied with water, and fire that never says, "Enough."
1. Helpful observations of what the text does and doesn't say. The text is not saying that all things are insatiable, but that there are things in this world that cannot be satisfied. Leeches only draw blood from their host. Sheol keeps accepting the dead. The barren woman keeps longing for a child. The earth keeps drinking up water. Fire keeps consuming fuel. The emphasis is on things that are insatiable.
 2. Interpretation of what the author meant by what he wrote. Some things in the world are insatiable. We should realize this, accept it, and not try to satisfy, what cannot be satiated. We might call this portion of Scripture wisdom for the "black holes of life." We can probably all think of other "black holes" in this life. I could add to the list given, "Trying to sanctify an unbeliever." No matter how much time you put in trying to disciple an unbeliever, they will never grow in the Lord. Yet recognizing the black holes of life does not mean we should invest nothing in them. We keep watering our crops though we cannot satisfy the earth's insatiable thirst. We keep feeding ourselves, though we continue to be hungry again. The wisdom to be gained here is to see and acknowledge the futility of certain pursuits, namely, trying to completely satisfy insatiable things.
 3. Application ideas for how this proverb might apply to life. Though you can give an unbeliever biblical counsel and the gospel, until they come to Christ, you can never help them grow in godliness. It is good to eat, it is good to water your crops, it is good to wash your clothes, and brush your teeth, but realize that certain tasks and pursuits cannot be completed. We keep striving to be like Jesus in this life and though we may get closer to Christ's likeness, we never arrive. Our desire to be like Christ will never be completely satisfied in this life.