

Dr. Kyle Dunham, Structure and Theology of Proverbs, Session 1

© 2024 Kyle Dunham and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Kyle Dunham in his teaching on the Structure and Theology of Proverbs, session 1, Elementary Wisdom as Character Formation.

Hello, my name is Kyle Dunham and today I'm going to be teaching about Proverbs. I wanted to begin by giving a brief introduction about myself. I teach at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

I am the Associate Professor of Old Testament and my background is mainly in wisdom literature. My dissertation study was in the book of Job. I've done some work in Proverbs.

I'm currently writing a commentary on Ecclesiastes and so the biblical wisdom literature is where I've focused most and so I'm thankful for this opportunity. The basis of what we're looking at today in the book of Proverbs is a journal article that recently appeared that I wrote in the Bulletin for Biblical Research and it's called Structure and Theology in Proverbs, Its Function as an Educational Program for Novice Leaders in Ancient Israel. My argument, as I'll show as we work through this, is that Proverbs was an ancient curriculum that was designed to help inexperienced youth progress toward greater levels of maturity and complexity as they aspired toward socio-political leadership in ancient Israel.

And so, we'll be working through that together and that will be the basis of our study. So, let's begin. I have entitled this, as I said, Structure and Theology in Proverbs and we're going to see how the book of Proverbs functioned in the context of ancient Israel to train young men primarily for socio-political leadership.

One of the questions that often is asked about the book of Proverbs relates to whether or not Proverbs is put together with intentional design or with patterns in mind. In fact, there's been a saying that's circulated for many years that biblical wisdom and specifically Proverbs is known as the orphan in the biblical household. The meaning of that phrase is essentially that Proverbs was seen as a book that didn't really have much to offer in terms of theological formulation.

That is to say that the book had a practical orientation, but not really a theological one. And lately, that has come under more scrutiny as more and more scholars have attended to the book to see if in fact, it does have something to contribute to our theological correlation of scripture. And I'm convinced that it does.

And so that will be the basis for our study today. One notable scholar is Michael Fox and he wrote a review of a monograph that took the view that Proverbs did in fact have some design patterns within the book. And Michael Fox argued that that wasn't the case.

In fact, this is what Michael Fox said. In the last 20 years, there has been a rash of efforts to find designs and patterns in Proverbs in both its parts and its whole. A scholar ferrets out features that when connected seem to him or her to form a pattern.

Some seek to divide entire collections into units, but this is entirely a scholar-oriented approach. It claims to show hidden patterns that the skilled and equipped analyst with a great deal of time to devote to the task can expose beneath the tangle. Outside of scattered thematic clusters and Proverbs strings and an occasional poem, no significant patterns such as might constrain interpretation have been widely observed.

The enterprise of finding them has value insofar as it has shown itself to be futile. Now, Michael Fox's position obviously is that Proverbs was put together not with an intentional design pattern in mind. That is to say that there was a loosely connected string of Proverbs and particularly looking at the material in chapters 10 onward, that there really is no intention or conscious arrangement to those Proverbs.

Others, however, have suggested that perhaps there is more conscious, intentional patterning in the book. In fact, many have studied contexts of primary oral cultures like ancient Israel and suggested that in the motivation for forming texts in those cultures, a crucial element was intentional verbal patterning. That is to say, that language that was formulaic and repetitive, rhythmic, and verbal expressions, these all had a function to what Walter Ong has called mnemonic serviceability.

What we mean by that is these texts aided in the memorization and mastery of material that would form the minds and worldview of aspiring leaders, of scribes, of the leaders in society, and the elites in society who would be leading that culture. David Carr has done extensive work along these lines and he's suggested that there were a number of what he calls written media that were part of a cultural project of incising key cultural and religious traditions word for word on people's minds. And the argument goes that in the formation of leaders, this was done and developed through the mastery and memorization of a core curriculum of texts.

And I want to argue that Proverbs likely had a function like this. That is to say that the book was intentionally arranged in such a way as to aid its memorization. And I think that the clue to seeing that is the fact that when the book is structured, the seams between the materials, as we'll see today, are arranged in such a way as to advance the learner towards certain virtues.

That is to say, to inculcate virtues like righteousness, justice, and integrity. And that we see this as we study the sections of the book and the collections of wisdom materials that are there. So, my thesis or my aim today is to show that the literary structure of Proverbs advances an educational program.

That is to say that it is outlined in the preamble and developed in the literary seams of seven wisdom collections. I want to suggest that Proverbs has an intentional grouping of seven sections of wisdom and that this program was developed as the young leader mastered the material and moved an inexperienced young person toward these virtues of righteousness, justice, and integrity. And so that will be our goal today as we look at the book of Proverbs.

I want to suggest that young people, as they mastered the material of Proverbs, went on a continuum, on a progression of development from elemental ethical decisions to complex social applications. You can see movement in several different lines of trajectory in the book of Proverbs. One is from the family setting to the sphere of social leadership.

One is from a domestic setting to that of foreign royal service. I think that the book of Proverbs accomplishes this or achieves it through incrementally moving the young person toward a greater grasp of the theological norms of Torah. That is to say, the book of Proverbs concretizes or materializes those theological norms in such a way that those truths are inculcated through the memory and mastery of this material.

What I call mnemonic signposts are embedded in the seams of the seven wisdom collections. And so rising leaders master this material to embody Torah as a wise royal official. And so, I think this is the best way to approach the book.

A word of background before we get there. I want to talk about a few scholars who have formed this kind of approach to the book and formed my own thinking along these lines. One is Brevard Childs.

Brevard Childs is the pioneer of the canonical approach and how he defined the canonical approach, he says, it requires the interpreter to look closely at the biblical text in its received form and then critically discern its function for the community of faith. And what he meant by that was rather than trying to ascertain all the redactional layers that lie behind a given book, that the object of our study rather ought to be the final form of the book as it's been transmitted through the community of faith and to ascertain its function in the community of faith. That is to say, what is this book as canon accomplishing, doing, or achieving in the community of faith? And so, his approach really changed a lot of trajectory in biblical scholarship toward looking at the final form of texts.

He had a student who was fairly well-known who took this approach and applied it to the book of Psalms. Gerald Wilson applied this to the Psalter. What Gerald Wilson accomplished was taking Childs' idea and then materializing it in the context of a given book.

Gerald Wilson argued that looking at the Psalter, the best way to understand the shape of the book is to look closely at the seams that connect the five books of the Psalter. That is the opening and closing Psalms of each book, the introduction, and the conclusion, and thereby to understand the intention of the final editor or arranger and the literary strategy that he had in putting together the book as he did. So those two have influenced particular aspects of biblical scholarship.

A recent refinement perhaps of this is Julius Steinberg. He wrote a book a few years ago in which he talks about the structural canonical approach, structural canonical approach. And what Steinberg does by adding structural to Childs' method is he suggests that we ought to look at the literary structure and design patterns of books.

That is to say, we look not only at the final form, but how the literary structure itself informs that book and how that informs its function within the community of faith. Now in the book of Proverbs, I want to suggest that this structural canonical reading has been hinted at and has preliminarily begun to be done in some quarters, but there's a lot of work still to do. And so, my effort today is an attempt to give one possible way of reading the book along structural canonical lines.

That is to say, to look at the literary structure of Proverbs and see, is the literary structure informing our understanding of how the final editor arranged these parts of Proverbs with a specific goal in mind. That is, is there an editorial strategy behind the book as a whole? I want to suggest that there is. And in fact, there, as we look at the book, there are seven wisdom collections. You may remember that Lady Wisdom in describing her house toward the end of the prologue talks about the seven pillars of wisdom.

And in assessing the book, I think I'm persuaded that the best way of understanding its arrangement is along these lines of seven collections. That is to say, we begin with a preamble and a prologue, and then we go to what is commonly in the literature called Solomon 1. Solomon 1 is a collection of these aphorisms, these sayings that begin in chapter 10 and move through chapter 22. And then we transition to two shorter sections called the Sayings of the Wise, Sayings of the Wise 1, and the Sayings of the Wise 2. And then finally, 25.1 gives us a new heading that's with, which says, these are the Proverbs of Solomon that the men of Hezekiah copied.

This suggests that Hezekiah's scribes were at work at this stage of the editing of the book and arrangement of the book. So, this is commonly called Solomon 2. This takes

us through chapter 29. And then we have the final two chapters, which are full of enigmatic wisdom and a little bit more difficult.

I am convinced that these are two scholars by the name of Agur and Lemuel. And so, chapters 30 and 31 give us these arrangements. So, putting it all together, it suggests that there are seven wisdom collections and that these seven collections advance the reader from inexperience to greater maturity, complexity, and application of wisdom.

Moving beyond this, what I wanted to focus on specifically as I was doing this study is the original thought I had is, what if we took the approach Gerald Wilson did to the Psalter and said, so if the five books are arranged in such a way that the opening and closing Psalms inform our reading of those sections, might we say the same thing about the seams of Proverbs? That is to say, if it is in fact seven collections of wisdom, are there specific clues in the opening and closing sections of those seams that might inform our reading? And so, as I studied them, I first began by arranging them into their different parts. And so, as you look at the seven collections of wisdom, we could move through that and see there's a table there that illustrates some of that. And so, it begins by talking about wisdom, the prologue does, and it ends with the rival invitations of Lady Wisdom and Folly.

So, in the prologue, wisdom is being contrasted with folly and it's specifically embodied in these two ladies, these two women, Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly. Then when we get to Solomon 1, as we work through this, we'll see this in more detail. There's an introduction to wisdom and folly in chapter 10, and then a conclusion on wealth and morality in chapter 22.

The sayings of the wise have its own transition and introduction. It has an exhortation, motivation, and purpose. And it ends the first sayings of the wise section with a part on wisdom, righteousness, and justice.

And I'm going to argue as we go along that these virtues, which are found in the preamble of Proverbs, are really the focal point of the book. And we'll see that in a minute as we go along. Sayings of the Wise too focuses on justice and it concludes with an example story of the sluggard.

So again, it inculcates this idea of diligence and virtue. Solomon 2 moves to complex royal applications. That is to say, it focuses on the royal court.

And so, we see an introduction in 25 to the royal court setting. And it concludes with an emphasis on discipline, trust in Yahweh, and righteousness. Again, righteousness is one of the key three virtues of the book, righteousness, justice, and integrity.

And then we have an interesting conclusion to the book with the sages, Agur and Lemuel. Agur in particular has intrigued me over the years. He begins with what I call an introduction on humility and integrity in a proper wisdom epistemology.

That is to say, he understands that the wisdom enterprise is more than just diligence, and hard work, that there are mysteries and enigmas. There are riddles. There are things that are beyond his grasp.

And so, he encourages a humble approach to wisdom. And his conclusion is along these same lines. He concludes on arrogance versus humility in the wisdom pursuit, admonishing the wisdom seeker to remember his place in the cosmos.

That is to say, to remember to stay humble before the Lord. And then Lemuel is the king. So, in Agur and Lemuel, I'm going to argue that we have a notable sage and a notable king.

When Lemuel ends, the book comes full circle. The book began with the father and the mother instructing. And by the end of the book, the son is now the king and the mother is instructing.

And her voice echoes in many ways, the voice that's implicit in the mother in the prologue. And she's exasperated and she's admonishing him along certain lines. And then the book ends with a conclusion on the exalted piety of the woman who fears Yahweh.

As I'll suggest, I think the virtuous wife that Lemuel chooses embodies Lady Wisdom and her character from the prologue in chapters one through nine. So, this is a basic overview of the book. And we want to look at some of the details a little in more focus as we move along.

So, we'll begin with a look at the preamble. The preamble is Proverbs 1.1-7. And I want to suggest that the preamble is framed by a title and by a programmatic theme. Within that, I think that the structure of the preamble moves along the lines of a chiasm, that is to say, it focuses on these virtues in verse three.

So let me read this and get a sense of what the preamble is saying. The preamble I want to suggest is outlining the purpose of the book and where the book intends to take the reader. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel, to know wisdom and correction, to understand perceptive words, to receive correction so as to gain insight for righteousness, justice, and acts of integrity.

Then we see a parenthetical sub-purpose for the book. That is to say, the author goes from beyond what the wisdom seeker will get to what the book will provide. To say, to provide the inexperienced with cunning, the young man with knowledge and

scheming, that the one who is wise listen and add to his insight and the one who is discerning obtain clever advice.

Then he switches back to what the wisdom seeker will gain to understand a proverb and an interpretive epigram, the sayings of the wise and their riddles. The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and correction. The preamble hints that there is longitudinal growth in the book.

By moving along a chain of wisdom words, I think the preamble informs us that the wisdom of the book moves from simplicity to complexity. That is to say, from a basic wisdom that is binary, that is a black-and-white world where character types are evil, wicked, or righteous and wise. And it moves from that to a more sophisticated study of wisdom that requires more intellectual discipline and rigor.

That is to say, as the wisdom seeker moves along these steps or phases, he must incorporate an understanding of the world that allows for more shades of nuance, and more shades of understanding. Knowing that sometimes even seemingly good people such as the king can make bad decisions and do wrong things. And so, the wise person has to be informed both how to behave in the world and also the way that the world really works.

That is the shady side of the world and of wisdom. And so, we see this by the terms that are used. So, for instance, wisdom and correction in verse two moves toward more sophisticated wisdom terminology, cunning, knowledge, and scheming.

And then what follows that is, I think, words that connote the royal court context. That is the proverb and interpretive epigram. These are a domain that's affiliated with, and they culminate in the sayings of the wise.

That is a group in Proverbs that we'll encounter as we move through the book. They're the ones that the young wisdom seeker is to idealize and to conform himself to, to learn from them, and to study with them. And so, the sayings of the wise and their riddles.

And so, it moves toward greater complexity. And all of this is grounded and controlled by the fear of Yahweh. That is to say, the fear of Yahweh controls the enterprise and grounds the enterprise.

It's both the starting point and the controlling principle governing the acquisition of wisdom. And so, this is why the preamble ends with the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and correction. So, there has been a lot of debate and study over the years to try to discover if there were schools in ancient Israel.

Whether or not that's the case, the literary world of Proverbs begins in the setting of the home and in the immediate family of the wisdom seeker. That is, wisdom is aimed primarily at character formation, taking a young person who is inexperienced and moving them toward greater intellectual sophistication, greater character, greater maturity in making decisions, and being able to apply the norms of Torah through wisdom. It concludes with intellectual conundrums that are the purview of the maturing wise, most likely in the royal court.

So, I want to suggest that as a young person would master this material, as a young person would memorize the preamble, he would attain an understanding of the direction that the book is taking him. That is to say, where is the book going? How is it organized? The preamble, I think, gives us a clue to the literary structure and the rhetorical features. And these served as an aid to memory and to mastery.

It allowed inexperienced youth to be prepared for the complexities of civic and religious leadership by providing them a framework to successfully navigate the dangers and demands associated with it. And so, this was the goal of the book. I want to talk a little bit about the structure of the prologue, but before we get there, let me just say a few more words about the preamble.

I've noted that these verses serve as the introduction to the book and they give us the programmatic theme. And I also want to mention that there are some discussions about how this is organized. Many take verse one, in fact, to be connected to the rest of the preamble.

But I think that a better way of understanding this is to take it as an independent introduction to the book. That is to say, it functions as a title and it concludes as a programmatic theme. And so, as we work through that to see the purpose of the book, it really focuses on the middle of the chiasm, that is to say, the virtues of righteousness, justice, and acts of integrity.

So, my argument is that as the young person mastered this material, he would understand that the virtues of righteousness, justice, and integrity that are norms of Torah provide the baseline for the young person as he's mastering the material of wisdom. He's to inculcate righteousness, justice, and integrity. These were virtues that the Torah stipulated for the king.

In Deuteronomy, the king was to exhibit justice, and was to be characterized by concern for the common people of Israel. And so, these virtues were symptomatic of the leaders of ancient Israel and how they were to act and to live. So, if we understand that as a gateway into the book of Proverbs, I want to spend a few minutes then looking at the prologue itself as an example of elementary wisdom.

So, my argument is that Proverbs moves from simple forms of wisdom to more complex ones, and it begins with elementary wisdom that's focused on character formation. And so, this is Proverbs 1:8 through 9:18. Several features suggest that this is basic and essential wisdom. That is to say that the wisdom tutelage in the prologue begins in the home.

It begins with elementary instruction, and it focuses on character formation. And let me give you a few suggestions for why this is the case. First, the father-son relationship of the prologue links to a household context in keeping with customary origins for wisdom instruction.

That is to say, Israelite fathers typically passed on their vocations to their sons and were responsible for their social, moral, and religious training. The domestic scene here also implicitly carries the voice of the mother, which is an unusual feature in ancient Near Eastern wisdom, as well as the voice of the grandfather in Proverbs 4. The rhetorical strategy underscores this link between parental instruction and the will of Yahweh, echoing Deuteronomy's training regimen, whereby parents instruct their children by handing down to the next generation what Yahweh revealed through Moses. And so, this begins in the home.

Secondly, the prologue is addressed to the *peti*, that is to say, the inexperienced youth who is on the threshold of liminal entry into the realm of independent adulthood. Friedrich observes that the significance of this character as the principal addressee of the book is that *peti* signifies an unattached youth who must take responsibility for himself by navigating a risk-filled world in which the wise and the foolish both act to recruit him to their side. So, the naive and perhaps naturally wayward young man must identify and traverse the arduous path to wisdom if he is to avoid the temptations that prevail on either side, fools and the wise that would allure him from the path.

Third, the prologue elaborates upon the appealing, wholesome character of Lady Wisdom. Lady Wisdom is an active patroness for the young man in his pursuit of wisdom, and she's contrasted with the dangerous and seductive outside woman. As literary characters, both Lady Wisdom and the outside woman are developed most fully in the prologue.

At the outset of the young man's quest for wisdom, character, and integrity, Lady Wisdom has four speeches consisting of 48 verses and more than 325 words. She gives voice to roughly 10% of the words in the Masoretic text of Proverbs. And Lady Wisdom amplifies the father's counsel.

She speaks from the same vantage point and she affirms the same cultural values. At the conclusion of the book, the virtuous ideal wife embodies in her daily concerns and labors, the ethos of Lady Wisdom. Lady Wisdom and the virtuous wife are the

positive and desirable counterparts to Lady Folly and her protege, who is the seductive outside woman.

The latter is likely an upper-class married Israelite woman who presents an alluring enticement to the young addressee. She personifies what we might call a grave temptation to the youth must avoid at all costs. She is the embodiment of Lady Folly.

She promises illicit and fatal pleasures that lead ultimately to Sheol. A fourth reason that the prologue is focused on character formation involves the mood and the structure of the discourse. There are 10 speeches and five interludes, and these present a program of progressive instruction shaped and unified so as to prepare for the more complex wisdom of the Solomon One collection to follow in chapters 10 through 22.

I have two examples here on these two slides of the 10 Wisdom speeches, along with five excurses. Often the excurses entail the call of Lady Wisdom or of Lady Folly or some other appeal to the youth to follow a certain path toward wisdom. These speeches convey what we might call the imperatival urgency of the father's counsel to his potentially errant son.

In this way, the prologue of Proverbs mirrors the conventional sayings and formulas common to the wisdom traditions of the ancient Near East. They're aimed at the training of young scribes and officials recently appointed to the royal court. Another reason that the prologue of Proverbs focuses in this way on elementary wisdom and character formation is its focus on righteousness, justice, and integrity.

In the preamble, we already suggested that there was a focus on these virtues, and that focus continues in the prologue. That is to say, there are several verses in the prologue that specifically focus on this, notably in chapter two, verses eight and nine, as well as in chapter eight and verse 20. This set of virtues, righteousness, justice, and integrity constitute an essential part, an essential tenant necessary for the tutelage of future leaders.

These were virtues that were ideal for them to inculcate in their lives. And these reflect the norms of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy instructed the nation to have leaders who pursued legal and social justice as a concrete reflection of God's character in the land of Israel.

Kings especially were to cultivate a pious fear of Yahweh and allegiance to the Torah as a means of avoiding the pitfalls that commonly are associated with royal power, excessive wealth, wives, and military prestige, which cumulatively led to hubris and religious apostasy. Deuteronomy 17:14 through 20 outlines that for us. So, these are the ways that I think the prologue of Proverbs focuses on elementary wisdom and

character formation, moving the young person toward preparation for a greater understanding of what wisdom entails.

Beyond this, I noted that this domestic education is structured in 10 speeches and five interludes. And there's been some good work done on the nature of these speeches and their rhetorical strategy. Glenn Pemberton has done work suggesting that there are three categories of these different speeches.

They are calls to attention, and these focus on catchwords such as hear, pay attention, be attentive, incline the ear, and cry out. So, these are calls to attention, to get the attention of the young man so that he focuses correctly on wisdom. And then there are calls to remember and obey.

The calls to remember and obey, focus on words such as not abandoning, not forgetting, not being lost. So, both to get the attention of the young man and then to get him to remember and to obey the material that he's been given. And then the final category is warnings against the outside woman, the alien woman, or the strange woman.

These discourses use catchword verbs that advise the son to treasure wisdom, to guard himself and the wisdom that he's been entrusted to keep the commands and to follow appropriately. And so, along with these speeches, Lady Wisdom has an important and key role in the prologue. She functions in the role of a teacher, and sage, and several lengthy poems introduce her and her call to the young person.

She positions herself in a public place. She calls to the young male followers who will recognize her attractive qualities, embrace her counsel, and follow her guidance for their own livelihood and protection. And so, her first discourse or speech is an excursus in chapter one, 20 to 33.

And this is where she calls the young man to heed her counsel. It comes immediately on the heels of the father's first speech, a call to attention. His first speech involves an admonition to avoid violent and greedy associates, the kinds of gangs of reckless youth who will lead him toward paths of destruction.

Her counsel follows on the heels of this with what we might call a spirited confrontational speech, where she encourages the young person to remember that if he rejects her wisdom, there will be dire consequences, that she will in fact, scoff at him when he finds himself foundering on the rocks of his own folly. She will say in a wisdom sort of way, I told you that this would happen. And so, her speeches are woven into the other speeches to have a cumulatively impactful rhetorical impact on the young man as he works through this.

And so, the structure of the prologue I want to suggest conveys an intentionally arranged set of cumulative discourses that are intended to lead a young, inexperienced wisdom learner, the addressee of the book, the young inexperienced man, toward wisdom, maturity, and integrity in navigating the pitfalls of liminal adulthood. That is to say, someone on the threshold of moving into the phase of independent adulthood who needs to be encouraged and admonished along certain lines. If you've raised children, you know that they enter this key strategic period in their early teen years as they're navigating the world, trying to understand what sorts of people should I associate with. What's good to do? What's bad to do? I want to suggest that the book of Proverbs provides a curriculum for navigating this by presenting a world in which the young person begins to learn the types of counsel and advice he or she must follow and what kinds of persons to associate with, what kinds of things to avoid.

And so, it's aimed at character formation and getting the young person to follow the wisdom of the father and the mother, which is ultimately grounded in the wisdom of Yahweh and in the norms of the Torah. The prologue speeches affirm that Yahweh provides true and desirable wisdom. And this is reflected in the father's wise counsel as we move to Discourse Three.

Then we see a positive concern for societal good by cultivating virtuous civic behavior in Discourse Four for the common wheel of the community. Discourse Five reminds the youth that wisdom serves as his own reward. He's to follow wisdom and be rewarded accordingly.

The son must also heighten his powers of discernment by fostering superior discrimination and choosing the right path, Discourse Six suggests. Discourse Seven goes beyond this to say he must nurture a disciplined lifestyle characterized by proper thinking and self-control. He must regulate himself in order to pursue wisdom.

Then the speeches turn and the final three speeches are warnings with the father's mature instruction about the mortal dangers that surround illicit sex with outside women. And I think this fact suggests that there is indeed a movement toward greater maturity and more difficult themes. That is to say, the warnings against the illicit outside woman are not interspersed or sprinkled through all the discourses.

They come at the end. And it suggests that the young person after he has mastered the beauty of wisdom, the necessity of following the father's counsel, the necessity of doing this for the good of the community, of submitting himself to the norms of wisdom, he finally is ready to be instructed about the dangers of the outside woman who might tempt him to give his energy to nefarious purposes, which ultimately will destroy him. And this ends with a poignant vignette about an enticing woman's destruction of an unsuspecting fool.

Through the course of these 10 speeches, the young man has moved from the early temptations of bad friends and easy money to the worldly-wise temptations of forbidden sexual partners. He has matured in his wisdom capacity from avoiding violence and greed in the first speech to avoiding disillusion and sexual profligacy in the final speeches. And along the way, Lady Wisdom has reinforced the father's counsel.

She's presented her own appeal to the youth as a desirable and protective patroness for the adolescent youth. So, as we think about this, a focus that I had was on the seams along the way that suggest whether or not this is in fact advancing the young person. And I want to just say a few words about this.

I think that in fact, we can see an intentionality in how this is arranged. At the opening and conclusion of the prologue, there's a constellation of catchwords that echo the preamble. This suggests an intentional literary framework that is again, underscoring this wisdom training regimen, this training program.

The opening wisdom discourse in 1:8 to 1:19 links to the preamble through several catchwords, such as listen and correction. The second wisdom discourse, which I want to suggest, much like the book of Proverbs, I understand it as Psalms 1 and 2 have an introductory role in introducing the book. I think the first two speeches have the same function here.

And the second wisdom discourse amplifies this verbal connection to the preamble by repeating the terms, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. The pivot of the chiasm in the preamble with these ideas of righteousness, justice, and integrity comes toward the end of that second speech, where the father reiterates those words to sharpen the focus of his wisdom speeches as being grounded in the wisdom of Yahweh and leading to character formation along these lines. Likewise, when we get to the end of the prologue, we have a conclusion that echoes many of these themes.

Lady Wisdom grounds her final appeal in 9:10 in the fear of Yahweh, which echoes again, the opening theme verse of Proverbs 1:7, the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge. As in the preamble, where the inexperienced person, the inexperienced youth is the primary target. We also see him appearing in chapter 9 verses 4, 6, and 16.

Lady Wisdom extols the virtues of instructing a wise man so as to add to his teaching in 9:9, which echoes this collocation of terms in the preamble of wisdom, adding, and teaching in verse 5 of the preamble. Character types exhibiting righteousness and integrity are identified as significant addressees of wisdom and folly. This recalls the use of these character traits in the pivot verses of the preamble in 1:3. So, all of this

cumulatively suggests that the prologue has been intentionally arranged to move the youth who is being instructed in elementary wisdom, being grounded in character formation from the simplicity of the domestic context with a focus on these virtues of righteousness, integrity, and justice toward increasing application as he's ready to experience the outside world with all of its temptations so that he's properly instructed and ready to be facing the dangers and demands that will accompany him as he moves into the next phase of learning.

So, as we've followed the progression of the prologue, we've seen that the focus in the preamble of moving the inexperienced youth toward these virtues of righteousness, justice, and integrity is intentionally formed and arranged, embedded in the progressions of these seven wisdom collections. So, I'm suggesting that in the seven wisdom collections, the wisdom trainee is grounded in character formation, elemental forms of wisdom, and moving to greater complexity, and greater application. And so, we see this in chapters one through nine.

As we turn the corner into the next phase, the book changes its tone, and its themes. The type of instruction that we get moves to an aphorism, a binary kind of proverb. And so, we'll see as we move into the next chapters, that in fact, the young person is now beginning to make his way into the world and encountering different types of people.

And so, the grounding of that elementary wisdom in the home has prepared him now for the second phase, which is moving among character types that he begins to experience in life outside the home. As he does so, we'll see that his first entree into that world is to understand the black-and-white character types of the righteous and the wise versus the foolish and the wicked which he is to align himself with and which he is to avoid. As we move into these chapters, we'll see an increasing progression of themes that suggest growing maturity and a greater focus on how that young person can develop into the kind of leader who embodies the Torah and lives out its character qualities in his civic life.

This is Dr. Kyle Dunham in his teaching on the Structure and Theology in Proverbs, session one, Elementary Wisdom as Character Formation.