

Proverbs

Volume 2



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A *Discover Together*
BIBLE STUDY

Proverbs

*Discovering Ancient Wisdom
for a Postmodern World*

Volume 2

Sue Edwards



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Contents

How to Get the Most Out of a Discover Together Bible Study	7
Why Study Proverbs?	9
LESSON 1 Raising Up the Next Generation	11
LESSON 2 “Fear” the Lord	25
LESSON 3 Cool Down Those Hot Flashes: A Study on Anger and Patience	35
LESSON 4 In the Shadow of Shaddai: A Study on Security	47
LESSON 5 A Ring in a Pig’s Nose: A Study on Discernment and Discretion	57
LESSON 6 The Subtle Sin of Pride	67
LESSON 7 Money Talk	79
LESSON 8 Life, Death, and Aging	95
LESSON 9 A Portrait of Perfection: Lessons from Superwoman	109
Works Cited	121
About the Author	123





How to Get the Most Out of a Discover Together Bible Study

Women today need Bible study to keep balanced, focused, and Christ-centered in their busy worlds. The tiered questions in *Proverbs: Discovering Ancient Wisdom for a Postmodern World, Volume 2* allow you to choose a depth of study that fits your lifestyle, which may even vary from week to week, depending on your schedule.

Just completing the basic questions will require about one and a half hours per lesson, and will provide a basic overview of the text. For busy women, this level offers in-depth Bible study with a minimum time commitment.

“Digging Deeper” questions are for those who want to, and make time to, probe the text even more deeply. Answering these questions may require outside resources such as an atlas, Bible dictionary, or concordance; you may be asked to look up parallel passages for additional insight; or you may be encouraged to investigate the passage using an interlinear Greek-English text or *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*. This deeper study will challenge you to learn more about the history, culture, and geography related to the Bible, and to grapple with complex theological issues and differing views. Some with teaching gifts and an interest in advanced academics will enjoy exploring the depths of a passage, and might even find themselves creating outlines and charts and writing essays worthy of seminarians!

This inductive Bible study is designed for both individual and group discovery. You will benefit most if you tackle each week’s lesson on your own, and then meet with other women to share insights, struggles, and aha moments. Bible study leaders will find free, downloadable leader’s guides for each study, along with general tips for leading small groups, at www.discovertogetherseries.com.

Through short video clips, Sue Edwards shares personal insights to enrich your Bible study experience. You can watch these as you work through each lesson on your own, or your Bible study leader may want your whole study group to view them when you meet together. For ease of individual



viewing, a QR code, which you can simply scan with your smartphone, is provided in each lesson. Or you can go to www.discovertogetherseries.com and easily navigate until you find the corresponding video title. Woman-to-woman, these clips are meant to bless, encourage, and challenge you in your daily walk.

Choose a realistic level of Bible study that fits your schedule. You may want to finish the basic questions first, and then “dig deeper” as time permits. Take time to savor the questions, and don’t rush through the application. Watch the videos. Read the sidebars for additional insight to enrich the experience. Note the optional passage to memorize and determine if this discipline would be helpful for you. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by women who have more time or who are gifted differently.

Make your Bible study—whatever level you choose—top priority. Consider spacing your study throughout the week so that you can take time to ponder and meditate on what the Holy Spirit is teaching you. Do not make other appointments during the group Bible study. Ask God to enable you to attend faithfully. Come with an excitement to learn from others and a desire to share yourself and your journey. Give it your best, and God promises to join you on this adventure that can change your life.



Why Study Proverbs?

A proverb is a short, pithy couplet that teaches truth in a memorable way. Here are two examples:

Anxiety weighs down the heart,
but a kind word cheers it up. (Proverbs 12:25)

If anyone loudly blesses their neighbor early in the morning,
it will be taken as a curse. (Proverbs 27:14)

These short, pithy sayings begin in chapter 10 and end in chapter 29. The book of Proverbs is structured like a sandwich: these brief, memorable sayings are sandwiched between discourses at the beginning and at the end.

Here's another way to look at the organization:

Chapters 1–9	Incentives to seek wisdom from King Solomon
Chapters 10–29	Proverbs
Chapters 30–31	Insight on wisdom from Agur and King Lemuel's mother



Introduction to Studying Proverbs (7:42 minutes).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PROVERBS

Proverbs are *principles* that are true in general terms. They show us the way the world works and how to live wisely in it. If we live by wisdom



principles, we will not bring calamity on our heads by our own foolish actions and attitudes. Foolishness is the source of many people's problems. When we are our own worst enemies, we bring problems upon ourselves either by being unaware of how the world works or by ignoring what we know.

Proverbs are not *promises*. If we interpret proverbs as promises made to individuals, we're guilty of saying that God promises us something that he has not promised at all, and we confuse people regarding the Bible. It is crucial that we interpret the Bible in the way that the author intended.

A proverb is a wise saying—a few words pregnant with meaning. We must examine each word carefully and then dig for the overall meaning. When Benjamin Franklin coined the secular proverb, “A stitch in time saves nine,” he was not promising that if you stitch up a hem before it unravels, it will never unravel again. He was explaining that if we attend to a situation early, we'll most likely encounter fewer problems later. Franklin was using figurative language to paint a picture of the way the world works. Solomon was his predecessor.

When mothers read the proverb, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6 KJV), it's tempting to insist that God promises all prodigals will return. And God may give a mother that assurance. But God never makes that promise on the basis of this particular proverb. To insist that he has is to use bad interpretive principles. Instead, this proverb tells us that parents who do their best to understand their children and raise them in a godly home are *more likely* to see prodigals return to the faith than are those parents who never instructed their children in the first place. But turning to God is ultimately the child's choice. God does not override free choice for anyone. That's a principle he set in place from the foundation of the world.

Our task is to decipher the proverbs in order to learn timeless lessons about life, and then to live in light of their truth.

Proverbs' purpose is to propel us into a relationship with God so we might live out the truths he shows us in this guidebook. They're valuable principles, but they are not promises. When we interpret proverbs as promises, we mishandle God's Word and mislead ourselves and others—and that gets us into trouble!

A NOTE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The 2011 New International Version (NIV) is the version used throughout this study. Because it uses gender neutral language where that fits with the intent of the original text, the author recommends this version for clarity. If you use another version, you'll need to keep in mind that the 1984 NIV and many other standard Bible translations use “man” and “sons” to represent the human race in general.