

- 7 *Proverbs 14*
“He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress” (v.26).
“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man (or woman) from the snares of death” (v.27). See also, 23:17: “always be zealous for the fear of the Lord.”
What does it mean to ‘fear the Lord’? Do *you* fear him?
In what way does it shape the decisions you make?
(Consider too the thief on the cross, *Luke 23:40*)
- 8 *Proverbs 18*
“The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him?” (v.17). This rings true, but does it tend to lead us to forever feel the need to justify ourselves?
Note that when Jesus was accused he largely remained silent.
- 9 *Proverbs 23*
Proverbs contains a great deal of teaching on money matters. So here, for example, “do not eat the food of a stingy man ... for he ... is always thinking about the cost” (vv.6-7).
Elsewhere we are encouraged to be more like ‘givers’ than ‘takers’ (21:25), and to do so generously from the first-fruits of our income (3:9-10). Giving, then, is meant to be a natural part of life; one that is embraced joyfully. Is this true of you?
- 10 *Proverbs 29*
Continuing on with money matters.
“The righteous care about justice for the poor but the wicked have no such concern” (v.7). The ‘rich’ and the ‘poor’ seem to always be with us (many proverbs refer to them), but are we actually meant to do anything about wealth inequality?

SACRED

Group Resources

Month 20

Closing

Light a candle, and quietly reflect on the discussion you’ve had, and any matters that have arisen. Then close by saying the Grace.

Opening Prayer

Grant me, O Lord, to know what is worth knowing,
to love what is worth loving,
to praise what delights you most,
to value what is precious to you,
and to reject whatever is evil in your eyes.
Give me true discernment,
so that I may judge rightly between things that differ.
Above all, may I search out and do what is pleasing to you;
through Jesus Christ my Lord.
Amen.

(Thomas a Kempis, 1380-1471)

General Question

- 1 *Proverbs* is a different kind of writing. Did you find it easy to read? And did you do so in a different way to how you've read the other books within SACRED so far?

Activity

Before the session, someone in the group should select 10 proverbs from chapters 1-30 and split each one into its two parts, creating 20 short sentences. These are written out on separate slips of paper. From the 20, the group then tries to reconstruct the original proverbs. Debrief on the task, before moving on to the questions below.

Further Ideas

As usual, work through some of these as the group sees fit.

- 1 *Proverbs 1-30*
If you had to pick out just one or two 'favourite' proverbs from the many you've read this month, which would you choose? Do you have any favourite *modern* 'proverbs'?

- 2 *Proverbs 1*
The writer speaks out against the attitude that asserts: "we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder" (v.13). How do we curb the desire for 'more'? Does consuming more mean someone else consumes less? In our 'innocence', are we actually exploiting the poor, albeit less blatantly than in vv.10-17?
- 3 *Proverbs 2*
Wisdom ... "will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words" (v.16). *Proverbs* contains many warnings against adultery. But what exactly constitutes adultery? Why is adultery seemingly so widespread today? And how do we guard against it?
- 4 *Proverbs 4*
Wisdom doesn't guarantee immunity from adversity, but when adversity *does* knock on your door, which are you more like – the carrot, the egg, or the coffee bean?
- 5 *Proverbs 9*
In the choices we make there can be a fine line between what afterwards seemed 'wisdom' and what seemed 'folly'. Sometimes, if we're honest, we know we are making poor choices, but what about the other times? Without the benefit of hindsight, how can we become more discerning?
- 6 *Proverbs 12*
"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (v.18). There's a familiar modern expression, 'It's not what you say, it's the way you say it'. Do you agree with this? And how about how *much* you say? Do you talk too much? Or too little? How can we better control our tongues?