

# **Dr. Daniel Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living**

## **-- Session 1, Two Ways (Prov. 1-9)**

### **Resources from NotebookLM**

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

#### **1. Abstract of Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 1, Two Ways (Prov. 1-9), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Daniel Treier's lecture** on Proverbs 1-9 explores the "two ways" theme—wisdom versus folly—present in the text. He frames this ancient wisdom literature within a Christian context, arguing that its moral instruction contributes to spiritual formation. Treier analyzes the literary structure of Proverbs 1-9, noting recurring motifs like parental guidance and the personification of wisdom and folly. He connects the biblical concept of the "two ways" to similar ideas in other scriptures and Christian theology. Ultimately, Treier emphasizes that Proverbs teaches a life of flourishing through the pursuit of God's wisdom, not merely moralistic self-help.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 1, Two Ways (Prov. 1-9) – 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).**



**Treier\_Prov\_Session  
01.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 1, Two Ways (Prov. 1-9)**

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Daniel J. Treier's lecture on Proverbs 1-9.

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. Daniel J. Treier on Proverbs 1-9 "The Two Ways"**

##### **Introduction**

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and ideas presented by Dr. Daniel J. Treier in his lecture on Proverbs 1-9, focusing on the overarching theme of "The Two Ways." Treier emphasizes a Christian approach to reading Proverbs, considering it not merely a collection of practical wisdom but as a guide for moral and spiritual formation within the Christian tradition. He draws upon existing scholarship, particularly the work of Old Testament scholars like Tremper Longman and Bruce Waltke, while providing a theological synthesis. Treier's approach is to understand Proverbs in the light of the entire canon of Christian scripture and devotion to the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ.

##### **Key Themes & Ideas:**

###### **1. The Two Ways:**

- The primary theme of Proverbs 1-9 is the ongoing choice between two paths: the path of wisdom and the path of folly. This is not a static choice, but an "ongoing drama of decision."
- This concept of "two ways" is not unique to Proverbs but appears throughout the Old and New Testaments. Treier cites examples like the Didache, Psalm 1, Jeremiah 21:8, Deuteronomy's blessings and curses, Jesus' broad and narrow paths in Matthew 7, and the duality of spirit vs. flesh in Galatians 5.
- The "two ways" framework emphasizes character formation and long-term communal consequences rather than short-term individual guarantees. "Really at stake are two ways of living that shape long-term communal character rather than providing short-term individual guarantees."

###### **1. Structure of Proverbs 1-9:**

- The first nine chapters of Proverbs consist of extended speeches from parents and personified wisdom, contrasting with the shorter proverbs found later in the book.

- The speeches from parents are structured with calls to listen, motivations for doing so, the core lesson, and conclusions detailing the consequences of choices.
- Wisdom personified appears in interludes in chapters 1 (20-33) and 8 (1-36).
- The chapters progress thematically, moving from accepting wisdom (ch. 2) to holding onto wisdom (ch. 3), maintaining a commitment to the path (ch. 4), and avoiding various entanglements (ch. 6). Chapters 5 & 7 feature parental warnings against folly, especially adultery.

#### 1. **Wisdom as a Gift:**

- Wisdom is not merely a product of human effort but is theologically rooted in the "fear of the Lord," which is the narrow gate for entering the pursuit of wisdom. This "fear" is not terror, but a recognition of God as Creator and an acknowledgment of our accountability. "The givenness of Yahweh's revelation is taken for granted, and chapter 1, verse 7, depicts the either/or. People either respond appropriately with fear toward this God, or else inappropriately with folly."
- This "fear of the Lord" is synonymous with faith and emphasizes God as the creator we are accountable to.
- James 1:5-8 clarifies how this fear allows one to receive wisdom by asking without doubting.

#### 1. **The Nature of Wisdom:**

- Biblical wisdom is not just personal but also social. It promotes justice and enables both learning and teaching. "The insight gained from proverbial instruction enables wise dealing and promotes justice, verse 3. The proverbs enable not only learning or gaining instruction but also teaching others, verse 4."
- Wisdom is democratic, addressed to everyone where they are and also is progressive, requiring ongoing learning and development. It is never static. "The goal is not a slavish repetition of traditional formulae, but the freedom of a maturing person who increasingly learns to recognize truth and live accordingly, without constant direction."
- The purpose of wisdom is not a mastery over the world in the technical sense, but rather to live well in worldly situations, to order one's life in accordance with God's design.

- Wisdom is like a hidden treasure which one only gains from putting God first, then receiving creaturely goods in the right way.

#### 1. **The Role of Parents & Instruction:**

- Parental teaching is crucial, involving both instruction and loving concern, seeking to elicit mature deliberation about the consequences of actions. "Parental wisdom, then, addresses the youthful will through authority and loving concern, seeking to elicit maturing deliberation about the consequences of possible actions."
- Honoring parents is presented as an antidote to the allure of "the gang" or sinful community and promotes receiving a spiritual heritage. "Given our human relationality, the antidote to the gang is honoring our own parents. Not just grudgingly obeying direct commands until reaching a certain age of independence, but seeking to prize a spiritual heritage we receive from them."

#### 1. **The Dangers of Folly:**

- Folly is portrayed through various negative examples like greed, violence, and laziness, culminating in the figure of the adulteress and dame folly. These are entanglements which could lead one off of the path of wisdom.
- The adulteress represents the seductive potential of alternative wisdom, foreign religions, and a disregard for God's covenant. This has significant spiritual implications regarding the covenant relationship with God, as marriage can be a metaphor for this.
- Dame Folly's offer mirrors Lady Wisdom's, highlighting the deception of sin which hides the true consequences.

#### 1. **Personification of Wisdom:**

- Lady Wisdom is personified as an active participant in creation, offering a public invitation to life, but also being rejected by some. "Wisdom is publicly available, personally active, and already scorned."
- Her presence in the act of creation (Prov 8) suggests more than just a divine attribute; she is a creative mediator between God and humanity. Treier hints at a potential connection to Jesus Christ as the ultimate embodiment of divine wisdom. "So, at the end of the first eleven stanzas and before the second eleven stanzas, wisdom, the creator in this section, verses 22 through 31, the creative mediator, says, I was there in verse 27. We have Yahweh at the beginning, we

have Adam at the end, and in the middle, we have wisdom saying, I was there as a mediator between God and humanity.”

- This personification indicates that wisdom is more than a set of collected words and the Holy Spirit may have overshadowed the author's intention.

#### 1. **Biblical Dualism vs. Unbiblical Dualism:**

- The "two ways" framework is not an unbiblical dualism, which would separate realities into completely distinct categories, but stems from the fact that there is only one true God.
- The distinctions are to be used to direct people in their single-minded pursuit of God's wisdom.

#### 1. **Progressive Nature of Wisdom:**

- Wisdom isn't something one masters and then is done with, but a progressive journey that one takes throughout life. The goal is not to have a fixed mindset, but to be free and mature in recognizing the truth and living accordingly.
- Wisdom is not about slavish repetition of traditional formulae.
- Wisdom involves a contemplative element which requires one to chew on it.

#### **Quotes for Emphasis:**

- "Really at stake are two ways of living that shape long-term communal character rather than providing short-term individual guarantees."
- "The givenness of Yahweh's revelation is taken for granted, and chapter 1, verse 7, depicts the either or. People either respond appropriately with fear toward this God, or else inappropriately with folly."
- "The insight gained from proverbial instruction enables wise dealing and promotes justice, verse 3. The proverbs enable not only learning or gaining instruction but also teaching others, verse 4."
- "Parental wisdom, then, addresses the youthful will through authority and loving concern, seeking to elicit maturing deliberation about the consequences of possible actions."
- "Given our human relationality, the antidote to the gang is honoring our own parents. Not just grudgingly obeying direct commands until reaching a certain age of independence, but seeking to prize a spiritual heritage we receive from them."

- "Wisdom is publicly available, personally active, and already scorned."
- "So, at the end of the first eleven steaks and before the second eleven steaks, wisdom, the creator in this section, verses 22 through 31, the creative mediator, says, I was there in verse 27. We have Yahweh at the beginning, we have Adam at the end, and in the middle, we have wisdom saying, I was there as a mediator between God and humanity."

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Treier's lecture provides a robust framework for understanding Proverbs 1-9 within a Christian theological perspective. The theme of the "two ways" serves as a foundation for the entire book, highlighting the importance of choosing wisdom, fearing God, and pursuing a life of integrity within a covenant community. This approach to Proverbs is not just for understanding, but for actively living out the wisdom of the text. Treier sets the stage for future lectures which will continue to explore this theme in the short Proverbs (10-29), the capital vices, and the concluding chapters.

## 4. Study Guide: Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 1, Two Ways (Prov. 1-9)

### Proverbs: The Two Ways - A Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Treier, what is the main theme highlighted in Proverbs 1-9?
2. How does Treier describe the structure of Proverbs 1-9 in relation to the speakers within the text?
3. What does the "fear of the Lord" mean in Proverbs 1:7 according to Treier, and why is it important?
4. What does the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 1:20-33 emphasize about wisdom?
5. How does Treier differentiate between the kind of "understanding" found in Proverbs and modern "techne?"
6. What are the three main points that Treier notes about the nature of wisdom in the book of Proverbs?
7. How does the parental teaching in Proverbs use the theme of "hearing" and "listening?"
8. How does Treier connect the warnings against adultery in Proverbs 5 and 7 to a larger spiritual theme?
9. How does Lady Wisdom's invitation in Proverbs 8 differ from Dame Folly's invitation in the subsequent chapter?
10. According to Treier, what is the significance of the meal metaphor in Proverbs 9?

#### Quiz - Answer Key

1. Treier states that the main theme in Proverbs 1-9 is the "two ways"—an ongoing drama of choices between pursuing wisdom or practicing folly. This theme is presented as a major framework for reading the book and understanding the decisions one makes.

2. Treier explains that Proverbs 1-9 primarily consists of extended speeches from parents and from wisdom personified. There are interlude speeches by Wisdom, with parental lectures in between, addressed to "my child or children."
3. Treier states that the "fear of the Lord" is not a terror but is recognition of God as the Creator to whom we are accountable. It is the "narrow gate" for entering into the pursuit of wisdom and a synonym for faith, emphasizing an initial reverence.
4. Treier explains that the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 1 emphasizes that wisdom is publicly available, personally active and is already being scorned. This personification highlights that wisdom seeks individuals and invites them.
5. Treier notes that the "understanding" in Proverbs is more about practical wisdom (phronesis) for living well in the world, rather than theoretical knowledge (techne) that focuses on mastery and control of the cosmos. The wisdom of Proverbs focuses more on the individual's character and relationship with God.
6. Treier describes wisdom as social (promoting justice), democratic (available to everyone), and theologically rooted (beginning with the fear of the Lord). It also has a progressive nature that moves a person from basic discipline to advanced discernment.
7. Treier states that the parental teaching in Proverbs places great importance on hearing and listening. He notes that hearing involves internalizing and responding to parental instruction, and it's strongly connected to the theme of "doing."
8. Treier connects the warnings against adultery in Proverbs to the larger theme of spiritual fidelity to God, seeing marriage as a metaphor for the covenant relationship between God and His people. Infidelity in marriage mirrors infidelity to God.
9. Treier describes Lady Wisdom as winsome, seeking long-term attraction through truth and righteousness while Dame Folly offers short-term sensual aggression and deceit. Lady Wisdom's truth and righteousness are contrasted with Dame Folly's lies and deception.
10. Treier explains the meal metaphor in Proverbs 9 as symbolic of fellowship with God and community, a festive and intimate invitation. This meal represents a harmonious relationship with God and with other members of the covenant.



## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each of the following questions in a well-developed essay format.

1. Explore the concept of "two ways" presented in Proverbs 1-9. How does this theme inform the reader's understanding of wisdom and folly? Using specific examples from the source material, describe how this theme is emphasized throughout the parental lectures and personifications of wisdom.
2. Analyze the personification of Wisdom and Folly in Proverbs. How do these figures present contrasting paths, and what do they reveal about the nature of wisdom and its rejection? How do they connect to the themes of marriage and family presented in the text?
3. Discuss the relationship between the "fear of the Lord" and the pursuit of wisdom, as presented in the source material. How does Treier argue that this fear is not a negative emotion but a vital component of spiritual growth? How does this concept contribute to the book's emphasis on character formation?
4. Examine the role of parental instruction in Proverbs 1-9. How do the parental lectures emphasize the importance of listening and adhering to wisdom? What are the consequences presented for both following and rejecting the teaching?
5. Consider the relationship between the book of Proverbs and Christian theology. How does Treier use concepts like "covenant", "grace", and Jesus to inform the reading of the book? How does Treier suggest Proverbs should be read in light of the larger Christian canon?

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Two Ways:** The central theme in Proverbs 1-9, presenting life as a choice between paths of wisdom or folly, life or death.

**Wisdom (Personified):** Presented as a female figure in Proverbs, she actively seeks followers, offering truth and righteousness and embodying divine attributes.

**Folly (Personified):** The counterpart of wisdom, also presented as a female figure, she seduces people towards destruction and her ways are deceptive and deadly.

**Fear of the Lord:** A foundational concept, not of terror, but a reverent recognition of God as Creator, it is the basis for wisdom and obedience.

**Shalom:** A holistic sense of flourishing, harmony with God, community, and creation; a state of well-being that wisdom brings.

**Phronesis:** A Greek term used to describe the practical wisdom emphasized in Proverbs, involving skill in living and dealing with concrete situations.

**Techne:** A Greek term referring to theoretical knowledge and mastery used to control one's environment, contrasted with the practical focus of biblical wisdom.

**Mashal:** A Hebrew word used to describe a proverb or parable, suggesting layered meaning and application in diverse situations.

**Covenant:** A sacred agreement between God and his people, reflected in the family relationships described in the book of Proverbs; it emphasizes loyalty and faithfulness.

**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism:** A concept describing a belief system where God is seen as a benevolent figure who is only concerned with human happiness, rather than a God who demands moral obedience and who reveals himself in scripture.

**Dualism:** The idea of splitting realities into separate, opposing categories. According to Treier, the book of Proverbs counters this by submitting all of life to God's Lordship.

## 5. FAQs on Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 1, Two Ways (Prov. 1-9), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source, formatted using markdown:

### Frequently Asked Questions about Proverbs 1-9:

1. **What is the central theme of Proverbs 1-9, and how does it frame the rest of the book?** The central theme of Proverbs 1-9 is the concept of "two ways": the way of wisdom and the way of folly. These chapters present an extended narrative, using parental instruction and the personification of wisdom and folly, to highlight the ongoing choices individuals must make between these two paths. This framework introduces the fundamental moral and spiritual choices explored in the short proverbs found in the later chapters of Proverbs. The pursuit of wisdom, characterized by fear of the Lord and adherence to God's ways, leads to life, while the embrace of folly, marked by pride and rejection of instruction, leads to death.
2. **How is "wisdom" portrayed in Proverbs 1-9? Is it just a set of practical skills?** Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 is not merely a collection of practical skills or insights. It is presented as a deeply personal and active force, even personified as a woman (Lady Wisdom). It is rooted in the fear of the Lord, which is understood as a recognition of God's authority and our accountability to him. Wisdom involves both a contemplative and practical dimension. It requires active seeking, acceptance of divine revelation, and a commitment to living in accordance with God's design. Wisdom's purpose is not about controlling the world but about living rightly within it. Additionally, Wisdom is portrayed as foundational to the creation of the cosmos, highlighting its divine origins and significance.
3. **What role do parents play in the pursuit of wisdom according to Proverbs 1-9?** Parents are presented as key figures in guiding their children towards wisdom. Their teachings and warnings are not just about following rules but about imparting a spiritual heritage and fostering mature deliberation about the consequences of actions. The parental instruction highlights the importance of listening, accepting guidance, and avoiding destructive influences like the "gang of sinners" and the adulteress. The parents embody authority and loving concern, seeking to shape their children's characters and set them on the path of life. Parental wisdom involves a comprehensive approach to life, addressing both practical and spiritual concerns.

4. **What are some of the specific dangers or "entanglements" that Proverbs warns against?** Proverbs warns against a variety of dangers that lead away from the path of wisdom. These include: being enticed by violence and greed, going with the "gang" or sinful crowds, succumbing to adultery or sexual immorality (which often functions as a metaphor for spiritual unfaithfulness), laziness, and becoming entangled in unwise financial deals like guaranteeing a neighbor's debt. All of these "entanglements" represent ways to stray from a life of shalom with God and community.
5. **What is the significance of the "fear of the Lord" in Proverbs?** The "fear of the Lord" is the foundational starting point for wisdom in Proverbs, as highlighted in 1:7. It is not about being terrified of God, but about having a reverential awe and recognition of his authority, power, and holiness. It's about recognizing God as the Creator to whom we are accountable. The fear of the Lord is thus closely related to faith, acknowledging God's covenant relationship with his people and the call to live in alignment with his ways. This "fear" is the gateway to acquiring true wisdom and avoiding the path of folly. It is also a form of holy fear that comes from a place of love for God, concerned with not disappointing our "beloved Father."
6. **How does Proverbs address the issue of human relationships, particularly regarding marriage?** Proverbs emphasizes that proper human relationships are closely connected to our relationship with God. The book specifically warns against adultery (Proverbs 5 and 7) not only as a violation of the marriage covenant but also as a metaphor for spiritual infidelity to God. It upholds the sanctity of marriage as a framework for experiencing sexual joy and symbolizing the covenant relationship with God. Maintaining fidelity in human relationships mirrors and supports the pursuit of spiritual fidelity to Yahweh. Even broader concepts like avoiding debt have relational significance within family and community, tying our personal choices into how we affect those around us.
7. **What is the nature of folly in Proverbs, and how is it portrayed?** Folly, in Proverbs, is the antithesis of wisdom. It is often portrayed as a deceptive and seductive force, embodied in "Dame Folly," who actively lures people away from the path of righteousness. Folly is characterized by pride, a rejection of instruction, a disregard for consequences, and a preference for immediate gratification over long-term benefits. Folly leads to destruction and death, which is presented as a stark contrast to the life and flourishing that come from pursuing wisdom. Folly attempts to mimic Wisdom, but it's destructive and selfish.

8. **Does Proverbs present a rigid "cause-and-effect" view of life where good actions always guarantee immediate positive outcomes?** No, Proverbs does not teach that good behavior always results in immediate blessings, nor does it imply that bad behavior always leads to instant punishment. The book recognizes that good people may face suffering, as highlighted in chapter 3. The "two ways" model is more about long-term communal character development than short-term individual guarantees. The proverbs are not meant to be interpreted as rigid promises but rather as general principles that guide people towards a life of flourishing. Wisdom emphasizes holding on to the path despite not always seeing immediate reward. The book encourages a nuanced approach to life, acknowledging that the outcomes of our choices are not always instantly apparent or predictable, even while the long term trajectory towards wisdom and folly is clear.