

Dr. Fred Putnam, Psalms, Session 4 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 4 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is the final lecture in a four-part series on the Book of Proverbs. **Dr. Putnam emphasizes interpreting the book's imagery and metaphorical language**, such as the "life as a journey" metaphor, to grasp its deeper meaning. He explains the structure of "better than" proverbs and analyzes specific examples, illustrating how **context, including surrounding verses and related themes, is crucial for understanding**. The lecture also explores **how Proverbs reveals God's nature, not only through explicit theological statements but also implicitly through its exploration of human relationships and responsibilities**. Finally, he argues that **Proverbs offers a framework for understanding reality and living a righteous life**, moving beyond simple behavioral instruction.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Putnam, Session 4 – 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).**



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

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

Briefing Document: Dr. Fred Putnam on Proverbs - Lecture 4

Overview:

This document summarizes the key points and arguments made by Dr. Fred Putnam in the fourth and final lecture on the Book of Proverbs. Putnam delves into the nature of proverbs, focusing on their use of images, the "better than" proverb structure, the importance of foundational metaphors, the concept of winnowing in the context of justice, and the broader theological implications of proverbs. He also emphasizes the interconnectedness of proverbs and the importance of considering their context within the broader book.

Main Themes & Key Ideas:

1. Proverbs and Images:

- Proverbs frequently use images to compress complex ideas, serving as a "picture worth a thousand words".
- Interpreting these images is crucial for understanding the author's worldview and perspective.
- Example: The image of a "poor man who walks in his integrity" (Proverbs 19:1).

1. "Better Than" Proverbs:

- These proverbs compare two seemingly opposite things, often suggesting that one is preferable to the other, even when counterintuitive (e.g., poverty vs. wealth).
- They are not to be taken literally. The comparison is qualified, and the point is not to endorse the seemingly "better" option, but to highlight the importance of a related value.
- Examples:
 - "Better a poor man who walks in his integrity...than one who is perverse in his lips and is a fool." (Proverbs 19:1)

- "Better is a meal of herbs with love than a fattened ox and hatred with it."
(Proverbs 15:17)
- "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and turmoil with it."
(Proverbs 15:16)
- The real point in these is often about a contrast like integrity vs. crookedness, not literal poverty vs. wealth.
- "In the better than Proverbs, it's always that the thing that is better is both things are qualified."

1. **Metaphors and Foundational Metaphors:**

- Proverbs utilize metaphors to convey deeper meanings.
- Foundational metaphors are underlying conceptual structures that shape how we understand reality.
- Key example: **Life is a journey** "A poor man who walks in his integrity" – 'walk' is a metaphor for life and 'integrity' is metaphor for the path of life.
- This metaphor permeates the book of Proverbs: "Here's the road, and this is the right road."
- Metaphors like "his life took a detour" or "hit a speed bump" all derive from this foundational metaphor.
- "Life begins when we're born, a journey begins in a place. Life ends when we die. And there comes a time when every journey ends."
- Provides framework: "...gives us a framework within which to understand them."
- Importance: Foundational metaphors give us a way of understanding and organizing our thinking about aspects of reality we can't experience directly.

1. **Justice as Winnowing:**

- Proverbs use the image of winnowing to represent justice.
- Winnowing is the agricultural process of separating grain from chaff using wind and air.
- In the context of justice, winnowing represents the separation of the innocent from the guilty.

- Quotes:
- "A king who sits on the throne of justice actually winnows all evil with his eyes." (Proverbs 20:8)
- "A wise king winnows the wicked and turns the wheel over them." (Proverbs 20:26)
- "Separating the innocent from the guilty is like separating wheat from chaff."
- This concept also runs throughout scripture.

1. **The Role of Seeing and Discerning:**

- The use of "with his eyes" to describe the king's ability to discern good from bad is another metaphor.
- Seeing in this context means understanding, having insight, and the ability to see and understand the situation accurately.
- "...this ability to winnow, to winnow out the guilty is actually an ability that comes from the kind of insight that the book of Proverbs is itself designed to give to its readers."
- It's connected to the idea of prudence.

1. **Justice and Judgment:**

- Proverbs 20:26, about a wise king winnowing the wicked and rolling the wheel over them, could be referring to threshing or to crushing olives.
- Underlying the specific metaphor is "the idea that justice entails or justice is winnowing, which really is a way of saying justice involves separating what is right from what is wrong."
- Justice should not favor one group over another but strive for impartiality.

1. **Context is Key:**

- Individual proverbs should not be read in isolation.
- The context of a proverb includes:
- Other proverbs on the same topic.
- The verses surrounding the proverb in question.

- Creating a topical index is helpful for understanding connections between proverbs.
- "When we read this proverb, it may be very clear. This may be a very clear proverb about justice. There may be some others that aren't quite so clear."
- "So when we read the next verse that has to do with justice, we're not reading that verse in a vacuum."
- Looking for related concepts and ideas, not just keywords.
- "They don't have to have the word discipline in them to be talking about discipline."

1. **Proverbs as Scripture and Their Revelatory Role:**

- Proverbs are part of Scripture and therefore a revelation of God.
- Some proverbs are explicitly theological, like those related to the Lord as creator.
- Example: "The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them both."
- Other proverbs reveal the nature of our existence and the importance of relationships.
- Example: "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is his mother's grief." (Proverbs 10:1)
- This verse, for example, "is saying to us that none of us exists of and unto ourselves, that we have responsibilities to other people..."
- It also can suggest that the "universe is actually a relational universe" and that God is relational.
- Proverbs can also be for more than moral correction, also "to correct the way we think, and the way we understand reality."

1. **The Purpose of Proverbs:**

- Proverbs are not simply moral lessons. They are compressed stories that invite us into a new way of seeing and understanding the world.
- "...like a door that invites us to step into a world, a world in which we will live a certain way because we understand and see in a new way."

- The book as a whole aims for wisdom and to shape the way we live.

Conclusion:

Dr. Putnam's lecture emphasizes the depth and complexity of the Book of Proverbs, urging readers to look beyond surface meanings and explore the underlying images, metaphors, and interconnectedness of the text. He highlights the book's purpose as not just a collection of moral sayings, but as a guide to understanding the relational and interconnected nature of life itself, and even of God. The proper reading requires context, a view toward the whole of Scripture, and a humility before the Lord.

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

Proverbs: A Comprehensive Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the significance of images in the book of Proverbs, according to Dr. Putnam?
2. Explain the concept of "better than" proverbs. Why is it important to understand that they do not advocate for the first thing over the second, without qualification?
3. How does the metaphor of "walking in integrity" work?
4. What is a "foundational metaphor," and how does the idea of "life as a journey" function as one?
5. Explain the process of winnowing and how it is used as a metaphor for justice in Proverbs?
6. Why does Dr. Putnam suggest that a king who "winnows with his eyes" is a metaphor?
7. How are the related metaphors of "people as plants" and the king as winnower related to the concept of justice?
8. According to Putnam, what should be considered when studying proverbs in a broader context?
9. What does Dr. Putnam mean when he suggests proverbs are not just about behavior, but about understanding reality?
10. How can the proverb "a wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is his mother's grief" be understood in a relational context?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Images in Proverbs are significant because they compress stories and ideas, saving space, and providing insights into the author's worldview. They require interpretation to truly understand the author's intended message about life or a specific aspect of life.

2. "Better than" proverbs compare two things, stating one is better than another, but these are qualified comparisons. They are not meant to indicate that the first mentioned thing is always better, but rather that it is better when both parts are qualified (for example, it is better to be poor with integrity than a rich fool.)
3. "Walking in integrity" is a metaphor comparing integrity to a physical space or road. It suggests that one's life is a journey along a path, and integrity is the ground they choose to walk on, not a literal place to walk.
4. A foundational metaphor is a conceptual framework that helps us understand abstract concepts by relating them to something concrete. "Life as a journey" allows us to comprehend our existence as a progression with a beginning and an end, full of events that are similar to those experienced on a literal journey, thus creating meaning.
5. Winnowing is the process of separating grain from chaff by throwing it in the air so that the wind carries away the lighter chaff. It is a metaphor for justice because it illustrates the process of separating the innocent (grain) from the guilty (chaff), which needs discernment, but does not imply the discarding of people like chaff.
6. A king who "winnows with his eyes" is a metaphor because it symbolizes the king's ability to discern and understand what is right. It suggests that accurate judgment comes from a clear insight into the situation.
7. The metaphor of people as plants connects to justice because people are likened to grain, which can be either good (wheat) or bad (chaff), and it is the king's role to separate the two through judicial winnowing. It ties the justice system to a natural process for separating good from bad in a way that provides some meaning for those who would have been a part of the agricultural economy in the ancient world.
8. When studying proverbs, one should consider not only the literal meaning but also the surrounding verses, related proverbs on the same topic, and the overall context of the book. This broader perspective helps provide a more comprehensive understanding of the message.
9. Proverbs are not just moral rules; they provide insight into the nature of reality. They also reveal how our relationships impact those around us, giving meaning to the universe as something created by a relational God, and they attempt to correct how we think about the world and our part in it.

10. This proverb highlights the relational nature of existence, showing how actions affect those close to us, just as all of our relationships have profound meaning in our lives. It prompts reflection on the impact our behavior has on others, and points to the nature of the universe itself as the creation of a relational God.

Essay Questions

1. Explore the concept of metaphors within Proverbs, using multiple examples from the lecture. How do these metaphors contribute to a deeper understanding of the wisdom offered in the book?
2. Discuss the role of context in interpreting the proverbs, and explain why it is essential to consider more than just individual verses. How does the relationship between verses (both adjacent verses and thematic verses) create a more comprehensive understanding of the book?
3. Dr. Putnam discusses the idea of "foundational metaphors." Analyze the significance of the foundational metaphor "life as a journey" in Proverbs, and consider how that metaphor impacts the meaning of the other more specific metaphors contained within the book.
4. Explain how the concept of "winnowing" serves as a metaphor for judgment. What does it reveal about the nature of justice in Proverbs, and what are the implications for those who act unjustly?
5. How does Dr. Putnam's lecture on proverbs address both the behavior and understanding of reality for a reader of the book of Proverbs? What might be a reader's takeaway as far as the practical use of the book in their life?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Proverb:** A short, memorable saying that expresses a general truth or piece of advice.
- **Image:** A descriptive picture or metaphor used to represent an idea or concept, often used to compress a longer story or concept.
- **Better than Proverb:** A saying that compares two things, stating one is better than the other in a qualified or specific context, but not as a blanket statement for all instances.
- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, where a comparison is implied, but not stated.
- **Foundational Metaphor:** A conceptual framework or underlying metaphor that helps us understand an abstract concept by relating it to something concrete, often a common human experience like a journey.
- **Integrity:** Moral uprightness, honesty, and the state of being whole. In the lecture, it's the idea of choosing the right path in life.
- **Winnowing:** A process of separating grain from chaff by throwing it into the air so that the wind blows away the lighter chaff, while the heavier grain falls back down, often used as a metaphor for separating good from evil.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which one word is substituted for another with which it is closely associated (e.g. using "the crown" for the concept of "royalty").
- **Context:** The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of Proverbs, includes the immediate surrounding verses, verses dealing with the same topic, and the book as a whole.
- **Prudence:** The ability to discern and understand situations accurately so as to make wise decisions.

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

FAQ on Proverbs from Dr. Fred Putnam's Lectures

1. **What are "better than" proverbs, and what is their purpose?**
2. "Better than" proverbs are a type of saying that compare two things, stating that one is better than the other, often in a way that seems counterintuitive at first. For example, "Better is a meal of herbs with love than a fattened ox and hatred with it." These proverbs do not advocate for the literal superiority of one thing over another (e.g., poverty over wealth, or vegetables over meat). Instead, they use a comparison to highlight a deeper truth about values or priorities. The true point isn't about the literal things but the *qualifications* of those things and the values they represent. In essence, they are emphasizing that things like integrity, love, and peace are more valuable than wealth, status, or material possessions gained through dishonesty or lacking relationship.
3. **How does the book of Proverbs use imagery, and why is it important?**
4. The book of Proverbs utilizes images to convey complex ideas in a concise manner. These images act as a form of compressed storytelling. For example, the concept of "walking in integrity" is not meant literally but serves as a metaphor for how one lives their life. Understanding these images is crucial for grasping the deeper meaning of the proverbs. It allows us to see the author's view of the world and how they understand aspects of life. These images often point to foundational metaphors such as life as a journey or judgement as winnowing.
5. **What is the foundational metaphor of "life as a journey" in Proverbs, and how does it work?** The foundational metaphor of "life as a journey" is deeply embedded in Proverbs. It's a way of understanding and organizing our thinking about life since life itself is too abstract to fully grasp. This metaphor allows us to conceptualize life's experiences—challenges, detours, and progress—in tangible terms. Phrases like "a path," "a road," and actions like "walking" or "stumbling" all derive from this underlying metaphor. Proverbs uses this to show there is a right path of wisdom, and if you stray off of that path, you become lost.

6. **How does the metaphor of "judgment as winnowing" function in the book of Proverbs?**
7. The metaphor of "judgment as winnowing" portrays the process of separating the innocent from the guilty as similar to the agricultural process of separating grain from chaff. A judge, like a farmer, must sift through the evidence to discern truth from falsehood. The metaphor emphasizes that justice is not about favoring one side over the other but about discerning right from wrong, as chaff is separated from wheat. Furthermore, the image of "winnowing with the eyes" is actually a metaphor for discerning truth accurately. It's not about physically winnowing but using sight to truly "see" and understand the situation, allowing for correct judgment.
8. **What does it mean to "see rightly" in the context of judgment in Proverbs?**
9. "Seeing rightly" is a metaphor for having the ability to accurately understand a situation. It signifies that a person's ability to judge correctly is tied to their insight and discernment. The metaphor builds on the idea that the eyes are what we use to perceive reality, and so those who are discerning can truly "see" and thus can make wise and righteous judgements. This connects back to the concept of prudence - which is the ability to see and understand a situation accurately.
10. **How should we understand the relationship between individual proverbs and their context?**

It's crucial to avoid reading proverbs as isolated statements. The context of a proverb includes related verses on the same topic. It also includes verses that are found next to the proverb in question. Instead of viewing them as isolated "amoebas", they should be seen as part of a larger "constellation" of ideas. The proverbs on one topic create a network of insights that shed light on the different aspects of that concept.

Understanding the context means looking at adjacent verses that have a connection to the overall concept. By doing this, we avoid absolutizing one single verse, and are able to obtain a broader perspective.

1. **What is the revelatory role of the book of Proverbs as a whole?**
2. Proverbs offers not only behavioral and moral guidance but also insight into the nature of reality and God. While some proverbs explicitly discuss God's attributes and actions, others, like the one about the wise and foolish son, can reveal the importance of relationships in the universe and that God is relational. Proverbs reveal the relational nature of creation as it reflects the relational nature of its creator. This way of looking at proverbs helps us understand how they are not just about ethical or practical concerns but are also designed to shape our understanding of the world, and God's character.
3. **Why does the author recommend cataloging proverbs topically, and what should we focus on when doing this?**

The author recommends cataloging proverbs topically, by concept, rather than simply by keyword, because this method allows us to delve into the deeper meanings and connections between different verses. It helps to move from a superficial reading to a more comprehensive understanding. This involves recognizing that proverbs do not have to use the exact same words to be talking about the same idea (like 'money', 'wealth' or 'gold'). By cataloging proverbs according to broad topics such as justice, parenting, or marriage, we can create our own "concordance" of topics which aids us in understanding a more holistic message of the book of Proverbs. By engaging in this process, we start to truly think about the meanings of these verses.