

Listening To a Bible Basher

Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam labelled the Premier of Queensland, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, as a "Bible-basher." But why should a book that is a monument of spiritual truth and wisdom be spoken of in such a derisive way?

Most people would be happy to be called a 'Shakespeare-basher', or a 'Kipling-basher' but would cringe at the thought of being labelled a 'Bible-basher.' But why? Those who wrote the Bible were men who had their feet on the ground. Just read it to see. The Book of Proverbs illustrates this and demonstrates that the Bible is as up-to-date as tomorrow's newspapers.

Wisdom in Proverbs is never an abstract matter and is always related to right and sensible attitudes, actions and behaviour. For example the statements: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" [Proverbs 1:7]; "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" [Proverbs 9:10]. This is not a craven fear, but a recognition of the fact that there are moral laws and, if they are neglected, foolishness takes over. The webcam incident involving two 18 year olds at the Defence Force Academy in Canberra is a case in point.

Today there is an abundance of smart tactics that are often praised but the religious concepts in Proverbs run the opposite way. "The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight" [Proverbs 11:1]. "Honest people hate lies, but the words of wicked people are shameful and disgraceful" [Proverbs 13:5].

We live in a society that specialises in sarcasm. Just watch the 'Footy Show!' "Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal" [Proverbs 12:18]. A business man in Geelong hung up this quote from Proverbs in his office: "Work and you will earn a living; if you sit around talking you will be poor" [Proverbs 14:23].

Proverbs has plenty of warnings to keep your wits about you when making a purchase or a sale. "The customer always complains 'It's no good, it's no good! That the price is too high,' but then he goes off and brags about the bargain he got" [Proverbs 20:14].

Proverbs offers sound advice on home life, political life, business life, work, leisure, sexuality, child rearing, discipline and disobedience. There's advice in Proverbs that would leave many counsellors and psychologists for dead. There are 30 days in April, why not read a chapter of Proverbs a day. It is quite possible that the term "Bible-basher" may not sound as ominous after reading the book through. In fact, Bible-basher could turn out to be a term of endearment!