

Dr. Fred Putnam, Psalms, Session 3 of 4, Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Putnam, Psalms, Session 3 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture series by Dr. Fred Putnam **explains** how to interpret and apply the book of Proverbs. He **focuses** on understanding the meaning and context of individual proverbs, emphasizing the importance of considering the relationship between lines of text, **recognizing** literary devices like parallelism, and **considering** the cultural background of the text to gain a deeper understanding of its message. Dr. Putnam **argues** that proverbs are not simply statements of fact but act as advice and counsel, **highlighting** the significance of considering the implications of one's actions on relationships and their overall impact. The lectures **encourage** a thoughtful and engaged approach to interpreting and applying the wisdom found within the book of Proverbs to one's life.

**2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Putnam, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows
media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and
click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms &
Wisdom → Proverbs).**



**Putnam_Prov_Sessi
on03.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Putnam, Psalms, Session 3 of 4

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts on the Book of Proverbs by Dr. Fred Putnam:

Briefing Document: Dr. Fred Putnam on Proverbs - Lecture 3

Overview:

This lecture focuses on understanding the nature of wisdom as presented in the Book of Proverbs and provides a methodology for interpreting individual proverbs. Dr. Putnam emphasizes the divine source of wisdom, the importance of a receptive attitude in learning, and the compressed nature of proverbs as stories. The lecture also provides guidance on how to unpack proverbs, paying attention to parallelism, and considering the cultural context in which they were written.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Divine Source of Wisdom:

- The lecture establishes that the wisdom in Proverbs is not solely from Solomon but is divinely inspired.
- **Quote:** "The Lord, Yahweh gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."
- "The fear of the Lord" is identified as the beginning of knowledge, and it is contrasted with the actions of fools, who despise wisdom and instruction, demonstrating a rejection of God as the source.
- **Quote:** "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction."
- Despising wisdom is equated with despising the Lord, as wisdom is sourced from God.
- The importance of approaching the book with a willingness to honor God's word is underscored, where true learning is rooted in humility and a desire to obey.

1. The Receptive Attitude of a Learner:

- Learning is not simply an accumulation of facts but a process of internalizing and embodying wisdom.

- True understanding requires a disposition of cheerful and willing acquiescence to the teachings of Proverbs.
- **Quote:** "That, in this case, at least, obedience leads to understanding, and our ability to work with and use Proverbs grows according to our disposition to embody them."
- The example is given where, in order to learn God's will, one must first commit to doing it.
- The book of Proverbs is not to be analyzed and dissected only, but as instruction to be heeded and followed.

1. **The Nature of Proverbs:**

- Proverbs are described as compressed stories, not just bits of compressed wisdom.
- Each proverb contains a depth of meaning that needs to be "unpacked."
- **Quote:** "What a proverb really is, is a compressed story."
- Proverbs serve as counselors or advisors rather than as hard laws or promises.
- **Quote:** "We can't just treat the Proverbs as things to be analyzed, dissected, and studied...But rather as things to be obeyed, rather as counselors to be listened to."
- The authority of a proverb increases with the breadth of its applicability.
- Proverbs speak with a singular voice, avoiding contradictions, as opposed to secular proverbs.

1. **Interpreting Individual Proverbs:**

- Pay close attention to parallelism in the two (or three) lines of the proverb and the way the lines relate to each other.
- Antithetical parallelism (contrasting ideas)
- Synonymous parallelism (saying the same thing in different ways).
- Emblematic parallelism (using an image to convey an idea)
- Identify the "nub of the contrast" in antithetical proverbs.
- Consider the compressed image or story within the proverb.

- Recognize that even seemingly self-evident observations often contain implicit counsel.
- Understanding the cultural context of proverbs is crucial in interpretation.
- **Quote:** "A big part of reading Proverbs and, and benefiting from them is getting back into that world and beginning to...immersing ourselves in it."
- Be careful not to impose contemporary cultural understandings onto ancient wisdom.

1. **Examples and Illustrations:**

- The lecture uses Proverbs 1:7, 2:1, 3:5-6, 10:1, 11:10, and 25:14 as examples of the principles for interpreting individual proverbs.
- The cultural nuances of haggling and its importance to understand proverb 20:14 is highlighted.
- The different ways fathers and mothers may react to their son's behavior is used as an example of the complexity contained within proverbs.

1. **Relational Worldview:**

- Proverbs assume a relational world where individuals are interconnected and their actions affect others.
- The consideration of the effects of one's behavior on those who care for them is central to decision-making.
- **Quote:** "Relationships ought to guide us in our decision-making. The consequences and the outcome of our behavior ought to make us either pause or make us go ahead."

Methodological Approach for Studying Proverbs:

1. **Embrace the fear of the Lord:** Start by being open to honoring God's word and being willing to obey.
2. **Recognize divine wisdom:** Understand that Proverbs are not just human advice, but God's wisdom.
3. **Study the parallelism:** Examine the relationship between the two lines of a proverb, not just as individual sentences.

4. **Look for the compressed story:** Find the deeper meaning and narrative embedded in the brief sentences.
5. **Consider cultural context:** Approach the text through the eyes of the intended audience.
6. **Apply the counselor mentality:** View proverbs as counselors to be heeded for practical life application, not as just academic subjects.
7. **Focus on attitude and character:** Recognize that learning involves becoming the person the teacher (God) wants one to be.

Conclusion:

Dr. Putnam's lecture provides a framework for understanding and interpreting the Book of Proverbs, emphasizing the importance of a receptive attitude, the divine source of wisdom, and the rich literary and cultural context of the text. It stresses that proverbs are not merely observations but rather counsel meant to guide and shape the lives of those who seek to live wisely.

4. Study Guide: Putnam, Psalms, Session 3 of 4

Proverbs: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Dr. Putnam, how should we approach understanding the phrase "the fear of the Lord" within the context of Proverbs 1:7?
2. What is antithetical parallelism, and how does it help us understand the relationship between the "fear of the Lord" and the actions of fools in Proverbs 1:7?
3. How does Dr. Putnam use the concept of metonymy to explain the connection between despising wisdom/instruction and despising the Lord?
4. According to Dr. Putnam, what attitude should readers have toward the book of Proverbs if they wish to gain wisdom?
5. What does Dr. Putnam mean by the statement, "a proverb is a compressed story"?
6. In what ways can a proverb gain authority?
7. What does it mean to say that biblical proverbs are poetic?
8. Why does Dr. Putnam caution against taking the layout of English Bibles when interpreting Proverbs?
9. Explain the main ideas behind the proverb in Proverbs 10:1, "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is his mother's grief."
10. How does the example of Proverbs 25:14 ("Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give") illustrate the importance of understanding the cultural context of Proverbs?

Answer Key

1. We should not just look up the phrase everywhere in the Bible, but examine the line that accompanies it. In this case, the accompanying line is "fools despise wisdom and instruction," which uses antithetical parallelism. Therefore, the way to understand "the fear of the Lord" is to see what it is *not*.

2. Antithetical parallelism is when two lines in a poem contrast each other, stating the opposite, or making a point through contrast. In Proverbs 1:7, it shows that the "fear of the Lord" is contrasted with despising wisdom and instruction, therefore implying they are opposites.
3. Metonymy is when one thing is named in place of another. Dr. Putnam explains that despising wisdom and instruction is metonymy for despising the Lord because all wisdom and instruction come from God.
4. Readers should approach the Proverbs with a willingness to obey their instruction, honoring what the Lord says in them. This is the attitude of fearing the Lord and where wisdom begins.
5. Dr. Putnam means that proverbs take a whole narrative and compress it into a few words, as if smashing a large story into a very small space. To understand a proverb is to unfold that story, like a compressed sponge when you add water.
6. A proverb gains authority by its usefulness. The more globally a proverb can be applied to different situations, the more authority it gains because people are more likely to use it in various contexts.
7. To say that biblical proverbs are poetic is to acknowledge that they use the same literary techniques as poetry: compression, metaphor, imagery, parallelism and that they should be read with a slow careful attention to the way the text is put together.
8. The layout in English Bibles often presents lines of proverbs as parallel, even when they are not. It may mislead readers to try to look for a parallelism in every verse.
9. The proverb in 10:1 contrasts the effects of a wise son and a foolish son on their parents. It suggests that a wise son brings joy to the father while a foolish son causes grief to the mother.
10. The proverb in 25:14 illustrates the importance of cultural context because understanding that rain in the Middle East is rare and usually tied to cloud cover illuminates the hyperbole in the proverb. When there is a cloud cover in the Middle East, one expects rain, so this proverb illustrates the emptiness of false promises.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the role of "the fear of the Lord" in the acquisition of wisdom, according to Dr. Putnam's lecture. How does this concept inform our approach to reading and applying the Proverbs?
2. Explain the concept of parallelism in Proverbs, detailing the different forms of parallelism (antithetical, synonymous, and emblematic) and how it contributes to our understanding of the book's meaning.
3. Analyze the ways in which Dr. Putnam encourages readers to engage with proverbs, considering not only the literal meaning but also the cultural context, the underlying story, and the implications for personal conduct.
4. Critically assess Dr. Putnam's claim that proverbs are "counselors" or "advisors," exploring the implications of this claim for our approach to the book of Proverbs as a whole.
5. Using examples from the lecture, explore how cultural understanding and critical reading are essential tools for the interpretation of the Book of Proverbs.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Antithetical Parallelism:** A form of parallelism in which two lines of poetry express contrasting or opposing ideas.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which one thing is referred to by the name of something closely associated with it (e.g., the Lord instead of wisdom).
- **Parallelism:** The use of similar grammatical structures, sound patterns, or meanings in two or more lines of poetry to create a sense of balance, emphasis, or contrast.
- **Proverb:** A short, well-known saying that expresses a common truth or experience and that compresses an entire narrative into a few words.
- **Synonymous Parallelism:** A form of parallelism in which two lines of poetry express similar or related ideas, using different language to say more or less the same thing.
- **Emblematic Parallelism:** A form of parallelism that uses images or metaphors that are meant to represent something else.
- **Tautological:** A statement that is true by definition or is redundant because the conclusion is already contained within the premise.
- **Haggling:** The act of negotiating or bargaining over the price of something, particularly in a marketplace.

5. FAQs on Putnam, Psalms, Session 3 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Proverbs from Dr. Fred Putnam's Lecture

- **What does it mean to "fear the Lord" as mentioned in Proverbs 1:7, and why is it important?** The phrase "fear of the Lord" does not primarily mean being afraid of God in the sense of terror. Instead, within the context of Proverbs, it contrasts with despising wisdom and instruction, which, as the lecture explains, come from the Lord. Thus, fearing the Lord means having a deep respect, honor, and willingness to pay attention to, heed, and obey His wisdom. This attitude of reverence is identified as the beginning of true knowledge and is the foundation for gaining wisdom, rather than begrudging obedience, which does not bring about growth in wisdom. It is a willing and cheerful acceptance of the Lord's teachings.
- **Is the wisdom found in Proverbs secular, or is it divine?** While Proverbs might seem like secular wisdom at first glance, the book itself reveals that it is actually divine revelation. Solomon recognizes that the wisdom contained within Proverbs does not originate from his own intellect but is given by God. It's a divine wisdom that comes directly from God, making it not just human advice, but part of God's revealed guidance for life. The book was written to express the importance of seeking and finding the fear of the Lord, who is the source of all wisdom, rather than rely on the authority of Solomon as the source of wisdom.
- **How should we approach reading the book of Proverbs?** The book of Proverbs should not be approached solely as a source of intellectual knowledge to be analyzed and dissected. It should be approached as a source of counsel, instruction, and guidance to be obeyed and embodied. The proper mindset for understanding and utilizing Proverbs involves a willingness to do what the book teaches. This means being open to recognizing the Lord's wisdom, being humble, and recognizing that one's own understanding is not the final source of truth. It is not just about accumulating facts, but about allowing the words of Proverbs to shape our behavior and our way of thinking, thus making the teachings part of our very being. Ultimately, a willingness to learn is necessary to gain wisdom.

- **What is the significance of parallelism in the structure of many Proverbs, and how do we analyze it?** Parallelism, often using two lines to convey a single idea, is a key feature of many proverbs. The lines can express similar ideas (synonymous parallelism), contrast different ideas (antithetical parallelism), or offer a more emblematic view that includes images from nature. To analyze a proverb with parallel lines, one must identify the corresponding parts of each line, including the nouns, verbs, and relationships between them. When analyzing, it's important to understand whether the lines are saying the same thing or something contrasting, then we need to ask what the 'nub' of the contrast is. Understanding these relationships helps to unlock the full meaning and implications of the proverb as well as the implied story within it.
- **How can the context of the ancient Near East influence the way we understand Proverbs?** Understanding the cultural, historical, and geographical context of the ancient Near East is essential for properly interpreting the proverbs. Many of the Proverbs assume familiarity with the customs, climate, and societal structures of the time, which might not be obvious to modern readers. For example, a proverb mentioning clouds and wind might have a deeper meaning for a society that relied on rainfall at certain times of the year. Similarly, haggling customs in marketplaces can change the intended meaning of a proverb that at first may seem like a lie. By understanding the world from the perspective of the Proverbs' original audience, we can avoid misinterpretations and unlock deeper insights into the meaning of the text.
- **How should we respond when a Proverb seems obvious or self-evident?** Even when a proverb sounds obvious or self-evident, such as "when it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices" (Prov. 11:10), it's important to recognize that it is still offering advice and counsel. Although it might seem like a simple observation, it actually presents an implicit question: What kind of world or community do we want to create and live in? Do we want a world of mourning, or one of rejoicing? This helps show us that even an observation in the form of a proverb carries with it underlying implications for how one ought to behave or structure our relationships.

- **Are Proverbs limited to a single interpretation, or can they be applied to a wide range of situations?** Proverbs are designed to be applied to a broad range of situations and relationships, not just to a single, narrow context. For example, while a proverb might specifically mention parents and children, it can apply to any relationship where one person has responsibility for the well-being or growth of another, such as mentor and mentee, counselor and client, or even teacher and student. The power of a proverb is rooted in its universal and versatile application across various aspects of life.
- **How can we get the most out of studying Proverbs?** To truly get the most out of studying Proverbs, we must approach them with an attitude of humility and a willingness to understand. Rather than merely analyzing the text, we should strive to apply its wisdom to our lives and allow it to shape our behavior, relationships, and values. The goal is to internalize these teachings as counselors, considering not just what a Proverb says, but also *why* it says it the way it does. To accomplish this, we need to immerse ourselves in the text and the ancient Near East to help understand the original context and gain wisdom by embodying the teachings found within.