

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 24, Repeat of lecture 23 on Proverbs

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her Old Testament History, Literature and Theology course, lecture number 24.

Well, good morning. The peace of Christ be with you.

Thank you. I hope you've enjoyed Calvin and Hobbes for the morning. There's a serious message behind this, so let me simply emphasize, as I've said before, I hate to repeat myself, but I've found out that that sometimes is a little bit valuable.

Please, please, please, as you're writing this one-page paper, it should start out as a four- or five-page paper, as you write down everything that you think you know and then cut down and get rid of all the excess verbiage. Most of us write way too much because we've been taught in high school to write a five-page paper, and so you're fluffing and adding and so forth to get five pages. Now, I want you to really write a concise, excellent, well-structured, thoughtful, provocative, whatever you call it.

You know, just make me a good paper out of that. Carrie is going to change the format of her review session just a little bit for tomorrow night, and she invites you to come by during that hour. She'll read your papers, have a look at them, and kind of give them a fine-tooth comb.

Carrie's been through a number of classes with me, so she knows what one-page papers are supposed to look like. So, if you want to take advantage of that, it's 7 o'clock tomorrow night in Chase 26, and this is still a little bit echoey, isn't it, the sound? Are you getting too much? I'm feeling like it's too reverberating. Is that any better? Okay, we can adjust it if we need to.

Do you have any questions about the papers? Make sure, as I said last week at some point when I was talking about them, make sure you consult the sources, the resources in the library, that whole shelves of commentaries that are in the library. Go to those. Don't use Matthew Henry that's online.

Matthew Henry's lovely for some things, but not for this paper. And other things that are online, you don't really want to be using them. I'm sorry to tell you that.

Use the library. It won't kill you. Yes, Susanna.

Yes, it's a good question. I do want you to think in paragraphs. One whole page, because of what you're doing in this paper, there's going to be some sub-issues that you're addressing, obviously, no matter what proverb it is that you've chosen.

So, I would suggest just sort of a rule of thumb. Your paper should have three or four good, solid paragraphs in it. So, thank you.

Good question. Yes. You want this to be double-spaced.

Yep, double-spaced. Single-spaced would allow you to get a whole lot more on the page, but that's not what we're looking for. We're looking for concision.

Yes, Kate. What do you mean by preliminary work? All that stuff that I tell you to do steps one, two, three, four, and so forth. You know, you take notes on this, you take notes on that, you tell me what you think about this, and you tell me what the commentary says.

All that you get to turn in, along with the one-page paper. Am I not speaking English? You're looking puzzled. You don't have to type it out.

As I said in my email, I think I sent an email to you about this. As I said in the email, you can handwrite all that stuff and just bring that to class on the due date if you want to. If you're turning your paper in online, make it one document.

If you've used this stuff, and by the way, it wouldn't hurt you to use this stuff already typed into your computer, because then you just cut and paste and, you know, shuffle it around a little bit, rather than dealing with handwritten notes. But it's up to you. What I just want to emphasize, I want the final paper, but I want to see the preliminary work as well.

Because I grade part, part of the grade is based on that. Yes, Ginger. Yeah, your final paper, your exhortation, whatever it happens to, whatever you want to call it, is going to be based on everything that you've been both researching and thinking about and putting together.

Good. Ask them now. Well, let's say I'm sorry; go ahead, Caitlin.

Yeah, you know, that's part of your preliminary work. So, show me your first draft or drafts. That's fine, too.

I'll look at them and see where you were before you ended up with that final paper. Everything that you do that's part of your process of doing this paper, I want to see. And the more that's there, even if your final paper is sort of lacking something here and there if I see that it's in the preliminary work, that'll help you.

That'll really help you. One last chance. Questions? Well, it's time to sing together.

Let's go on to Psalm 51 again. I gave you the English translation here just in case you've got time to look at it while you're singing. Or if you're not singing, you know, you can focus on the English because it's a great way to start our day together.

Our day and our week together.

Father in heaven, thank you so much for your goodness to us. Thank you that we've had the gifts and the privileges of being able to get up this morning, have food, have warmth and security, enjoy this opportunity to study, have friends.

Lord, in all these things, we're mindful that we do take them for granted, but they are coming from your good hand. And so, we're grateful for that. We're thankful for your word.

We're thankful for this part of it that we're going to study today. And we earnestly pray together, Lord, that you would help us to think carefully and clearly. May your word be living and active in our hearts and even active today to trim out some things that are displeasing to you.

Lord, refine us, we pray, and teach us, prepare us to be better servants in your kingdom. As we pray for these things, we would also ask for our leaders, both at local levels and national and international spheres. They need your wisdom, Lord.

We pray that you would, in your grace and mercy, give it to them. Father, we ask these things in Christ's name with thanksgiving. Amen.

Well, we are going to pick up with wisdom literature today. Specifically, after a couple of introductory comments, we're going to focus on the book of Proverbs. As you know, if you've downloaded the lecture outline, just a little bit by way of review, because it doesn't hurt to do that to kind of see how this is going to work.

Remember when we were dealing with the historical stuff when we got to David, and that was a really appropriate time to sort of take a little bit of a tangent and look at the Psalms, because so many of them are associated with the name of David. And so we picked up some poetic material in that context. Now, as we move on to Solomon, what was Solomon known for, besides wisdom? Four Ws? Mary? A little help there.

Yeah, women, wealth, worship, wisdom. Helpful kinds of things. And of course, today, because Solomon's name is associated with three of the four books that we think of as wisdom texts, we are again going to take a turn out of the historical materials and spend some time on wisdom literature.

Just a quick review. What are the characteristics of Hebrew poetry? What's the primary characteristic of Hebrew poetry? Chelsea? It's parallelism. Good.

And what three kinds of parallelism did we sort of land on when we were talking about it? You want to pass the buck to... Okay, synthetic means what? Let's get that one nailed down. Right. First line, added, added, added to.

And what are the other two? Kate? Antithetical. Right, which means the first line has kind of an opposite stated in the next line following. And as I said to you when we were talking about this, it's in the book of Proverbs, particularly starting with chapter 10 and going through about chapter 15, that we have our big collection of antitheses.

And that's no accident because one of the functions of the book of Proverbs is to teach the student, and we're going to say more about that in a moment, to teach the student discernment. And there's no better way to teach discernment than to say on the one hand you have this and on the other you have this. Think which one's better, okay? And so your antitheses work that way.

What's the third kind of parallelism? Starts another one that starts with S-Y-N. Yeah, Suzanne. Ah, that's kind of a sum.

Yeah, hang on to or put that behind. Don't put it behind you. Just sort of coordinate off over here.

But we've got antithetical. What's the opposite of antithetical in terms of our kinds of parallelism? Synonymous, right. Right, yes.

Okay, so the first line is repeated but with different terminology so that you have conceptual ideas that are being presented twice. And then, of course, as we said, that helps us in our learning prospect. So synonymous, antithetical, synthetic, those are the three basic ones.

And as we said when we were talking about Hebrew poetry, there are combinations of those and there are other kinds of parallelism. But these will serve us for now quite well. One of the things we want to do before we jump right into Proverbs is spend a little bit of time talking about wisdom in its wider context because it's not only the biblical material that has, quote, unquote, wisdom literature.

Every culture you look at that has a literary traditional corpus has something that falls into this general category of wisdom literature because there are some things about being human that cause us to think and ponder and wrestle and make choices and want to do it as best as possible because, of course, we want to have some sense

of guidance and direction in our lives. So I've just listed a couple of things that are going to shape how we think about wisdom at large. The first is the human desire.

We can't do this, but we often think we can. And we have been given intellectual capabilities that allow us to deal with the things that are part of our environments and part of our worlds. And so the whole human desire and tendency to want to be as much as possible in control, gain mastery of life through the power of reason.

God has given us our minds for a purpose, and we're supposed to be using them. In fact, using your mind is one of the most spiritual things you can do because it's God's gift. And so within this understanding that God, of course, is sovereignly in control of how everything unfolds, there is a place for using our mental capabilities and to our best as possible, as best we possibly can, making the choices that make the most sense.

So that's one of the things that is going to shape this whole discussion of wisdom in the broader sense. I put all the rest of them out here as well. Towards achieving that end, accepting instruction is very significant.

If you've read the assignment in Old Testament parallels for today, the sayings of Amenempe, those are instructional, just as the book of Proverbs is instructional. And we know how important it is to receive instruction. What's the main focus in Proverbs? It's the father talking to his child.

My child, this, this, this, and this. Listen to the instruction of your mother. Heed the teaching of your father.

Store up those commands in your hearts. All right? So the instruction is important, and that leads you right on into bullet number three, which is passing this stuff along. Tradition and things that are traditional ought not to be anathema to each successive generation.

Sometimes we tend to think so. Oh, that's just traditional. You know, I want something new.

Don't think that way. That which comes down through tradition is of utmost value, especially in helping us think, and think well, and think clearly about how we live our lives. Bullet four is also extremely interesting, particularly with regard to Proverbs, because as you read through the Proverbs, you're going to see that each one of them is this tiny little slice.

In some cases, they're caricatures of human nature. In other cases, they're little bits of advice. In other cases, they're observations about how things work.

And of course, each one can only encompass so much stuff, and so there's going to be other angles and other facets. Think of a diamond, and think of shining light through your diamond, and you're going to see, as it comes out on the other side, different colors coming out, right? And in some ways, you're going to have the same thing happening with wisdom literature. Each little gem, especially in the book of Proverbs, is going to contribute something interesting.

Let me give you probably the classic example of this. You've got to turn to Proverbs 26 for this one. If you've got your Bibles, you can do that.

And I'm going to read, and we're going to do a little third grade exercise here, for those of you who have your Bibles. For those of you who don't, you don't have to worry about doing what I'm asking you to do. But if you've got your Bible, get your hand ready and slap it down right under verse 4 of chapter 26.

Right under verse 4. I'll let you get to chapter 26 first. Got it covered up? This is the exercise. Okay.

Chapter 26, verse 4 says, do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you're going to be like him yourself. In other words, if somebody's ranting and screaming and raving at you, don't rant and scream and rave back. You've lowered yourself to that level.

Great piece of advice, isn't it? Isn't it a good piece of advice? One that most of us could take pretty seriously, because usually when someone's really angry at us, the whole decibel level of what we say in response, it inches up there. Great advice. Remove your hand and let me read verse 5. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he's going to be wise in his own eyes.

Now, that doesn't mean you scream back at him, but it means that you're going to engage that person and make sure that that person is not allowed to go on thinking his folly and his foolish thoughts. And so two pieces of advice, and as you look at them both and you look at the situations in which we find ourselves on a daily basis, it takes a whole lot of discernment and wisdom to figure out which one of those applies right here and now. Right? And so this is a small illustration of what I'm trying to say there with the fourth bullet.

We've got a wonderful resource in our wisdom literature for sorting through how to think about particular situations, but it takes a good deal of discernment. I'm going to talk about discernment a little bit later on as we think how to apply these proverbs to life. Well, those things so far have focused primarily on proverbs, but as we get especially into the book of Job, and you know this well because Job, of course, even if you haven't read the whole book seriously, we know what the main point is.

Job is suffering unjustly, and when we have to deal with suffering and extensive suffering, and suffering we just don't understand, and when we have to deal with the prospect of death and mortality, which is not only in the book of Job, but in the book of Ecclesiastes, the author of Ecclesiastes is coming to grips with death. And those two are important pieces of wisdom literature as well. Now, those are our biblical wisdom pieces, but every other culture is going to have to wrestle with these same things.

The sufferer and his friend is a piece of Mesopotamian wisdom literature. It has the same kinds of themes as Job, because every place you go, people are human, they're fallible, they're finite, and they're wrestling with these things. So those are the universal aspects of wisdom that we want to have kind of in the background as we talk through our wisdom literature, our biblical wisdom literature.

Just a couple of things to say in this regard. I mentioned this already. Some of the stuff that you're reading in the Old Testament parallels will give you a little window into this, but there's lots more for the reasons I just articulated.

Humankind wrestles with these questions. Now here we've basically got a review of what I've just said a moment ago as I was talking through some of those previous bullets, and you'll want to know these things, the things that characterize each of the biblical wisdom texts. First of all, Proverbs is practical.

One of the excellent Old Testament commentators who has also written a small commentary on Proverbs has said, Proverbs is godliness in working clothes. And that's exactly what it is. It describes us as we are when we get up early in the morning, as we are, well, this is sort of taking a principle and applying it, as we're driving down the road and we're tempted towards road rage or something like that.

Proverbs is putting godliness into working clothes. It's looking at it. And as I'm going to say in a moment, it also caricatures us at our worst sometimes and pokes fun, and we're supposed to take some lessons from that as well.

Job and Ecclesiastes wrestle with these issues I've been mentioning, suffering, death. And because we don't know a lot about what's beyond and we don't know the whys in so many of these cases that the questions that come up, they are classed as being speculative wisdom literature or philosophical. And then finally, Song of Songs, interestingly enough, did not used to be classified as wisdom literature.

For quite some time, it was just thought of as, well, lyric poetry. But it has slowly moved over into the category of wisdom literature. Why do you think that's true? We're going to spend Friday talking about Song of Songs, part of Friday.

Why do you think Song of Songs is in wisdom literature? If you've read it, you know, your first take on it is going to be, oh, really? What's the main topic of Song of Songs? One word. It starts with L. It's love, isn't it? And it's love between two people who are enamored. They're enraptured.

They're just ecstatic over each other. Of all places in our lives, that's where we need to be wise, right? And so we're going to talk about some of the things that we learn from those wonderful, ecstatic poems that are the Song of Songs. That's Friday.

All right. A couple more things to do by way of introduction before we get into Proverbs itself. Given what I've just said to you and this broad span of material that comes under the umbrella of biblical wisdom literature, you know, how on earth do we define wisdom? Well, of course, the starting point is what we see not only in Proverbs 9, 10, but also in Job 28, 28, and somewhere in Psalms that I can't remember just off the top of my head.

But it's a recurring theme. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And that obviously is going to be a helpful principle as we're talking about biblical wisdom.

It's the fear of the Lord. Because if we don't have that, we are in bad shape. And the biblical fool, if you've read Dr. Wilson's material for today, the worst of the biblical fools is a nabal whose name underlies, sorry, yeah, a nabal, the term of which underlies the biblical name Nabal.

And we remember him from being Abigail's husband, who is a hardened fool, all right, rejecting God and rejecting God's instruction. So this is a very helpful starting point, but we want to push it a little bit further. I've called this the challenge of defining biblical wisdom, and it's a challenge because, picking up on what we've just said and adding to it a little bit, if wisdom is one of the characteristics of God, those of you who know catechisms, probably not too many do anymore, but one of the things we learn from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, those of us who grew up in the Presbyterian context, is that wisdom is one of those central characteristics of God.

And is being wisdom power, justice, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, that's how that line goes. Wisdom is a characteristic of God. How do you define a characteristic of God who's infinite and utterly pure and holy and infallible? You know, how do our minds wrap around that? Good question.

It's part of our challenge. Secondly, picking up on what I just said, as we look at even these four biblical wisdom texts, they do have that wide range of content and intent, for that matter. So you've got Proverbs, basic practical advice, and we're going to look at that shortly.

You've got observations about human nature, but you've got this wrestling with the unanswered questions. How do you get a definition that encompasses all of that? Well, two authors, let's get context, I believe, a book that I use in Introduction to Biblical Studies, which Bible majors take, whether you like it or not. And it's by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart, both of whom used to be, as they began writing the first edition of this text, professors up at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary.

They have come up, and this is actually Doug Stewart's definition because he wrote the Old Testament sections, with a fairly good definition, and I rather like it, even though they changed it in the second and third editions. I'm going back to the first edition because this is a great definition. It's the discipline.

Wisdom doesn't come just sort of happily floating down into our brains. It's the discipline of applying truth to life in the light of experience. And of course, our experiences encompass our wrestling with death when we encounter it in friends or family or whatever.

It encounters our dealing with suffering of every kind. It also means that we work very hard to know truth, and I'll talk more about that in a moment. So it's the discipline of applying truth to our own lives in light of our experiences.

I think it's a fairly decent definition, and I might ask you to know that. So get the red flags up there, all right? This is one you might want to memorize. The contrast, and we're going to talk about types of fools a little bit later on, but biblical folly or foolishness has nothing whatsoever to do with intellectual capacity.

It has everything to do with whether or not we accept or reject God's instruction. That's why the book of Proverbs over and over and over again says store up my commands, accept my instruction, seek, look for, search for, and all these things are part of the process of taking in God's instruction. That's what a wise person will do.

A foolish person, later, not for me. I'm a little bit better than that. That's not what we want to be doing.

Any questions so far before we move on? Yes, Rebecca. A different aspect of the person. One of them seemed like adultery and like the ideal woman and stuff like that, but then, like, now that I know more about the book when I'm reading, so I don't know.

Yeah, good. How is it that Solomon can write, given his relationships with multiple women, write such strong statements against the adulteress, particularly in the first section of the book of Proverbs? Yeah, it's a great question, and you could probably say the same about Ecclesiastes. In that book, you see him being very strong because he's been through experiences.

I think the definition here works with him. In light of his experiences, he has some pretty powerful things to say. Some of us have to learn the hard way about what's wise, and I would suggest that maybe Solomon is speaking out of some very painful experiences, and his life has been changed, and he's grown sadly wiser.

That's certainly the case, I would suggest, with Ecclesiastes. If we're going to say Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, we'll talk about that later. But yeah, it's a great question.

I'm going to come back a little bit to Solomon in a moment, but it's a very good question. Anything else before we go charging on? Just a little bit of a note, this picks right up on our Solomon question. As we read 1 Kings 4, and I'm actually going to go back to that for a moment, so again, if you've got that text still handy, it won't hurt to take a quick run to 1 Kings 4 that we already looked at, but I want to review it from another perspective now.

This is after Solomon's prayer for wisdom to rule his people, and it's after that test case that indicates that he does have wisdom justly to rule his people. Then at the end of chapter 4, we have the following statement, starting with verse 29, God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Now look at verse 32.

He spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs numbered to 1,005. Well, you know, that gives you some sense of this manifold output that he's doing in a literary perspective. 3,000 proverbs.

Do you know how many are in the book of Proverbs? It's not 3,000. Guess. I sat down and counted them up one time as if I had nothing else better to do.

There's slightly over 900 proverbs in our book that has 31 chapters, right? So there was a whole vast array out there of additional things that Solomon was composing. Likewise, psalms. He's writing psalms.

Not only that, so he's a poet of the best kind, right? Describe plant life from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the walls. You know, those are two things that are saying from the greatest to the least, because the cedars of Lebanon were monstrous, and of course the hyssop is a tiny little plant. So Solomon knows his plant.

He's a botanist. He's taken his core curriculum in the natural sciences, if I may be so rude as to suggest it like that. He taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.

This is a man who's liberally educated, if you want to look at it that way, and he's going to use that stuff, especially when you read the last chapters of Proverbs that set up simile after simile after simile after simile. And we know what those are. You know, this is like this, this is like this, establishing comparisons that really are used to teach something.

Solomon uses these aspects of the natural realm to make moral applications. And so he's drawing two very significant spheres together. All right, so anyway, we have Solomon teaching all this stuff.

When you read Proverbs 25, verse 1, it says, the men of Hezekiah gathered together the Proverbs of Solomon. Now I'm going to say why I think that's the case in a moment, but just recognize that there's a process here of compiling this book. It isn't just that Solomon sort of dictated the whole thing and then we got it.

He's written all these Proverbs. The men of Hezekiah are going to do something to bring them into a structured literary whole, and then there are some later additions that show up right at the end of the book. King Lemuel is apparently one of them.

What we have in chapters 30 and 31 seem to be some later additions. We don't really know when, but here's a little chart that might help us, we think. Here it is right here.

Now, let's look at this for a moment. We've studied David. We've studied Solomon.

We haven't gotten into divided kingdom yet, but we will, Lord willing, after Easter. But in 931, the kingdom does indeed split into north and south, and so you've got two basic kingdoms going along. Northern kingdom primarily is going to be apostate, primarily.

About 200 years after this split in the kingdom, we have a very critical thing happening because the Assyrians come along. They take away the northern kingdom entirely, and they lay siege to Jerusalem. A guy named Sennacherib.

We're going to be talking about it later on. When that happens, let me suggest to you that these men of Hezekiah that are mentioned in chapter 25 are well aware that their national heritage, from a human perspective, is being threatened. And what do you do when you think you're going to lose your whole heritage, the literary heritage, while you make certain to archive it, don't you? And so maybe what the men of Hezekiah were doing was very carefully writing these things down that they wanted to have preserved in case the Assyrians would take them all away and wipe out their kingdom.

Quick footnote here, which has nothing to do with Old Testament or much. You are all aware of the Holocaust and the horrors of the Holocaust and the fact that the Jewish community in Warsaw, the famous Warsaw ghetto, was pretty much wiped out of existence. Now there's a long, long, long story behind all that.

Millions of people gone. But here's the fascinating thing. You had a remarkable cultural center in Warsaw.

They were giving symphony concerts in that ghetto because there were so many artistically talented people. And the other thing that has happened has just come out now. It's been sort of under wraps because the stuff was written in Yiddish and Polish.

The Warsaw ghetto community knew what was going to happen to them. They archived. They wrote their own history of their suffering and demise and hid it.

They hid it under the buildings that were there. And of course those buildings were demolished. This is Warsaw.

And only after the war was over were they able to excavate and dig up those things. They've been, as I said, in Polish. They're in Polish and Yiddish.

So they've been archived in Poland. But now they're coming out. And it's brilliant historiography.

The people who are writing this thing, knowing that their end was forthcoming, were careful to document it. Really careful to document it. I'm suggesting that that's maybe a more contemporary slice of what we see going on in Hezekiah's day because they didn't know that God was going to deliver them.

God does. Sennacherib doesn't take Jerusalem at that point. Jerusalem's going to fall later on.

But perhaps that's what Hezekiah is doing. The men of Hezekiah are doing. Well, at any rate, between that time and the fall of the southern kingdom in 586 to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, we have some additions to the Book of Proverbs.

And I said a moment ago we don't know exactly when they happen. But that gives us an idea that the Holy Spirit has used a long process to bring this book about for us. Not just Solomon's composition at one point in time.

Nick, go ahead. Should you memorize this chart? The chart will show up again when we start looking at prophetic literature here. Just know the principle behind it.

So if you want to, think in terms of the span of time. That's what I really want you to see. I want you to see the span of time between Solomon himself and what takes place when these things are copied by the men of Hezekiah, if that helps a little bit.

Okay. Need to carry on? A basic structure of the Book of Proverbs. You may be thinking as you dip into Proverbs, there's no structure here at all.

Well, there is. There is. And we want to look at it.

And I should say this, by the way. Sitting in the back of the room, we have an authority on the Book of Proverbs. So I'm nervous to be giving this lecture.

Dr. Hildebrandt knows Proverbs inside and out. And he's not talking up here because he would be doing it in about six or seven lectures. Good leaving.

All right. At any rate, we have an introduction. Introduction.

And we're going to look at this. So back to the text again. You know, Proverbs, as I've been trying to tell you, is an instructional book.

It's an educational book. And so just like every class, this one included, has a syllabus that have course objectives. At least, every class should have a syllabus that has course objectives.

Basically, in verses two through six, we read the course objectives. Let's look at them. Here's your course objectives for the Book of Proverbs and that lifelong instructional course.

For attaining wisdom and discipline. For understanding words of insight. For acquiring a disciplined and prudent life.

This is a lifelong course, isn't it? As you look at these objectives. Doing what is right and just and fair. Giving prudence.

An interesting word. Do you remember Genesis 3, verse 1? And the serpent who has cleverness, craftiness. Arumim.

The serpent is Arum. That's this word right here. In this case, giving a good sense of how you assess life.

Cleverness. Prudence. Simple.

Knowledge and discretion to the young. Let the wise listen and add to their learning. Let the discerning get guidance for understanding Proverbs and parables.

Not only those basic things of life, which are absolutely essential, but also moving into the more fun parts of the intellectual game, if you will. Understanding Proverbs and parables, sayings and riddles of the wise. You might say, for understanding quantum physics.

Those things that are just beyond most of our minds. And yet, those who do quantum physics find them wonderful, wonderful explorations in terms of the nature of the universe. So that's our introduction to the book.

And it lays out the course of study, if you want to think of it that way. Oops. One thing at a time.

Then we have, in chapters 1 through 9, a unit that sits by itself. Okay? Because the Father repeatedly here praises the value of wisdom. Now, one of the things that we notice in this whole section is, as Rebecca pointed out earlier, the warnings against the adulterous.

Wisdom as a characteristic is personified by a woman. And if you've read the text, you know that. It shows up in several different places in this chapter.

But its opposite, Lady Wisdom's opposite, is dame folly. And also, in several different places in this chapter, we see her coming through with one of her most hideous characteristics, and that is the adultery that she leads people into, because folks are so easily trapped by that stuff. And young men are being warned by the Father over and over again, stay away from this.

It looks enticing. It looks like something you want. It's going to bring you down to the depths of Sheol.

All right? Now, I just want to look at a couple of places in this section, although I'd encourage you to go back to them, just to see how Lady Wisdom operates. Right? Chapter 1, verse 20. Wisdom, that's Lady Wisdom, calls aloud on the street.

She raises her voice in the public squares. All right, just transfer yourself down to the Boston Common. Okay? And try and decide if you like this picture of Lady Wisdom on the Boston Common.

At the head of the noisy street, she cries out on the gateway to the city. She makes her speech. Here comes the speech.

Lady Wisdom on her soapbox, right opposite Park Street Church. How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you. I would have made my thoughts known to you.

But since you rejected me when I called, since no one gave heed when I stretched out my voice, since you ignored, I mean, there's been sort of an ongoing rejection here, isn't it? Since you ignored all my advice, I will laugh at your disaster. I will mock when calamity overtakes you. Verse 29.

Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. The waywardness of the simple will kill them. The complacency of fools will destroy them.

Not exactly politically correct, would you say? There's a very interesting commentary on Proverbs written by, I think it's Kenneth Akin in the Daily Study Bible series. And he takes this passage and says, this goes totally contrary to what we in our trying to make God nice, you know, the way we'd like to think about it. But he says, if the church doesn't regain a sense of the urgency of this chapter, the church is going to be utterly ineffective.

We need to have a sense of urgency for people who are going their ways right on down to the depths of Sheol. So I just leave that for you. In a little bit of a different tone, that's picking up on, that's chapter one.

Let's look at chapter eight, because we have wisdom coming through again here. And here there's something quite remarkable happening. Starting at verse 22, that's the wisdom in creation bit.

This is a challenging passage, but I want you just to see something as I read parts of it. The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His work. Before His deeds of old, I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning before the worlds began.

And then it describes wisdom's functions as the whole creative process unfolds. And it's a beautiful description. All right, I was there when He set the heavens in place, verse 27, when He established the clouds above, verse 28.

Now verses 30 and 31, I was the craftsman at His side. That, by the way, is a masculine singular noun for those of you who like these kinds of things. I was filled with delight day after day.

That happens to be masculine plural verb form. Rejoicing always in His presence, a feminine singular participle. Isn't this exciting? We're seeing a multiplicity in the Godhead here reflected just in the verb forms and the noun form with the craftsman.

Something about the richness of God the Creator in those participle forms are masculine plural, feminine singular, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world, and delighting in humankind. Talking about wisdom's activity with God in creation. In other words, as part of our Trinitarian God.

Paul picks up on this in Colossians chapter 1 when he talks about Jesus Christ who is there right at the beginning of creation. Before Him, by Him, through Him, all things were created. Paul's going back, I would suggest, to this particular thing.

One more thing I want to say about chapters 1 through 9, and then we need to go streaming right along. We've seen both wisdom and the adulteress in these chapters, and now they are brought face-to-face with each other in chapter 9. Right? Face-to-face with each other. Wisdom has built her house, hewn out seven pillars, prepared her meat, mixed her wine, and she sends out an invitation.

She says, let the simple come in here, come, eat, drink, leave your simple ways, find out what life is really all about. Dame Folly, and then she goes on to say, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's coming from her mouth.

Again, personifications. Dame Folly, verse 13. The woman Folly is loud, she's undisciplined and without knowledge.

She sits at the door of her house, she doesn't stand, she sits. She calls out to those who go by, but notice her invitation starts out exactly the same way. Did you notice that when you read it? Dame Folly starts the same way as Lady Wisdom.

Let the simple come in here to those who lack judgment. If we don't have our thinking straight, we can be very easily enticed by Folly, who's going to have a very nice, appealing invitation. It's going to look good on the surface.

And we can go through example, example, after example of people who've gone that track. Thinking, it sounds good to start with, but notice what she goes on to say. Stolen water is sweet and food eaten in secret is delicious.

In other words, those things that are part and parcel of wrong choices in life. Theft, adultery, those are probably being illustrated by the food eaten in secret being delicious. Little do they know that the dead are there and her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

That pathway down, I know we use the famous slippery slope illustration, but it's there. That pathway down is a slow one and it's those choices that we make choice by choice by choice of things that just look enticing, look easy, look like they're going to satisfy us in a very unsatisfactory way. And of course, the end is a very sobering one.

Well, we need to go on. That's the first part. Yeah, I'm sorry, Kristen.

No, please. Do you think that this adultery metaphor has like a parallel to Christ in the church and that was kind of a metaphor like when we don't give Christ the honor he deserves, we're kind of being adulterers, like a little marriage relationship? Yeah, does the adultery warning in here have multiple levels of application? Is that kind of what you're saying? So it's not only against physical adultery, but against idolatry, which is adultery? Absolutely. When you look at the marriage covenant made at Sinai, which we've talked about, you know, that's God and his people and it's a covenant.

It's a marriage covenant. So idolatry is ripping that apart. And likewise, Christ and his bride, the church, the same thing for the New Testament believers.

Absolutely. And Colossians chapter 3 tells us greed is idolatry. So there's all kinds of things that are going to be part of tearing at those threads that are the fabric of our relationship with Christ.

Yeah, good question. A couple more things on structure. In chapters 10 through 22, we have primarily single verses that are making points.

Now, having said that, notice my sub points here. First of all, as I said a moment ago, well, 15 minutes ago, the first six chapters, 10 through 15, are lots of antithetical parallelisms that are very, very effective in teaching discernment. I'm going to say more about those in a moment.

Right at the beginning of those, isn't it interesting that as you read chapters 10 through 12, righteousness, righteousness, righteousness, it's the theme. I mean, it's a steady drumbeat through those chapters because that, of course, is foundational to all the rest of this stuff. And it's one verse after another that's focusing on that.

And then there are other thematic emphases as well. I just give you one example here, and that is that in chapter 16, we do see a fairly steady drumbeat there on kings and rulers and how they should be functioning. Lovely stuff in chapters 10 through 22.

I would encourage you to read a proverb a day for the rest of your lives and just soak it up. Think about it. You're writing papers on one, but of course, there's 899 left to go.

Chapters 22 through, sorry, 22, 17 through 24, 34 are a little bit of a separate kind of a category, and they are the proverbs that are paralleled to a good degree in this Egyptian text that you're reading in Old Testament parallels called the sayings of Amenemahpet. And formally, these are different as well. They're longer.

They're not just single verses with this line, this line, and then it's kind of over with. They're longer developments. Probably the classic one is that remarkable description of somebody who has drunk too much.

If you haven't come across that yet, go and read it. It's a long description, a sad description. Well, then after chapter 24, we do have further collections of Solomon's and Hezekiah's time, sayings from these two characters, Agur and Lemuel, who are interesting by the way.

We don't have time to spend time with them, but they're fascinating. And then right at the end of chapter 31, the last 22 verses is our acrostic. If you've been in any kind of a women's seminar or a women's Bible class, no doubt you have had this portion of scripture held up to you as the ideal.

Because of course, this is the virtuous woman, the Eshet Chayil as she called in Hebrew, who does everything and does it right. Her children rise up to call her blessed. She's up early in the morning.

She's weaving, spinning, doing everything. And not only that, she teaches Torah. Faithful instruction, the word is Torah, is on her lips.

And you're thinking, I can't ever be that. Well, we can aspire to it, but I think there's something bigger going on here as well. And I've tried to note it here.

In the beginning of this text, we saw this sobering emphasis on adulteress and folly as an adulteress as well. And I would suggest that the closure is designed specifically to be the counter to that. Adulteress is the threat.

Folly is a threat. She's going to threaten the lives of people who are God's people. But here's the antidote.

And wisdom is now being personified, I would suggest, at the end of the book. Sure, it's something that we women and men, by the way, can live up to this too. And I think that comes under our umbrella of seeing this now as wisdom at the closure of the book.

Now, that's way too fast, but that gives us maybe a little bit of a sense of the structure. We need to go on. There's still much to do.

This is the fun part of the lecture for today. It really is. And I've got to tell you a little story to get into this.

Years ago, probably 20 years ago, I was asked to do a six-hour seminar on the book of Proverbs. And I thought, how am I going to do that? And it occurred to me that maybe it would be helpful if I could draw some of the Proverbs. Because they are, indeed, when you read these Proverbs, a lot of them are just funny.

You've got to use your imagination. They're tremendous verbal caricatures. And they make, they poke fun at people, like you and me.

And so I thought, well, you know, I can draw some of these Proverbs, and if I have somebody to do it for me who's a good artist, that'll just make it a wonderful presentation. So I went to one of my dear friends, who really is a good artist, and I said, Celia, I need some help. And I explained to her what I needed to have.

And she thought for a minute, and she looked at me, and she said, you don't need me to do this. You need to have really bad art. That's going to get the people's attention.

You draw it. She's right. And so I did.

And so I've saved those little overhead transparencies for the last 20 years. And I just last fall imported them into my PowerPoint. Some of them, not all of them.

So you get to look at these and figure out what they're saying, all right? This is our little entertainment for the morning. What's the top one? It's a fountain, okay? What do you think the message of the Proverb is? Word spread. Yes, that's true.

And fountain spread. Somebody look it up real fast. We only want the first half of it.

Chapter 10, verse 11. Yes, Mary? Yeah, the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. In other words, someone who's speaking properly is going to spread all the wonderful things that water brings to people.

New life, et cetera. That's kind of nice. How about this one down here? Don't look yet.

What do you think it's saying? Okay, I know the art's bad, but you can, I mean, please, what is this? That's fire splendid, all right? And before the fire is green stuff,

and behind it is? Scorched earth. Right. What does the Proverb say? Who's got it? Go ahead, Suzanne.

A scoundrel plots evil and his speech is like a scorching fire. Yes, a scoundrel plots evil and his or her speech is like a scorching fire. Well, you know, look at that.

It's, you know, try and use your imagination. If you don't like that art, make your own. But, you know, behind the words of somebody who is intentionally cruel is utter devastation.

And you can see that here. Scorched. Burned up.

Lots of things we can say about that. Want a couple more? You're going to get them whether you like them or not. Words not only spread, they penetrate.

You know, Proverbs has a lot to say about the power of words, doesn't it? Lots to say. What's happening here? Yeah, I know you got the last one, but what's this one? This is a little bit, this is bad art, I told you. What's happening? Say it again.

The person is eating something, okay, and he's supposed to have a little smile on his face, and where's that something landing? His inmost parts. Now, find the proverb. What does it say? It's 18.8, in case you can't read it, Trevor.

I didn't find it, but is it the one where you're eating something in secret? Well, that, yes, but you may not be thinking of exactly the same one that this one is. Go ahead, Kristen. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels.

They go to the man's inmost parts. Yes, did you all hear that? The words of a gossip are like choice morsels. Oh, we just love to hear them.

They go down to a person's inmost parts, and don't think for a moment that they don't change your perceptions of that person forever. Okay, words penetrate, and they have a remarkable ability to change how we think about people. Notice it's said twice, 26-22, same thing.

Get the picture? Something about this is very, very important to know. And the last one, well, of course, what's happening to that poor fellow? His innards are being eviscerated by a sword, right? Reckless words pierce like a sword. Reckless words pierce like a sword.

But the tongue of the wise brings healing, is the other half of that. Want a couple more? You're going to get them. That one's really bad.

Oh, you know this one? Like a, I don't know. It's a pig. That's very good.

How do you know it's a pig? It's got a curly tail. Yeah. Say it again.

Chris, did you have it? Chelsea. Yes, a woman without discretion is like a pig with a gold ring in its snout. Yeah.

How about that one? Somebody look up 13-9. Obviously, there's a contrast here, isn't there? Because there's a light on the one hand, and there's a snuffed out light on the other. What's the moral lesson? What are we seeing? Who's got it? Mary.

Yes. The light of the righteous, my translation says, shines brightly, but this is fine. What are you reading? Okay, good.

It's probably closer at any rate. But the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out. So here we go.

Shines brightly or rejoices. Lamp of the wicked is snuffed out. All right.

Yeah. As you read Proverbs, and I would encourage you to do it, draw some of them. You might remember them better.

All right. A couple more things we need to do. Coming back to our definition, when we're talking about proverbial wisdom, it really does involve a chosen lifestyle.

And again, this picks right up on our definition. It involves the powers of observation, capacities of the intellect to evaluate, and the effort of the will to apply truth. The discipline of applying truth to life in light of experience.

That's exactly what we're seeing. We've got to use our minds to do it. We have to use our wills to apply it.

All right. And memory. Memorizing scripture is one of the most important things you can do, believe it or not.

Now, a couple more things we need to go through here. Some related concepts. In Proverbs, you're going to see not only the word wisdom, you're going to see the following words, and oftentimes they are overlapping as part of these synonymous parallelisms in the way they work.

Knowledge. We can spend the rest of our lives learning about what it is that God has created, because Solomon, for example, is going to use lots and lots and lots of imagery from the world in which he lives. So it's not just knowledge of God's word, it's knowledge of all of God's truth.

Discipline. A great Hebrew word which can be translated instruction, training, reproof, correction, or chastisement. It's one word.

It's musar. But depending on its context, it has a really wide range. But the thing to keep in mind is what I've just told you here.

Most of these involve a little bit of pain of one kind or another. That's part of the learning process, going through some pain, whether it's the pain of reproof and the embarrassment of that, or the pain of just sitting down and learning something and taking some time to learn it, or the outright chastisement of that little figure in the book of Proverbs called the rod, because Proverbs has a good deal to say about the rod of discipline, and I don't think it's figurative. Understanding.

The Hebrew word is a word that means to discern between. Binah is the word. It comes from a form called, a form bain, which means between.

So binah is going to have this sense of figuring out between this option and that one. Discretion. Well, our proverb we just looked at, a woman without discretion, in other words, the ability to think really carefully and evaluate what's going on, and then of course make the right choices as opposed to the wrong ones.

And then here's our arum word again. There's a place for being clever and shrewd, lest we get taken in by scam artists, to use a contemporary issue. You've got to be pretty sharp to avoid those kinds of things.

Well, let me take two minutes more of your time and encourage you to read this passage. The bad art has sort of taken the place of reading Proverbs 4, 4-9, but it's a wonderful passage that says, embrace wisdom above all else, though it cost you all you have. Get wisdom, because wisdom will protect and wisdom will guide.

Now, I'm going to stop with that. You've got two more things in your lecture outline, but they are self-explanatory. One talks about the biblical words for fools, and that's where Dr. Wilson's book comes in eminently handy, because he lays them all out for you, and so you can know those.

And then finally, the last thing talks about conceptual parallelisms, parallelism on a big scene, not just two lines, but the conceptual parallelisms between humility and pride, drunkenness and sobriety, truth, falsehood, etc., etc. So look at those. You'll be in fine shape.

And Lord willing, we're going to do Job on Wednesday. Again, in one day, it's a travesty. This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her Old Testament History, Literature and Theology course, lecture number 24.