

### Wisdom in Requests

#### Proverbs 30:1-9

**Proverbs 30:1-9** - *“The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel - to Ithiel and Ucal: Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One.*

*Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?*

*Who has gathered the wind in His fists?*

*Who has bound the waters in a garment?*

*Who has established all the ends of the earth?*

*What is His name, and what is His Son’s name, if you know?*

*Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*

*Do not add to His words lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.*

*Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): remove falsehood and lies far from me.*

*Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food allotted to me, lest I be full and deny You, and say,*

*‘Who is the LORD?’ - or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.”*

#### Background Notes

Who is Agur, the writer of the proverbs in Proverbs 30? The only thing we know about him that he came to America and gave a lecture at the University of California. What? Look at the end of verse 1: *“Agur declared to U Cal.” [laughter]*

Seriously speaking, the only information we have about Agur is right here in Proverbs 30. The Jewish Talmud leans towards the opinion that Agur is another name for Solomon. That position has been held down through the years, even though there’s little evidence to support it.

The word in verse 1 that’s translated *“utterance”* or *“prophecy”* or *“oracle”* can also be translated *“Massa,”* indicating the place where Agur son of Jakeh, came from. If that’s so, Agur was a descendant of the Ishmaelite people (Genesis 25:13-14). And from the Hebrew text, the statement that Agur declared to Ithiel and Ucal could also be made to say, *“This man said, ‘I have wearied myself, O God, and am consumed.’”* But most likely Ithiel and Ucal were actual people who were Agur’s friends or students, and Agur wanted to teach them truth that he had learned.

#### Doctrinal Point

**The sayings of Agur contain truth for every believer.**

Although Agur's sayings are directly addressed to Ithiel and Ucal, this is the Word of God, so it's addressed to us as well.

**Verses 2-3:** *"Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One."* In this saying, Agur doesn't mean that he has a low IQ, or that he can't think like the average human. No. This is a statement of humility. In verse 3 Agur acknowledges that by human searching alone, you cannot obtain wisdom and the knowledge of God - no matter how smart you are! What a contrast to many people today who, in their pride, think they know everything, and who make confident statements that God doesn't even exist. They will surely change their minds in the future.

**Verse 4:** *"Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?*

*Who has gathered the wind in His fists?*

*Who has bound the waters in a garment?*

*Who has established all the ends of the earth?*

*What is His name, and what is His Son's name - if you know?"*

In verse 4, Agur presents the greatness and majesty of God by asking a few questions. These questions point out the fact that God is so powerful and sovereign and majestic, no human can fully understand Him.

In his last question, *"What is His name, and what is His Son's name?"* Agur is not thinking of the Trinity or the pre-incarnate Second Person of the Godhead. He is emphasizing that no one can fully comprehend God, because God does not impart of His nature or attributes to descendants.

However, the way the Holy Spirit inspired Agur to write this question certainly paves the way for the later revelation of Scripture:

- the wonderful truth about Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God
- the truth that we can come to know God through Jesus Christ
- the truth that we can be brought into the family of God as sons of God.

**Verses 5-6:** *"Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."* These two verses are both about the Bible, God's special revelation. In verse 4, the subject was God's **general** revelation to man in nature. In verses 5-6 the truth is presented about God's **special** revelation to mankind, the Word of God - the Bible.

Verse 5 emphasizes the truth of the **infallibility of God's Word**. The Bible is true. There are no errors in the Bible. *"Every word of God is pure."* This is the miracle of the Bible! Even though God used human writers, and even though He caused the Bible to be written in a variety of cultural and historical contexts, He preserved it from the errors of human thinking and the errors of the culture in which it was written. The Bible truly is a miracle!

Because of this, we can come to the Bible and find the truth - and we find protection and refuge as well. Why? Because it is God's Word, backed up God Himself! As the end of verse 5 says: *"He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him."*

Verse 6 emphasizes the truth of the **sufficiency of God's Word**. The Word of God does not need any additions. It is complete and sufficient as it is. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* These verses not only teach that God inspired all of Scripture, but also that the Bible is completely sufficient for everything we need: for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in living righteously. Through the Bible, God can prepare and equip the believer for all kinds of good work.

Because the Word of God is sufficient, we are not to add to Scripture or take away from Scripture. Notice the warning at the end of Proverbs 30:6, *"lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."*

How dare we add to the Word of God? And yet some people do indeed try to add to the Bible. The cults, for example, add to the Word of God. In fact, they give their own writings and traditions the same - or even more - authority than the Word of God!

The last chapter of the Bible pronounces judgment on anyone who dares to add or take away from God's Revelation. This could be extended in application to the entire Bible. *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Revelation 22:18-19).

**Verses 7-9:** *"Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): remove falsehood and lies far from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food allotted to me, lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the LORD?' - or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God."* In verses 7-9, Agur directs a prayer to the Lord. This is the only prayer in the book of Proverbs. In it Agur makes two requests:

- Request #1 concerns Agur's spiritual life and character. Verse 8: *"Remove falsehood and lies far from me."* That's very much like the request in the Lord's Prayer, isn't it? *"Lead me not into temptation."* Agur knew that he was vulnerable, so he prayed that the Lord would keep him from situations where he might be tempted to lie or deceive. We all need to pray this prayer. It doesn't take much to tarnish godly character and reputation.

- Request #2 concerns Agur's physical life and material needs. Verses 8-9: *"Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food allotted to me lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the LORD?' - or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God."* Again, this is very much like the request of the Lord's Prayer: *"Give us this day our daily bread."* Notice: Agur prayed that he would have enough to eat so he wouldn't be tempted to steal. But he also prayed

that he would not have too much, because wealth might cause him to become independent and arrogant, and not depend on the Lord.

Are we willing to make that prayer request? Some believers are not willing to pray that way. They'd rather risk the pitfalls of being rich! Are you willing to pray, "Lord, if I can't handle it, may wealth never come! Let me be poor, so I will depend on You for all my needs."

The sayings of Agur contain truth for every believer.

## Practical Application

### Argue like Agur!

In Jude 3, believers are told to "*contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.*" Agur is a good Old Testament model for us to follow if we are to earnestly contend for the faith.

In verse 5 we saw that Agur believed that **the Word of God is infallible**. It contains no mistakes or errors! If we are to defend the faith that God has entrusted to us, we too must believe that the Bible is infallible. How can we defend a faith that's based on the Bible, if the Bible contains human errors and mistakes?

In verse 6, we saw that Agur believed in **the sufficiency of Scripture**. There is no need for anything to be added to the Word of God! if we're going to contend for the faith, we must believe in that the Bible we hold in our hands is complete, and that we can rely on it to meet every situation, every need, and every argument. It is not "old-fashioned," but is relevant for every time and every culture. The Bible doesn't need any addition of human "wisdom" to make it applicable and relevant to our lives!

Let's follow the model of Agur in contending for the faith. Argue like Agur!