

Dr. Daniel Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living

-- Session 4, Proverbs 30-31, Final Words

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 4, Proverbs 30-31, Final Words, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Daniel Treier's lecture analyzes Proverbs 30-31, focusing on the importance of speech and listening in moral formation. He highlights prohibitions against gossip and lying, emphasizing the power of speech to shape social contexts and relationships. The lecture then examines the concluding oracles of Agur and Lemuel, interpreting them within a broader theological framework. Finally, it explores the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 8, suggesting a connection to Jesus Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of God's pedagogy. The overall message emphasizes the integration of right belief, belonging, and behavior in achieving wisdom and shalom.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 4, Proverbs 30-31, Final Words – 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
04.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 4, Proverbs 30-31, Final Words

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 30-31:

Briefing Document: Dr. Daniel J. Treier on Proverbs 30-31

Document Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and concepts presented by Dr. Daniel J. Treier in his lecture on Proverbs 30-31, focusing on the final words of the book and their implications for Christian living. The lecture explores the moral, social, and theological dimensions of Proverbs, particularly emphasizing the importance of speech, community, and the fear of the Lord.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Moral Formation and Speech Acts:

- **Accountability:** Proverbs emphasizes that we are accountable for our words and how we listen, as these practices shape us morally.
- *"In Proverbs, speech acts. That is to say, we are accountable for and formed by the practices of our mouths and our ears."*
- **Moral Formation:** Proverbs' primary goal is moral formation, highlighting the consequences of specific behaviors and their impact on wisdom and character. It directly addresses behaviors to promote belonging to a God-fearing community.
- *"First, the focus of Proverbs is moral formation, profiling the consequences of specific acts and the ways that they reflect and enhance wisdom or folly for the sake of promoting righteous character."*
- **Integrated Formation:** True spiritual formation requires moral formation, as the heart involves the whole person (belief, belonging, and behavior).
- *"Third, simultaneously, true spiritual formation requires moral formation because humans pursue wisdom as embodied persons in communities. Right belief is not genuine fear of the Lord apart from belonging and behavior."*
- **Redemption Required:** While partial morality is possible for non-believers, full wisdom requires the grace of God which transforms the heart and opens the ears.

- *"Partial morality is possible for pagans, but the full pursuit of genuine wisdom is only attainable for God's people by grace that transforms the heart and opens the ears."*
- **Heart and Speech:** Our words reveal our inner intentions. Divine and human actions intertwine, and while we ought to plan prudently, ultimately, the consequences are in God's hands.
- *"The plans of the mind belong to mortals, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord... Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks..."*

1. Prohibitions and Warnings Regarding Speech:

- **Gossip:** Proverbs strongly condemns gossip, emphasizing its disruptive nature and the need to avoid those who engage in it.
- *"A gossip goes about telling secrets, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence."*
- **Lying:** The text highlights the contrast between the long-term success of truth and the fleeting nature of lies. It exposes different forms of deception, such as flattery and dissembling.
- *"Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment."*
- **Power of Speech:** Speech has the power to heal or harm, build up or break down. It is important to speak wisely and to not waste words on those who won't listen.
- *"A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit... do not speak in the hearing of a fool who will only despise the wisdom of your words."*

1. Speech and Social Contexts:

- **Home:** Respect for parents and harmonious family relationships are crucial. A contentious wife is a destructive force.
- *"if you curse father or mother, your lamp will go out in utter darkness... a continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike."*
- **Kings:** Wisdom is essential for rulers; they should be just and righteous. Proverbs critiques tyrannical rulers, stressing the importance of listening and speaking rightly.

- *"Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves those who speak what is right. ... With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue can break bones."*

1. Proverbs 30-31 and Recapitulation

- **Outside voices:** The oracles of Agur and King Lemuel, though from outside of Israel, don't offer alternative to Yahweh, but rather recapitulate the themes of wisdom from the book of Proverbs, connecting it to the cosmos, community, and household.
- *"The two oracles in these chapters apparently arrive from outside of Israel... The oracles actually recapitulate major themes of Proverbs, relating wisdom even more closely to the cosmos, the community, and the household as spheres of activity ordered by Israel's God."*
- **Agur's Oracle:** Agur confesses inadequacy and asks for divine knowledge, with Trinitarian undertones, then moves to examples of speech, pride, avarice, lust, and the value of non-human wisdom.
- *"In fact, Agur pleads for the proper knowledge of Israel's God which is the essence of full humanity."*
- *"Outsiders long for a virtuous and harmonious culture that arises from the knowledge of Israel's Holy One."*
- **King Lemuel's Oracle:** Lemuel's mother teaches him to reject lust and gluttony, and to advocate for the poor.
- *"Nevertheless, he learns wisdom from his mother, as the Israelite learns from his parents throughout the rest of the book."*
- **The Proverbs 31 Woman:** The ode to the Proverbs 31 woman is an acrostic poem which describes an industrious, wise, and capable woman who fears the Lord. It subverts overly simplistic patriarchal interpretations.
- *"The ode surely works at a literal level, and therefore, influenced as it is by Lemuel's mother, no less, it has profound implications for assessing Proverbs' portrayal of women."*
- *"By contrast, Proverbs 31 portrays the ideal covenant partner, as not just a husband, but probably of what all of us are supposed to be in relation to God."*

1. Communal Shalom and Practical Implications:

- **Friendship:** Proverbs values genuine friendship, but warns against self-seeking motives.
- **Kingship:** Righteous rulers bring joy, while wicked rulers bring oppression.
- *"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan."*
- **Household:** Spousal and parent-child relationships are crucial for a healthy community.
- *"They knew that disharmony in marriage was grievous because they knew that harmony was purpose."*
- **Discipline:** Discipline is an act of love. It is important to note that while physical discipline is mentioned, it must be balanced with selflessness, and verbal correction is primary.
- *"The importance of discipline as an act of parental love cannot be gainsaid. God's loving discipline is our model."*
- **Cultural Context:** Proverbs should be read with an awareness of its original context, not used to justify illegitimate practices. It's more about moderating abuses than about creating a new social structure.
- *"The reader who expects Proverbs to revolutionize the social context of its original historical setting or settings will be disappointed."*
- **Traditional Sexual Ethics:** Proverbs affirms traditional Jewish and Christian sexual ethics as vital for a healthy community.
- **Importance of Parenting:** The focus of Proverbs is intimate, paternal shepherding, not distant lordly patriarchal status. Women's wisdom is also highlighted as important for teaching children.

1. Theological Significance and Household Analogy:

- **Household as Analogy:** Household life is presented as an analogy of covenant fellowship with God, emphasizing participation and not just likeness.
- *"In other words, the household is not only like the spiritual life, the household is a spiritual analogy, and it is one of the metaphors of the spiritual life in Proverbs."*
- **Parenting as Imitation of God:** Parenting and teaching are a privilege to participate in God's work of nurturing life.

- **Importance of Obedience:** Obedience to God is paramount, placing both proverbial patriarchy and healthy parenting in the proper context.

1. Lady Wisdom and Christ:

- **Proverbs 8:** Dr. Treier explores the relationship of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8 to Jesus Christ, noting that the language of "begetting" in verse 22 and other verbs are not necessarily about creating, but rather about bringing forth or having an eternal presence with the Father.
- *"it seems to me that a non-literal understanding of begetting is entirely consistent with the poetic nature of the passage and the symbolic force of household imagery throughout Proverbs, as well as what Proverbs wants to say about wisdom."*
- **Controversy:** While some interpret Lady Wisdom as a created being, and even as a model of Christ being created, Dr. Treier argues that the text could also be read as having a non-temporal, divine quality.
- *"The temptation was to read Jesus in this passage and to see the Son as being created by God, and therefore not being fully divine. Partly, I think, that was generated by relying upon the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, rather than dealing straightforwardly with the Hebrew."*
- **Interpretation of Verbs:** He argues the verbs in Proverbs 8 are not necessarily about created things, but rather about begetting, or about an eternal presence in the case of 'amon'.
- *"The Lord acquired or possessed me by bringing me forth, by begetting me at the beginning of his way, which you can follow before his other earliest works."*
- *"Bruce Waltke translates the first phrase of the verse, beside him constantly, taking the root of this word in terms of being firm or faithful, rather than in terms of the artisan or master worker."*
- **Mystery:** The text hints at a mysterious relationality within the divine life, which comes into clearer light with Jesus Christ. It suggests a mediator between God and humanity.
- *"If wisdom has some kind of creaturely connection that is chronologically and otherwise distinct from everything else in the cosmos, then the begetting metaphor, far from subordinating the Son to the Father as creature to Creator, actually indicates the continuity of divine life and character."*

- **Incarnation:** Jesus is the resolution of the mystery of Lady Wisdom, providing direct contact with divine wisdom and love.

Concluding Thoughts:

Dr. Treier's lecture highlights that Proverbs is not simply a collection of wise sayings, but a holistic guide to living a life of faith, marked by right speech, communal harmony, and the fear of the Lord. He explores the ways in which the Old Testament points to the coming of Christ, using the example of Proverbs 8 to suggest ways in which Christians might relate the text to Jesus. The lecture reinforces the importance of human agency in responding to God's teaching, and the privilege of imitating God in loving relationships with one another.

Let me know if you have any other questions.

4. Study Guide: Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 4, Proverbs 30-31, Final Words

Proverbs Study Guide: Chapters 30-31 & Final Words

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the provided source material.

1. What is the primary focus of Proverbs, according to Dr. Treier, and how does it relate to moral formation?
2. Explain the tension between human and divine action in speech, as discussed in the lecture.
3. Describe the significance of gossip and lying within the context of Proverbs' teachings.
4. How does the lecture connect the power of speech to character and communal consequences?
5. According to the lecture, how do Proverbs 30 and 31 fit into the overall structure of the book?
6. What is the significance of the rhetorical questions posed by Agur in Proverbs 30:4?
7. What are some of the characteristics and roles attributed to the woman in Proverbs 31?
8. How does the lecture address the potential for a patriarchal reading of Proverbs?
9. What role does the household play as an analogy in relation to the covenant fellowship with God?
10. Briefly outline Dr. Treier's interpretation of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and its potential connection to Jesus Christ.

Quiz Answer Key

1. Proverbs primarily focuses on moral formation, detailing the consequences of actions to promote righteous character. It directly addresses behaviors, aiming to foster a community that fears the Lord, integrating belief, belonging, and behavior.

2. The tension lies in the fact that while humans plan and speak, the ultimate outcome of their words and their impact on others is in the Lord's purview. This highlights the interplay of human intent and divine providence.
3. Gossip is strongly prohibited due to its disruptive nature, and those who listen to gossip are viewed negatively. Lying is also condemned, and Proverbs emphasizes the long-term benefits of truth versus the fleeting nature of falsehood.
4. Speech reveals and reinforces a person's character, and this has substantial communal impacts. The power of speech is not inherently corrupt, but corruption in communication reveals its potential danger.
5. Proverbs 30 and 31 act as a concluding "bracket" to the proverbial collections, corresponding to Proverbs 1-9. These chapters, featuring oracles from outside Israel, recapitulate and reinforce the book's major themes.
6. Agur's rhetorical questions emphasize the inadequacy of human knowledge regarding the divine and point to the need for divine revelation. These questions also hint at the nature of God and His Son.
7. The Proverbs 31 woman is portrayed as industrious, clever, strong, and generous, serving as an example of an ideal covenant partner, demonstrating practical wisdom rooted in a fear of the Lord. She also demonstrates how women can be teachers.
8. The lecture challenges a simplistic patriarchal reading by showing the Proverbs 31 woman's multifaceted role. It emphasizes that while Proverbs reflects aspects of its original context, its core message promotes godly character and justice.
9. The household serves as a spiritual analogy to the covenant fellowship with God. The relationships, dynamics, and even the way of speaking in the household are meant to reflect the relationship between believers and God.
10. Dr. Treier interprets Lady Wisdom as being "begotten" rather than "created," aligning more with Christological views of Jesus, emphasizing the metaphorical nature of the language and suggesting that it signifies the eternal nature of the Divine.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Respond to the following essay prompts using the provided source material and your own critical thinking.

1. Analyze the significance of speech acts in the book of Proverbs. How do the teachings on gossip, lying, and the power of words contribute to the overall message about wisdom and character formation?
2. Discuss the role of social contexts—including the home, kingship, and friendship—in shaping and being shaped by wisdom, as presented in Proverbs. How do these contexts interact with each other?
3. Compare and contrast the two oracles in Proverbs 30 and 31. How do they reinforce and expand upon the book's overall themes? What unique insights do they bring to the discussion of wisdom?
4. Examine the figure of the woman in Proverbs 31. How does her portrayal challenge or confirm traditional interpretations of gender roles? How does she embody the book's concept of wisdom?
5. Explore the potential connections between Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and the figure of Jesus Christ. What are the arguments for and against seeing this as a Christological passage? What does this interpretation suggest about the nature of wisdom itself?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Moral Formation:** The process of developing and shaping one's character, guided by ethical principles and values.
- **Speech Acts:** The actions performed through speaking, highlighting the impact and responsibility associated with words.
- **Shalom:** A Hebrew word signifying peace, wholeness, and well-being, particularly within a communal context.
- **Gossip:** Idle talk or rumor, often involving secrets and negative implications. Proverbs condemns this as disruptive.
- **Avarice:** Excessive greed for material possessions; one of the vices addressed in Proverbs.
- **Chiasm:** A literary structure where parts are arranged in a mirrored or inverted pattern, creating a sense of symmetry.
- **Sapiential:** Relating to wisdom, particularly in the context of wisdom literature like Proverbs.
- **Hermeneutics:** The theory and methodology of interpreting texts, often used when discussing biblical understanding.
- **Patriarchy:** A social system where men hold the primary power and authority, sometimes seen as the dominant structure in ancient societies.
- **Pedagogy:** The method and practice of teaching, often with reference to the wisdom of a teacher.
- **Hypostasis:** In theological terms, the distinct person or individual within the Trinity.
- **Incarnation:** The Christian theological doctrine that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Logos:** A Greek term for "word," often used to refer to Jesus Christ as the divine reason or principle of creation.
- **Begetting:** In this context, metaphorical language suggesting "bringing forth" rather than creation, which is used of God's relationship to Wisdom.

5. FAQs on Treier, Proverbs for Christian Living – Session 4, Proverbs 30-31, Final Words, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Proverbs

- **What is the primary focus of the book of Proverbs in terms of moral formation?**
- The book of Proverbs focuses on moral formation by highlighting the consequences of specific actions and demonstrating how those actions either promote wisdom or folly. It emphasizes the integration of belief, belonging, and behavior, with a direct emphasis on the wisdom or folly of various behaviors. However, Proverbs acknowledges that true wisdom stems from a fear of the Lord, which involves a transformed heart through grace and ultimately shapes one's belonging and behavior within a community of faith. It's not just about self-management but about a heart change that leads to right speech and actions.
- **How does Proverbs address the significance of speech and listening?**
- Proverbs emphasizes that speech acts, both what we say and what we hear, are crucial for moral formation and have significant consequences. The book warns against gossip, lying, and flattery, highlighting the damaging effects they have on individuals and communities. Conversely, Proverbs celebrates the power of truthful, gentle, and timely words to bring healing and joy. Ultimately, the quality of our speech is seen as a direct reflection of our inner character and is an area where our need for God's grace to transform our hearts becomes apparent. It is not a matter of mere self-control, but rather a transformed heart.
- **What are some key prohibitions concerning speech in the book of Proverbs?**
- Proverbs strongly prohibits gossip, describing it as a tempting but destructive force that causes communal disruption. The book also condemns lying in all its forms, contrasting the long-term success of truthfulness with the fleeting nature of falsehood. Furthermore, Proverbs warns against flattery, emphasizing that it is a manipulative tool that leads to ruin. These prohibitions emphasize the importance of honest, truthful, and constructive communication that builds up rather than tears down.

- **How does Proverbs portray the relationship between speech and social contexts, particularly within the family and among leadership?**
- Proverbs highlights that speech is profoundly shaped by and shapes social contexts. In the home, the text underscores the importance of honoring parents and avoiding contentious relationships. Regarding leadership, the book calls for just and wise rulers who speak with righteousness and for those in power to value truthful speech. Proverbs also cautions against the corrupting influence of wicked leaders, showing how their falsehood and tyranny impact the entire community. This theme emphasizes how communication patterns either contribute to or undermine communal well-being and order.
- **What is the significance of the oracles in Proverbs 30-31, and how do they relate to the rest of the book?**
- The oracles of Agur (Proverbs 30) and King Lemuel (Proverbs 31) serve as a closing bracket around the book of Proverbs, recapitulating and reinforcing its major themes. They highlight the importance of seeking divine wisdom and righteousness, rejecting vices like avarice, slander, lust, and pride. These oracles affirm that true wisdom comes from a fear of the Lord and is essential for fostering a harmonious community, including both the household and larger social spheres. They also demonstrate that the pursuit of wisdom is universal, applicable to both Israelites and outsiders who seek a virtuous life.
- **How does Proverbs 31 portray the ideal woman, and what are its implications?**
- The ode to the Proverbs 31 woman portrays her as a figure of great virtue and industriousness. She is characterized by her clever initiative, hard work, wise teaching, and care for the needy, her family, and her community. This portrayal challenges simplistic notions of domesticity, presenting her as a multi-faceted individual who is both capable and strong. This passage emphasizes that true excellence is not just about home life, but involves active engagement with the world and the consistent practice of God's wisdom, revealing that her value transcends mere domesticity.

- **What does Proverbs suggest about the nature of friendship and the importance of good company?**
- Proverbs emphasizes the crucial role of friendship and wise social relationships. It highlights the fact that some people offer friendship for self-serving reasons, instead of being true companions. It also acknowledges that bad company can corrupt one's character. The text advocates for cultivating relationships based on shared values and a mutual desire for wisdom and righteousness. Good company is recognized as foundational to the development of personal and communal character.
- **How does Proverbs connect human parenting to God's pedagogy, and how is this linked to Christ?**
- Proverbs presents human parenting as an analogy for God's way of guiding people into wisdom. The book emphasizes the tremendous privilege and responsibility involved in nurturing children, mirroring God's care and provision. The teaching and discipline provided by parents are seen as a means of shaping character and preparing children for a life of wisdom and faithfulness. The idea of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 is presented as having a metaphorical begetting, and the idea that Jesus Christ is the resolution of a mystery latent in the text, a culmination of divine revelation and pedagogy, thus making Proverbs a profound testament to God's love and desire for our spiritual growth in covenant relationship with him. This means that the core of the message is one of God using all of life to lead us to him, including human parenting.