

Dr. Daniel Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living -- Session 2, Prov. 10-29 Virtuous Character 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 2, Prov. 10-29 Virtuous Character, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Daniel Treier **explains** Proverbs 10-29 through the lens of Christian virtue ethics. He **focuses** on the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance) and theological virtues (faith, hope, charity), **showing** how they relate to the book's teachings on character development. Treier **argues** that while some virtuous behavior is accessible through natural means, full virtue requires a relationship with God. He **supports** his analysis with numerous Proverbs quotations and references to theological traditions.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 2, Prov. 10-29
Virtuous Character – 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
02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 2, Prov. 10-29 Virtuous Character

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Daniel J. Treier's lecture on Proverbs 10-29, focusing on virtuous character:

Briefing Document: Virtuous Character in Proverbs 10-29

Overview:

Dr. Treier's lecture examines Proverbs 10-29, focusing on how these chapters address the development of virtuous character. He utilizes the framework of cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) to organize and understand the moral teaching within these proverbs. He emphasizes that Proverbs is not just about prescribing behaviors but about fostering character. Treier argues that these virtues, while not explicitly named as such in Proverbs, provide a helpful framework for understanding the book's moral instruction.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Two Ways and the Need for Moral Formation:

- Proverbs 1-9 presents a choice between wisdom (leading to life) and folly (leading to death). Proverbs 10-29 expands on this, detailing how to live wisely and cultivate virtuous character.
- "Proverbs 1 through 9 confronts us with two ways, the way of wisdom leading to life, and the way of folly leading to death."
- Virtues are not innate but developed dispositions that enable individuals to recognize and realize the good.
- "People are not born with virtues, they are made."
- The relative innocence of youth is considered "dangerously unstable," highlighting the need for guidance and instruction.

1. Cardinal Virtues:

- Cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance) are rooted in God's creation order and are attainable by all humans to some degree. These virtues are essential for "living well in this world."

- While these virtues can be pursued partially outside of faith, their fullest expression is tied to the "fear of the Lord."
- "So, particular virtues may be developed to some degree because of the integrity of God's creation order, even apart from integration with the fear of the Lord. But ultimately, to their fullest extent, in an integrated way, even these cardinal virtues are going to require the fear of the Lord."
- **Prudence:** The "higher-order" virtue that regulates the others, emphasizing the role of reason over passion, planning, and avoiding haste.
- "Prudence regulates them. It commands action and response by reason rather than whimsical passion, while still respecting the particularity of individual situations."
- Proverbs values prudence through its literary structure, particularly antithetical parallelism, which highlights contrasting paths of wisdom and folly.
- Prudence involves planning ahead (Proverbs 10:5), carefully considering speech (Proverbs 25:11), listening (Proverbs 18:13), and responding appropriately to various situations (Proverbs 26:4-5).
- It also requires learning from parents, correction (Proverbs 15:5, 15:32, 17:10), and advice (Proverbs 15:22).
- **Justice:** "consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor." Integrates piety toward God and responsibility toward others, disposing us to respect the rights of each person and establish harmony.
- Righteousness, which is necessary for justice before God, involves internal transformation and not just external actions (Proverbs 20:27, 20:11).
- Charity, in this context, is presented as an obligation, not merely an option (Proverbs 11:24, 29:7).
- Proverbs affirms a "preferential option for the poor" but does not equate wealth with divine favor (Proverbs 28:6).
- There are numerous warnings against ill-gotten gain and violence (Proverbs 10:2, 11:1, 15:27, 24:15).
- **Fortitude:** The virtue that ensures "firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good." Blends courage with patience, strengthening resolve to resist temptations and overcome obstacles.

- "Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life."
- It enables one to "conquer fear, even fear of death."
- Fortitude is grounded in God (Proverbs 18:10), and entails endurance (Proverbs 14:10, 14:13, 18:14), and patience (Proverbs 25:15, 25:26, 28:1). It's not merely personal heroism, but involves support from family and friends (Proverbs 17:17, 16:26).
- Fortitude requires courageous action, such as helping others (Proverbs 24:10-12), but it must be guided by prudence and justice, preventing misuse.
- **Temperance:** Moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It requires discipline (Proverbs 12:1) and involves changing one's desires (Proverbs 13:25).
- It is not anti-emotion, but ensures that humans govern desires with reason.
- Lack of temperance is likened to a "city breached without walls," (Proverbs 25:28) highlighting the importance of self-control.
- While humans can demonstrate basic self-restraint, the overall assessment of human culture is not optimistic (2 Timothy 3; Romans 1).
- The grace of God is necessary to train individuals toward self-control (Titus 2:11-13).

1. **Theological Virtues:**

- Theological virtues (faith, hope, charity) require "redemptive grace" and are distinct from human capacities.
- These are "superhuman or divine virtues," not available through creation, but through God's initiative.
- They align us with our true end as God's creatures and make Christian practice of cardinal virtues distinctive.
- **Faith:** Begins and ends with God, not merely basic trust. Associated with fear of the Lord (Proverbs 16:6), upright conduct (Proverbs 15:8, 28:9), and humility (Proverbs 15:33, 20:24).

- Humility is vital to a Christian account of the moral life and is implied by the concept of faith. It involves confessing sin (Proverbs 28:13-14) and finding refuge in God (Proverbs 14:26-27).
- Faith involves wisdom, not credulity (Proverbs 14:15) and requires seeking understanding.
- Faith links us to trustworthy objects and to God, prompting the application of divine teaching.
- **Hope:** Assurance that God blesses the righteous while the wicked ultimately face folly (Proverbs 10:28).
- Wisdom is a "tree of life" offering hope for flourishing (Proverbs 11:28-30).
- Hope is focused on the present, but acknowledges future promises (Proverbs 13:12, 15:30).
- Hope motivates the pursuit of wisdom and the promotion of it in others (Proverbs 19:18, 24:13-14)
- Hope is not placed in wickedness, strength, or riches (Proverbs 11:7, 23:18, 24:19, 27:1).
- **Charity:** The greatest of the virtues. "Perfects, rather than destroys or leaves untouched, good natural loves like friendship, parental love, and romantic love"
- It is revealed in Jesus, and oriented to God. "Involves seeking the good of others in light of God's love for them"
- Involves generosity and blessing (Proverbs 11:17, 11:24-25, 19:17) and treating it almost as an obligation.
- Charity is shown through mercy, even toward animals (Proverbs 12:10), pursuing reconciliation (Proverbs 10:12, 17:9), and a loving pedagogy (teaching virtue and wisdom).
- It is integrated with prudence and seeks to help people grow in wisdom (Proverbs 25:20, 14:10).

1. **Interconnectedness of Virtues**

- Virtues are unified, not isolated, meaning they are intertwined and one cannot be fully developed in isolation. (ie, Justice requires prudence and fortitude)

- Attaining one virtue is intertwined with attaining others.
- Humility is the root of the virtues while charity is the fruit.
- Charity is also considered the root of the virtues

1. **Proverbs' View of Human Nature:**

- While recognizing the potential for human virtue within the creation order, Proverbs is not overly optimistic about the extent of this virtue due to the prevalence of wickedness, even among God's people.
- Redemptive grace is seen as necessary to transform culture so God's design for creation can come to fruition.

Conclusion:

Dr. Treier's lecture provides a rich framework for understanding the moral teachings of Proverbs 10-29. By using the language of cardinal and theological virtues, he illuminates how the proverbs promote character formation, not merely outward behavior. He emphasizes that while elements of virtue are possible through natural means, the fullest development and integration of these virtues are dependent on faith in God. The lecture highlights the ongoing need for moral progress, guided by God, and it emphasizes that the process of character development requires both divine grace and personal effort.

4. Study Guide: Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 2, Prov. 10-29 Virtuous Character

Proverbs: Virtuous Character - A Study Guide

Quiz

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

1. According to Treier, what is the primary context for moral formation and what is its purpose?
2. How are virtues developed, and what does Proverbs suggest about the relative innocence of the young?
3. Briefly define the cardinal virtues and explain what makes them "cardinal."
4. How does Treier explain the relationship between the cardinal virtues and the fear of the Lord?
5. What is the relationship between the theological virtues and redemptive grace?
6. Explain the cardinal virtue of prudence and give one example of its expression from the Proverbs.
7. According to Treier, how do the Proverbs view justice?
8. How does the virtue of fortitude help in the pursuit of good?
9. Explain the cardinal virtue of temperance and give one example of its expression from the Proverbs.
10. Explain how faith, hope, and charity work together in the life of a person of virtue.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary context for moral formation is the church, which directs individuals toward virtuous character. The family is creation's home for moral formation, and the church provides the right environment for it to occur.
2. Virtues are not innate but are made through developing deep dispositions, leading to habitual recognition and realization of the good. Proverbs views the innocence of the young as dangerously unstable because character is eventually formed one way or another.

3. Cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are called "cardinal" because they are principal virtues upon which moral development hinges and deal with living well in this world.
4. The cardinal virtues can be partially developed through the integrity of God's creation order, but they require integration with the fear of the Lord to be fully realized. This distinction is that a limited understanding can be found in nature, but a holistic understanding requires a recognition of God.
5. Theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) require redemptive grace. They are not naturally attainable but result from God's initiative to restore covenant fellowship, rendering the practice of cardinal virtues distinctive to believers.
6. Prudence is the virtue that enables one to discern the true good in each situation and choose the right means to achieve it. Proverbs 10:5 provides an example of prudence by illustrating the value of planning ahead, contrasting the prudent child who gathers in summer with the shameful child who sleeps during harvest.
7. The Proverbs view justice as an integration of piety toward God and responsibility toward neighbors. It involves respecting the rights of each person, promoting equity, and ultimately requires rightly ordered worship and appropriate desires to fully realize comprehensive justice.
8. Fortitude is a virtue that blends courage with patience, giving one firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and overcome obstacles, enabling one to conquer fear and prioritize goods that God has called them to pursue.
9. Temperance is the virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods through self-control. Proverbs 25:16 illustrates temperance by advising to eat honey only in moderation to avoid sickness, highlighting the need for restraint.
10. Faith begins with trust in God, as demonstrated by humility and a turning from self, leading to hope. Through hope, the person is motivated to pursue wisdom and promote it in others. Charity then guides the actions of the person and is the ultimate goal of the life of virtue, expressed in generosity, mercy, and reconciliation.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between the cardinal and theological virtues as presented by Treier, and analyze how their interaction influences the development of virtuous character within a Christian context.
2. How does Treier interpret the book of Proverbs in terms of promoting moral progress, and how does it align with and refine the Christian tradition's portrayal of cardinal and theological virtues?
3. Analyze Treier's claim that Proverbs' understanding of justice goes beyond mere human actions to include the heart, and explore the implications for how Christians should engage in the pursuit of righteousness and social justice.
4. Evaluate the tension between the partial realization of virtues through creation order and the full integration of virtues through the fear of the Lord, as presented in the lecture. Consider practical implications for those who pursue virtue in a secular setting.
5. Using specific examples from the Proverbs and Treier's lecture, discuss how the virtues of prudence, fortitude, and charity are intertwined, and how the integration of these virtues shapes a person's character and actions.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Cardinal Virtues:** The four principal moral virtues in classical and Christian thought: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. These virtues are considered essential for living a good life in this world.
- **Theological Virtues:** The three virtues that are considered gifts from God and direct us to a relationship with God: faith, hope, and charity (love).
- **Virtue:** A developing deep disposition, resulting in the habitual recognition and realization of the good. It is what one ought to feel, think, and do in particular situations.
- **Prudence:** The cardinal virtue that enables practical reason to discern the true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means to achieve it; often viewed as wisdom applied to daily living.

- **Justice:** The cardinal virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give God and neighbor what is due to them; includes both piety toward God and responsibility toward others.
- **Fortitude:** The cardinal virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good; combines courage and patience, enabling one to resist temptations and overcome obstacles.
- **Temperance:** The cardinal virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods through self-control.
- **Faith:** The theological virtue by which one believes in God and all that he has revealed. In Proverbs, faith is associated with the fear of the Lord, humility, and upright conduct.
- **Hope:** The theological virtue by which one desires eternal life with God and trusts in his promises. In Proverbs, hope is linked to the present flourishing of those who pursue wisdom.
- **Charity:** The theological virtue of love, directing one to seek the good of others in light of God's love for them, encompassing generosity, mercy, and reconciliation.
- **Redemptive Grace:** God's gracious initiative to bring humans back into covenant fellowship with him, which enables them to attain and pursue the theological virtues and to integrate their practice of the cardinal virtues.
- **Fear of the Lord:** A reverential awe and respect for God, which is the foundation of wisdom, understanding, and virtuous character.
- **Common Grace:** God's grace that is extended to all of humanity through his creation, enabling all people to experience a limited degree of virtue, particularly within a culture.
- **Antithetical Parallelism:** A literary device often used in Proverbs, especially in chapters 10-15, where one line presents an idea and the following line presents a contrasting idea. This device is used to emphasize the choice between wisdom and folly.
- **Pedagogy:** The method and practice of teaching, which, in Proverbs, is presented as a loving effort to help people learn and teach virtue, with firm yet tender guidance, avoiding naive tolerance.

5. FAQs on Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 2, Prov. 10-29 Virtuous Character, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Proverbs and Virtuous Character

1. **What is the primary focus of Proverbs 10-29, and how does it build upon the earlier chapters?** Proverbs 10-29 focuses on virtuous character, presenting a collection of divine revelations related to moral life. These chapters build on Proverbs 1-9, which introduced the two ways—wisdom leading to life and folly leading to death. The emphasis shifts from a broad invitation to wisdom to a detailed exploration of how to embody it through virtues, with a continued call to embrace the heritage of wisdom passed down by faithful parents and the community. The book shifts from a general call to wisdom in the first nine chapters, to an application of those ideas in practical life in the following chapters.
2. **What are the cardinal virtues, and why are they significant in Proverbs?** The cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. These virtues are considered fundamental to living well in this world, as they deal with aspects of human desire and behavior. In Proverbs, these virtues are not directly named, but the concepts permeate the book as patterns of behavior that lead to a good life. Prudence guides our actions through reason, justice ensures we give others what is due, fortitude helps us endure difficulties, and temperance helps moderate our desires. These virtues are seen as both possible for all humans, due to the common grace of God and His creation order, but also fully realized when done in connection with the fear of the Lord.
3. **How does the concept of "prudence" manifest itself in the book of Proverbs?** Prudence, the first of the cardinal virtues, is highly valued in Proverbs and is associated with wisdom and the ability to navigate specific situations, avoid folly, and understand the consequences of different actions. It involves planning ahead, carefully considering what to say, listening to wise counsel, and avoiding haste. Proverbs emphasizes that the human mind can make plans, but that the purpose of the Lord will prevail, implying that true prudence is in line with God's wisdom. The value of prudence is demonstrated in the many contrasts between the wise and the foolish throughout the book.

4. **What is the relationship between justice as portrayed in Proverbs and righteousness before God?** In Proverbs, justice is not just about treating others fairly; it's fundamentally linked to righteousness before God. True justice integrates piety towards God with our responsibilities towards others. This involves acting with integrity, avoiding ill-gotten gain, and giving to the poor. While justice can be practiced partially through basic human practices, it is ultimately realized in its fullest sense through a right relationship with God, where our actions come from a desire to please Him and be in line with His will, and not merely through adherence to rules. Proverbs stresses that what is within is what drives the external actions.
5. **How does the virtue of fortitude, or courage, manifest in Proverbs?** Fortitude, which combines courage and patience, is essential for enduring injustice and hardship on the path of wisdom. It is the ability to prioritize the most important goods, even in the face of adversity. Though not explicitly detailed in many verses, the idea is woven into the fabric of the text. It involves patiently resisting evil, having courage to help others in need, and recognizing that strength and endurance come from God, family, and friends. It's not about personal heroism, but the prioritization of what God calls us to and is realized as endurance that is based on a life spent in wisdom.
6. **What role does temperance play in Proverbs, and how is it connected to discipline and self-control?** Temperance in Proverbs is about moderating one's attraction to pleasures and balancing the use of created goods. It's connected to discipline because it is the means by which one takes control over desire, and a love for discipline in turn makes one want to pursue knowledge. It's described as a necessary virtue for governing desires and making wise choices, avoiding excess, and being careful with the resources one has been given. Ultimately, temperance promotes a life marked by balance and reason, not simply instinct. Like the other virtues, it can be cultivated partially through natural means, but full realization requires God's grace and our turning away from worldly passions.

7. **What are the theological virtues, and how do they differ from the cardinal virtues?** The theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, differ from the cardinal virtues in that they are primarily attained through God's redemptive grace, rather than through human effort or cultural norms. They align us with our true end as God's creatures and require a covenant relationship with God. Faith is more than just trust; it involves a right relationship with God, humility, and confession of sin. Hope is an assurance based on God's promises of blessing to the righteous. Charity, which is love directed toward God and others, involves generosity, mercy, reconciliation, and the desire to help others learn virtue. In short, the cardinal virtues are how to live in the created order, while the theological virtues are how we relate to God.
8. **How does Proverbs view the relationship between wisdom, faith, and love, and how do these play a part in the Christian life?** Proverbs portrays wisdom, faith, and love as interconnected elements of the Christian life. Wisdom is the practical application of faith. It comes from a fear of the Lord, the willingness to trust Him, and following the instructions given in His law. Faith is more than just belief; it's a deep trust in God that leads to a life of humility, confession, and obedience. Love, or charity, as it is discussed in this source, is the ultimate expression of the Christian life and is the culmination of the other virtues, encompassing both generosity towards the poor and the pursuit of reconciliation. The way we are to live is a life of loving God and our neighbor, and this begins with an understanding of the wisdom that God has given us, as shown in the book of Proverbs.