

Life with the grain of the universe proverbs



April - July 2017

'The fear of the Lord
is the beginning
of Wisdom' | Proverbs 1:7a



KIAMA ANGLICAN
CHURCHES

LIFE WITH THE GRAIN OF THE UNIVERSE

Studies in the Book of Proverbs

Having looked at the Sermon on the Mount and the events around Easter we now turn our Bible Study and Sermon attention to the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs is part of the “Writings” section of the Hebrew Old Testament and is considered to be the principal book of “Wisdom” in the Old Testament if not the whole Bible. It is in fact the most extended straight ethical section in the Scriptures.

As we ended the Sermon on the Mount we noted that Jesus said that the wise man was the one who ‘heard these words of mine and put them into practice’ (Matthew 7:24) and that he warned of the serious consequences of not doing so.

Wisdom in the end is living God’s way.

Mark Dever writes:

*Christians have always recognised the treasury of practical wisdom found in the Proverbs. When Paul wanted to talk about humility and unity, where did he turn? To the Proverbs. (Rom 12:16 cf. Proverbs 3:7; Rom 12:20, cf. Prov 25:21-22) When Peter wanted to write to young churches about conceit, dissensions, folly, and judgement, where did he turn? To the Proverbs. (1 Peter 5:5, cf. Prov 3:34; 1 Pet 4:18, cf. Prov 11:31, 2 Pet 2:22, Prov 26:11) When James wanted to talk about pride and presumption, where did he turn? To the Proverbs. (Jas 4:6, cf. Prov 3:34; Jas 4:13-14, cf. Prov 27:1) When the writer to the Hebrews wanted to encourage Christians who were enduring suffering, where did he turn? To the Proverbs. (Heb 12:5-6, cf. Prov 3:11-13.) Even Jesus himself wove a parable in Luke 14 out of one of these proverbs. (Luke 13:8-10, cf. Proverbs 25:6-7)**

We need to remember of course through all of this that our salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ through the great grace of God— we are not saved by keeping and doing the proverbs. We live by them as acts of thankfulness and as expressions of our relationship to Jesus.

Greg Holmes - May 2017

*Dever, M. Promises Made : The Message of the Old Testament (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2006) p508

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

The studies (1-9) were written by Andrew Errington (some of you may remember him he was part of the last Moore College Mission Team that came to Kiama. He is currently working on his PhD in Aberdeen, Scotland) and we are grateful for his permission to use these studies. The introductory study was written ‘in house’ and simple attempts to get our minds started on the idea of ‘Wisdom’ in the Scriptures. There is an appendix at the end of these studies with a few brief notes about how Hebrew “Poetry” works.

Timetable

Week End	Passage	Title	Comments	Page
Sun 7 May Intro	Proverbs	Wise? What is Wise?	THE WISE MAN BUILT	
Sun 14 May 1	Proverbs	The Beginning of Wisdom	WHY BELIEVING IN GOD IS A GOOD IDEA	
Sun 21 May 2	Proverbs	Righteousness Works	WHY CRIME DOES NOT PAY	
Sun 28 May 3	Proverbs	The Wisdom of Virtue	WHY IT'S BETTER NOT TO BLOW YOUR TOP	
Sun 4 Jun 4	Proverbs	The Wise Listener	WHY IT'S GOOD TO BE TOLD WHEN YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING DUMB	
Sun 11 Jun 5	Proverbs	The Wise Speaker	HOW TO SHUT UP	
Sun 18 Jun 6	Proverbs	Money, Work and Good Business	GOOD REASONS TO GET UP IN THE MORNING	
Sun 25 Jun 7	Proverbs	Living in Society	HOW TO PUT UP WITH OTHER PEOPLES	
Sun 2 Jul 8	Proverbs	Family and Home Life	WHY GETTING OLDER IS NOT NECESSARILY A DISASTER	
Sun 9 Jul 9	Proverbs	The Heart and its Master	WHY WE'RE NOT ROBOTS	

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

This 'little' book of notes is intended to provide some assistance as you work through these studies on Proverbs.

In many ways Proverbs is a very different book to the Scripture sections we have studied in the recent past and this results in studies that are somewhat different.

The first difference is that these studies represent a TOPICAL approach to Proverbs and so there is not just one passage which is the focus of our attention.

With this in mind I would offer the following comments/suggestions:

1. There is a lot to most of these studies and they will need careful time management and care to stay on track. In most of them it is important to get to the final parts of the studies.
2. Some have lots and lots of verses to look up. Given that I have printed below the verses in the longer lists in each study. These are identified by a capital letter (eg, (G)) which corresponds to the list. If you want it I can e-mail the lists unattached to the studies.
3. It is important to remember that the individual proverbs
 - a. Are not iron clad promises.
 - b. Are (almost) always true.
 - c. Do show us how to live a Godly life.
4. The principle of Head, Heart, Hands is a good one to apply here. That is in these verses
 - a. What do I need to KNOW (Head)
 - b. What do I need to BELIEVE (Heart)
 - c. What do I need to DO (Hands)
5. There are a few appendices at the end of this material, these are to provide resources as you study Proverbs.

Please note that these Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. I have accumulated lots of resource 'stuff' as I have prepared these. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.

e-mail: gregholmes@bigpond.com phone 0411 244 052

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Goldsworthy, G. Proverbs: Tree of Life (Reading the Bible Today) (Sydney South, Aquila, 1993)

Well known Australian author – probably the best to consult.

Kidner, D. “Proverbs” (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1964).

On of the classic standard commentaries.

Hubbard, D.A. Proverbs (The Preacher’s Commentary) (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1989)

Again a standard commentary – available in iBooks

Dever, M. Promises Made : The Message of the Old Testament (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2006)

The ‘sermon’ on Proverbs in this is well worth a read.

The article by Dan Wu in the current Southern Cross “How the World Works” is well worth a read.

Longman, T. Proverbs (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament) (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2006) A more recent ‘serious’ commentary on the book.

Goldingay, J. “Proverbs” in Carson, D.A.; France, R.T.; Motyer, J.A.; Wenham, G.J. (Eds) New Bible Commentary (21st Century Edition) (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

Goldsworthy, G. Gospel and Wisdom (in The Goldsworthy Trilogy) (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2000). *Great background reading. The ‘Goldsworthy Trilogy’ is available on iBooks.*

Koptak, P.E. The NIV Application Commentary : Proverbs (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997).

Lane, E. Proverbs (Focus on the Bible) (Ross-shire, Christian Focus, 2000)

Longman, T. How to Read Proverbs (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2002)

Murphy, R.E. Proverbs (Word Biblical Commentary) (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1998)

Ross, A.P. “Proverbs” in Longman, Tremper III, and Garland, D.E. (Eds) The Expositor’s Bible Commentary - Revised (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990)

The following Internet addresses are helpful –*but could take up lots of time.*

<https://www.ridley.edu.au/resource/2013-annual-preachers-conference/>

<https://australia.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reeve-prov1>

<http://www.dts.edu/media/play/fundamentals-for-preaching-the-proverbs-bruce-waltke/>

<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/proverbs/bruce-waltke?page=1>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-do-i-preach-expository-sermons-from-proverbs>

The Bible Project ‘videos’ on Reading Proverbs and the book itself are worth a look (at www.thebibleproject.com).

INTRODUCTORY STUDY.

This study seeks to introduce the topic of Wisdom and to stimulate our thinking about what a wise man is and what he does.

SOME BASICS

1. Look up Matthew 7:24-27. What does the 'Wise Man' do?

These, of course, are the last words of the Sermon on the Mount. Speaking of His words, Jesus says, that evidence of wisdom is hearing His words and doing them – that is a firm foundation.

The fool, in this case, hears but does not do.

2. Look up Proverbs 1:7; 9:10. What is the 'beginning of wisdom'?

The beginning of wisdom/knowledge is the fear of the Lord.

It is worth noting the parallelism in 9:10

Fear of the Lord // knowledge of the Holy one.

Beginning of wisdom // understanding.

In 1:7 the parallelism is antithetical – See the notes on Hebrew poetry at the end of the Bible Study booklet.

3. Read Proverbs 4:7. What is wisdom worth?

Putting it simply – everything.

The verse speaks of making a great effort to attain wisdom.

Note also 4:5-6.

4. Read James 3:17; James 1:5. What does James say wisdom is like? How does he say we can get it?

James says that wisdom is pure; peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

James recognises that the source of all true wisdom is God and counsels that God's people should continually ask God for that wisdom.

Incidentally the New Testament reading in most of our services during this series is from James which is the most 'wisdom like' of the New Testament letters.

5. From James 3:13, how is wisdom to be expressed?

'Wisdom is as wisdom does'

Wisdom is shown in deeds and the attitude that underlies those deeds.

As Dibelius points out, James' exhortation to the 'wise person' reads awkwardly, because he has combined two ideas in it: wisdom is to produce works and wisdom is to be characterized by humility. The first idea reminds us strongly of James' earlier demand that faith manifest itself in works. True wisdom, like real faith, is a vital, practical quality that has as much (or more) to do with the way we live as with what we think or say. In this James is true to the Old Testament conception of wisdom as a way of life, the attitude and conduct typical of a godly person. But James is even more interested in the second idea mentioned above, the qualities that wisdom

should manifest. In the meekness of wisdom is to be taken as qualifying the works; they are to be done 'in meekness' that characterizes, or springs from, 'wisdom'.

DEEPER AND WIDER

6. **Dr. Stephen Renn (Lecturer in Old Testament at SMBC) says: "Biblical Wisdom is not mere intellectual sharpness nor academic distinction, but relational appropriateness in submission to God." What does this mean for the way you show wisdom?**

For discussion.

Worth comparing to the words of James 3:13 above.

7. **Read 1 Kings 3:5-14. What offer did God make to Solomon? What did Solomon ask for? What other things could Solomon have asked for? So what did God give Solomon?**

Given the opportunity to have whatever he liked. (Surprisingly he didn't ask for a never ending packet of TimTams.)

He asks for Wisdom.

Lots he could have asked for – and God granted those as well

8. **Read 1 Kings 11:1-6. What did Solomon forget about being a wise man? (Hint: see question 1)**

Solomon seemed to forget that the truly wise man hears the words of God and OBEYS them.

APPLY

9. **Who is the wisest person you know? How does his or her wisdom fit with what we have seen above?**

For discussion.

The answer is Jesus – ultimately.

But some discussion about wise people we know, here and now, could be helpful.

10. **How can you be more wise?**

I think what Jesus says in Matthew 7:24ff is that firstly we should immerse ourselves in His words. That is, the Scriptures.

And note

A Quote: "Not until we have become humble and teachable standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty Acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours." J.I. PACKER

About these studies

Life with the Grain of the Universe is a series of nine studies on the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is often a difficult book to approach. For the most part, it consists of individual sayings, often with no connection from one to the next. The aim of this series is to make things easier, and to draw out some of the teaching of Proverbs, which has great value for the life of Christ's disciples in this age.

Briefly, the structure of Proverbs is as follows:

1:1-9:18 — Introduction to wisdom and foolishness, often with long connected sections in verse.

10:1-22:16 — The Proverbs of Solomon. Mostly individual sayings, not especially connected to one another.

22:17-31:31 — Further collections of wisdom. These are often in more connected chunks.

- i. 22:17-24:34 – The words of the wise
- ii. 25:1-29:27 – further sayings of Solomon collected by Hezekiah's officials
- iii. 30:1-33 – The oracle of Agur
- iv. 31:1-31 – The oracle of king Lemuel's mother.

These studies, however, are organised not chronologically, but by theme. This is because of the conviction that this is a productive way to read the book of Proverbs. Organisation by theme means that there is a lot of flipping around. However, this thematic approach repays the effort, as Proverbs really is particularly concerned with a number of themes and when its wisdom is heard together the message can be very powerful. Some proverbs, of course, deal with more than one theme, and so there will be some overlap between studies. But in general, the themes are distinct. By the end of these studies, almost all of Proverbs will have been read.

The most difficult issue for the Christian reader of Proverbs is how this book fits into the whole story of the Bible. The genesis of Proverbs was a particular time in Israel's history (the success of the monarchy under Solomon), and its wisdom bears the marks of that experience. Its overall message can be summarized simply: righteousness works. Proverbs is concerned with wisdom, that is, with how to live sensibly in this world, how to live in a way that works (with the grain of the universe); and its answer is that what's wise is actually to be righteous. So the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (see Study 1). The obvious question that arises when faced with this teaching is: what about when righteousness doesn't work? What about when the righteous perish along with the wicked? (Which, of course, is the challenge of Ecclesiastes.) This big issue is dealt with in Study 2 (see notes). It is ultimately resolved only in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the promise of the vindication of righteousness in the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Proverbs is a strange book to our ears. There is much that is unfamiliar. Yet it contains powerful wisdom, and can be very fruitful in helping us with the nitty-gritty of discipleship, of loving God in real life amongst real people. I hope you will find it a blessing, as I have.

Andrew Errington.

STUDY 1: THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM
(OR, WHY BELIEVING IN GOD IS A GOOD IDEA)

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” (9:10)

This study is both an introduction to Proverbs as a whole and an examination of its central theme: wisdom. It begins by looking at Proverbs teaching of the value of wisdom and the way its fruit is shown in the contrast between the wise and the foolish. It then moves on the great refrain of Proverbs that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. This idea is examined, and then applied through Jesus’ conclusion to the sermon on the mount, where he explicitly draws on the contrast between the wise man and the foolish man and interprets it around obedience to his word. As this is the first study, it will be well worth reaching the end, where the discussion may be the most fruitful.

Proverbs References (Referred to in the longer lists in the studies.)
(Capital letters indicate which list is which.)

A

- Proverbs 9:13 The woman Folly is loud;
she is undisciplined and without knowledge.
- 14 She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat at the highest point of the city,
- 15 calling out to those who pass by,
who go straight on their way.
- 16 “Let all who are simple come in here!”
she says to those who lack judgment.
- 17 “Stolen water is sweet;
food eaten in secret is delicious!”
- 18 But little do they know that the dead are there,
that her guests are in the depths of the grave.
- Proverbs 10:23 A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct,
but a man of understanding delights in wisdom.
- Proverbs 13:16 Every prudent man acts out of knowledge,
but a fool exposes his folly.
- Proverbs 14:6 The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none,
but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.
- Proverbs 14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways,
but the folly of fools is deception.
- Proverbs 14:15 A simple man believes anything,
but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.
- Proverbs 14:18 The simple inherit folly,
but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
- Proverbs 14:24 The wealth of the wise is their crown,
- Kiama Anglican Churches: Proverbs: May – July 2017

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

but the folly of fools yields folly.

- Proverbs 14:33 Wisdom reposes in the heart of the discerning
and even among fools she lets herself be known.
- Proverbs 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the hearts of fools.
- Proverbs 15:14 The discerning heart seeks knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.
- Proverbs 15:21 Folly delights a man who lacks judgment,
but a man of understanding keeps a straight course.
- Proverbs 17:12 Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs
than a fool in his folly.
- Proverbs 17:16 Of what use is money in the hand of a fool,
since he has no desire to get wisdom?
- Proverbs 17:21 To have a fool for a son brings grief;
there is no joy for the father of a fool.
- Proverbs 17:24 A discerning man keeps wisdom in view,
but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.
- Proverbs 18:15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge;
the ears of the wise seek it out.
- Proverbs 20:5 The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters,
but a man of understanding draws them out.
- Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge,
but the simple keep going and suffer for it.
- Proverbs 22:10 Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife;
quarrels and insults are ended.
- Proverbs 24:7 Wisdom is too high for a fool;
in the assembly at the gate he has nothing to say.
- Proverbs 26:1 Like snow in summer or rain in harvest,
honor is not fitting for a fool.
- Proverbs 26:2 Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow,
an undeserved curse does not come to rest.
- Proverbs 26:3 A whip for the horse, a halter for the donkey,
and a rod for the backs of fools!
- Proverbs 26:4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
or you will be like him yourself.
- Proverbs 26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
or he will be wise in his own eyes.
- Proverbs 26:6 Like cutting off one's feet or drinking violence
is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool.
- Proverbs 26:7 Like a lame man's legs that hang limp
is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.
- Proverbs 26:8 Like tying a stone in a sling
is the giving of honor to a fool.
- Proverbs 26:9 Like a thornbush in a drunkard's hand
is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.
- Proverbs 26:10 Like an archer who wounds at random
is he who hires a fool or any passer-by.
- Proverbs 26:11 As a dog returns to its vomit,
so a fool repeats his folly.
- Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 27:12 The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 27:22 Though you grind a fool in a mortar,
grinding him like grain with a pestle,
you will not remove his folly from him.

Proverbs 28:26 He who trusts in himself is a fool,
but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

B

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Proverbs 2:1 My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,

2 turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,

3 and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,

4 and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,

5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD gives wisdom,
and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

7 He holds victory in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

8 for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.

8 This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 10:27 The fear of the LORD adds length to life,
but the years of the wicked are cut short.

Proverbs 14:2 He whose walk is upright fears the LORD,
but he whose ways are devious despises him.

Proverbs 14:9 Fools mock at making amends for sin,
but goodwill is found among the upright.

Proverbs 14:26 He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress,
and for his children it will be a refuge.

Proverbs 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
turning a man from the snares of death.

Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom,
and humility comes before honor.

Proverbs 16:6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for;

through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.
Proverbs 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life:
Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.
Proverbs 22:4 Humility and the fear of the LORD
bring wealth and honor and life.
Proverbs 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,
but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.
Proverbs 24:21 Fear the LORD and the king, my son,
and do not join with the rebellious,
22 for those two will send sudden destruction upon them,
and who knows what calamities they can bring?

STUDY 2: RIGHTEOUSNESS WORKS!

(OR, WHY CRIME DOESN'T REALLY PAY, IN THE END)

“The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked goes out.”
(13:9)

This is probably the most difficult study, but its ideas are absolutely central to proverbs and it needs to be dealt with early on. It looks at the fundamental theological claim of the book of Proverbs as a whole, the message that *righteousness works*. Proverbs is concerned with the question of wisdom – what way of life works in this world; and its ultimate answer is: the way of righteousness. This is why the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (study 1). The question this raises, however, is, what about when it doesn't? This is the question of Ecclesiastes, which sees the righteous as faring no better than the wicked and so almost despairs that everything is “meaningless”! Proverbs itself is not unaware of this problem (as, I believe, Prov. 11:4, 18, 21; 12:28; 23:15-18 hint at); but it is not its main concern. The resolution to this dilemma is ultimately found only in the promise of resurrection and the assurance of final judgment. The aim of this study, therefore, is to raise this problem, see it for what it is, point to its resolution, and recognise that Proverbs needs to be understood in the light of that broader story – essentially, that is, this study attempts to situate Proverbs within its whole biblical context.

A
Proverbs 10:2 Ill-gotten treasures are of no value,
but righteousness delivers from death.
Proverbs 10:3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.
Proverbs 10:6 Blessings crown the head of the righteous,
but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.
Proverbs 10:7 The memory of the righteous will be a blessing,
but the name of the wicked will rot.
Kiama Anglican Churches: Proverbs: May – July 2017

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 10:16 The wages of the righteous bring them life,
but the income of the wicked brings them punishment.
- Proverbs 10:24 What the wicked dreads will overtake him;
what the righteous desire will be granted.
- Proverbs 10:25 When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone,
but the righteous stand firm forever.
- Proverbs 10:27 The fear of the LORD adds length to life,
but the years of the wicked are cut short.
- Proverbs 10:28 The prospect of the righteous is joy,
but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.
- Proverbs 10:29 The way of the LORD is a refuge for the righteous,
but it is the ruin of those who do evil.
- Proverbs 10:30 The righteous will never be uprooted,
but the wicked will not remain in the land.
- Proverbs 11:4 Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath,
but righteousness delivers from death.
- Proverbs 11:5 The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them,
but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.
- Proverbs 11:6 The righteousness of the upright delivers them,
but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.
- Proverbs 11:7 When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes;
all he expected from his power comes to nothing.
- Proverbs 11:8 The righteous man is rescued from trouble,
and it comes on the wicked instead.
- Proverbs 11:18 The wicked man earns deceptive wages,
but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.
- Proverbs 11:19 The truly righteous man attains life,
but he who pursues evil goes to his death.
- Proverbs 11:21 Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished,
but those who are righteous will go free.
- Proverbs 11:23 The desire of the righteous ends only in good,
but the hope of the wicked only in wrath.
- Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
and he who wins souls is wise.
- Proverbs 11:31 If the righteous receive their due on earth,
how much more the ungodly and the sinner!
- Proverbs 12:2 A good man obtains favor from the LORD,
but the LORD condemns a crafty man.
- Proverbs 12:3 A man cannot be established through wickedness,
but the righteous cannot be uprooted.
- Proverbs 12:7 Wicked men are overthrown and are no more,
but the house of the righteous stands firm.
- Proverbs 12:12 The wicked desire the plunder of evil men,
but the root of the righteous flourishes.
- Proverbs 12:21 No harm befalls the righteous,
but the wicked have their fill of trouble.
- Proverbs 12:28 In the way of righteousness there is life;
along that path is immortality.
- Proverbs 13:6 Righteousness guards the man of integrity,
but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 13:9 The light of the righteous shines brightly,
but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.
- Proverbs 13:15 Good understanding wins favor,
but the way of the unfaithful is hard.
- Proverbs 13:21 Misfortune pursues the sinner,
but prosperity is the reward of the righteous.
- Proverbs 13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children,
but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.
- Proverbs 13:25 The righteous eat to their hearts' content,
but the stomach of the wicked goes hungry.
- Proverbs 14:11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed,
but the tent of the upright will flourish.
- Proverbs 14:14 The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways,
and the good man rewarded for his.
- Proverbs 14:19 Evil men will bow down in the presence of the good,
and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
- Proverbs 14:32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down,
but even in death the righteous have a refuge.
- Proverbs 15:6 The house of the righteous contains great treasure,
but the income of the wicked brings them trouble.
- Proverbs 15:8 The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked,
but the prayer of the upright pleases him.
- Proverbs 15:9 The LORD detests the way of the wicked
but he loves those who pursue righteousness.
- Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.
- Proverbs 16:17 The highway of the upright avoids evil;
he who guards his way guards his life.
- Proverbs 21:7 The violence of the wicked will drag them away,
for they refuse to do what is right.
- Proverbs 21:12 The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked
and brings the wicked to ruin.
- Proverbs 21:21 He who pursues righteousness and love
finds life, prosperity and honor.
- Proverbs 22:4 Humility and the fear of the LORD
bring wealth and honor and life.
- Proverbs 24:15 Do not lie in wait like an outlaw against a righteous man's house,
do not raid his dwelling place;
- 16 for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again,
but the wicked are brought down by calamity.
- Proverbs 24:19 Do not fret because of evil men
or be envious of the wicked,
- 20 for the evil man has no future hope,
and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.
- Proverbs 28:10 He who leads the upright along an evil path
will fall into his own trap,
but the blameless will receive a good inheritance.
- Proverbs 28:18 He whose walk is blameless is kept safe,
but he whose ways are perverse will suddenly fall.
- Proverbs 29:6 An evil man is snared by his own sin,

but a righteous one can sing and be glad.
Proverbs 29:16 When the wicked thrive, so does sin,
but the righteous will see their downfall.

STUDY 3: THE WISDOM OF VIRTUE (OR, WHY IT'S BETTER NOT TO BLOW YOUR TOP)

“One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city.” (16:32)

This may be a fairly short study, possibly allowing time for extra prayer etc. In general, it consists in a look at a number of proverbs that can be reasonably grouped under the heading of virtue. They cover a number of issues, but they have particularly to do with ideas of temperament and character. These proverbs provide a really valuable opportunity for people to think about these deeper issues of character: what type of person do I want to be, in Christ? We often focus mainly on “doing” things of discipleship; but these proverbs focus on “being” questions. So take time over the questions that discuss the issues at the end. If you wanted, you might consider using Galatians 5:22, on the fruit of the Spirit, as a comparison to help think about Christian character.

A
Proverbs 3:3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.
Proverbs 10:9 The man of integrity walks securely,
but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.
Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up dissension,
but love covers over all wrongs.
Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
but with humility comes wisdom.
Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.
Proverbs 11:16 A kindhearted woman gains respect,
but ruthless men gain only wealth.
Proverbs 11:17 A kind man benefits himself,
but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.
Proverbs 11:20 The LORD detests men of perverse heart
but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.
Proverbs 11:27 He who seeks good finds goodwill,
but evil comes to him who searches for it.
Proverbs 12:10 A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal,
but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 12:16 A fool shows his annoyance at once,
but a prudent man overlooks an insult.
- Proverbs 14:16 A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil,
but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.
- Proverbs 14:17 A quick-tempered man does foolish things,
and a crafty man is hated.
- Proverbs 14:29 A patient man has great understanding,
but a quick-tempered man displays folly.
- Proverbs 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body,
but envy rots the bones.
- Proverbs 15:18 A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension,
but a patient man calms a quarrel.
- Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom,
and humility comes before honor.
- Proverbs 16:5 The LORD detests all the proud of heart.
Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 16:6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for;
through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.
- Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction,
a haughty spirit before a fall.
- Proverbs 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior,
a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.
- Proverbs 17:9 He who covers over an offense promotes love,
but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.
- Proverbs 17:13 If a man pays back evil for good,
evil will never leave his house.
- Proverbs 17:27 A man of knowledge uses words with restraint,
and a man of understanding is even-tempered.
- Proverbs 18:12 Before his downfall a man's heart is proud,
but humility comes before honor.
- Proverbs 19:2 It is not good to have zeal without knowledge,
nor to be hasty and miss the way.
- Proverbs 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience;
it is to his glory to overlook an offense.
- Proverbs 19:19 A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty;
if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.
- Proverbs 19:22 What a man desires is unfailing love;
better to be poor than a liar.
- Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;
whoever is led astray by them is not wise.
- Proverbs 20:3 It is to a man's honor to avoid strife,
but every fool is quick to quarrel.
- Proverbs 20:6 Many a man claims to have unfailing love,
but a faithful man who can find?
- Proverbs 20:7 The righteous man leads a blameless life;
blessed are his children after him.
- Proverbs 20:22 Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!"
Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.
- Proverbs 21:4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart,
the lamp of the wicked, are sin!

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead to profit
as surely as haste leads to poverty.
- Proverbs 21:8 The way of the guilty is devious,
but the conduct of the innocent is upright.
- Proverbs 21:10 The wicked man craves evil;
his neighbor gets no mercy from him.
- Proverbs 21:24 The proud and arrogant man—"Mocker" is his name;
he behaves with overweening pride.
- Proverbs 21:29 A wicked man puts up a bold front,
but an upright man gives thought to his ways.
- Proverbs 22:5 In the paths of the wicked lie thorns and snares,
but he who guards his soul stays far from them.
- Proverbs 23:19 Listen, my son, and be wise,
and keep your heart on the right path.
- Proverbs 23:20 Do not join those who drink too much wine
or gorge themselves on meat,
21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor,
and drowsiness clothes them in rags.
- Proverbs 23:29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaints?
Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?
- Proverbs 23:30 Those who linger over wine,
who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.
- Proverbs 23:31 Do not gaze at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup,
when it goes down smoothly!
- Proverbs 23:32 In the end it bites like a snake
and poisons like a viper.
- Proverbs 23:33 Your eyes will see strange sights
and your mind imagine confusing things.
- Proverbs 23:34 You will be like one sleeping on the high seas,
lying on top of the rigging.
- Proverbs 23:35 "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt!
They beat me, but I don't feel it!
When will I wake up
so I can find another drink?"
- Proverbs 24:8 He who plots evil
will be known as a schemer.
- Proverbs 24:9 The schemes of folly are sin,
and men detest a mocker.
- Proverbs 24:10 If you falter in times of trouble,
how small is your strength!
- Proverbs 24:11 Rescue those being led away to death;
hold back those staggering toward slaughter.
- Proverbs 24:12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this,"
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who guards your life know it?
Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?
- Proverbs 24:17 Do not gloat when your enemy falls;
when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice,

- 18 or the LORD will see and disapprove
and turn his wrath away from him.
- Proverbs 25:14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.
- Proverbs 25:16 If you find honey, eat just enough—
too much of it, and you will vomit.
- Proverbs 25:19 Like a bad tooth or a lame foot
is reliance on the unfaithful in times of trouble.
- Proverbs 25:26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted well
is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked.
- Proverbs 25:27 It is not good to eat too much honey,
nor is it honorable to seek one's own honor.
- Proverbs 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down
is a man who lacks self-control.
- Proverbs 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;
someone else, and not your own lips.
- Proverbs 27:4 Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming,
but who can stand before jealousy?
- Proverbs 27:21 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold,
but man is tested by the praise he receives.
- Proverbs 28:1 The wicked man flees though no one pursues,
but the righteous are as bold as a lion.
- Proverbs 28:14 Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD,
but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.
- Proverbs 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed,
but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his anger,
but a wise man keeps himself under control.
- Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up dissension,
and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.
- Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride brings him low,
but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.
- Proverbs 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare,
but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.
- Proverbs 30:12 those who are pure in their own eyes
and yet are not cleansed of their filth;

STUDY 4: THE WISE LISTENER

(OR, WHY IT'S GOOD TO BE TOLD WHEN YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING DUMB)

*“Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper, and happy are those
who trust in the Lord.” (16:20)*

This is a relatively short study, but a terribly useful one. It deals with issues of guidance and its relationship to the wisdom of listening. It begins with proverbs that stress our limited perspective and God's sovereignty and then moves to proverbs about listening. The idea that wisdom involves listening to advice and being willing

Kiama Anglican Churches: Proverbs: May – July 2017

to be rebuked is repeated again and again in proverbs, and every generation, perhaps especially ours, needs this reminder. Finally, the study looks at questions of who it is wise to listen to, and above all, the need to trust in God's word for guidance.

A

Proverbs 1:8 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

9 They will be a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.

Proverbs 9:7 "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult;
whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse.

8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you;
rebuke a wise man and he will love you.

9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still;
teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

Proverbs 10:17 He who heeds discipline shows the way to life,
but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but he who hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool seems right to him,
but a wise man listens to advice.

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son heeds his father's instruction,
but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 13:10 Pride only breeds quarrels,
but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

Proverbs 13:18 He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame,
but whoever heeds correction is honored.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool spurns his father's discipline,
but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

Proverbs 15:10 Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path;
he who hates correction will die.

Proverbs 15:12 A mocker resents correction;
he will not consult the wise.

Proverbs 15:31 He who listens to a life-giving rebuke
will be at home among the wise.

Proverbs 15:32 He who ignores discipline despises himself,
but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.

Proverbs 17:10 A rebuke impresses a man of discernment
more than a hundred lashes a fool.

Proverbs 19:20 Listen to advice and accept instruction,
and in the end you will be wise.

Proverbs 19:25 Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence;
rebuke a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge.

Proverbs 19:27 Stop listening to instruction, my son,
and you will stray from the words of knowledge.

Proverbs 21:11 When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom;
when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge.

Proverbs 25:12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold
is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.

Proverbs 29:1 A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.

STUDY 5: THE WISE SPEAKER (OR, HOW TO SHUT UP)

“One who gives an honest answer gives a kiss on the lips.” (24:26)

Following on from Study 4, this study looks at the teaching of Proverbs about wise speech. It moves from sayings that highlight the power of words, through the contrast made in proverbs between the speech of the wicked and righteous and its effects, to a concrete look at what Proverbs sees as good speech. Proverbs emphasises a number of things we don't always think about, such as the wisdom of being very careful with our words, and the need to avoid gossip and false speech. This leads to a final consideration of Jesus' stark words in Matthew 12:33-37, and then a call to cultivate truly good speech. This is an important area of discipleship (as Jesus makes very clear); and Proverbs can help us a great deal. Not all the questions will work perfectly, but it will be worth it to get through all the sayings.

STUDY 5

A

- Proverbs 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.
- Proverbs 10:20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver,
but the heart of the wicked is of little value.
- Proverbs 10:21 The lips of the righteous nourish many,
but fools die for lack of judgment.
- Proverbs 10:31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,
but a perverse tongue will be cut out.
- Proverbs 10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is fitting,
but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.
- Proverbs 12:6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood,
but the speech of the upright rescues them.
- Proverbs 12:13 An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk,
but a righteous man escapes trouble.
- Proverbs 13:2 From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things,
but the unfaithful have a craving for violence.
- Proverbs 14:3 A fool's talk brings a rod to his back,
but the lips of the wise protect them.
- Proverbs 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the hearts of fools.
- Proverbs 15:14 The discerning heart seeks knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.
- Proverbs 16:13 Kings take pleasure in honest lips;
they value a man who speaks the truth.
- Proverbs 16:27 A scoundrel plots evil,

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

and his speech is like a scorching fire.

- Proverbs 17:20 A man of perverse heart does not prosper;
he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble.
- Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips bring him strife,
and his mouth invites a beating.
- Proverbs 18:7 A fool's mouth is his undoing,
and his lips are a snare to his soul.
- Proverbs 22:12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge,
but he frustrates the words of the unfaithful.

B

- Proverbs 10:14 Wise men store up knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.
- Proverbs 10:19 When words are many, sin is not absent,
but he who holds his tongue is wise.
- Proverbs 11:12 A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor,
but a man of understanding holds his tongue.
- Proverbs 12:23 A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself,
but the heart of fools blurts out folly.
- Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life,
but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.
- Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.
- Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous weighs its answers,
but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.
- Proverbs 17:27 A man of knowledge uses words with restraint,
and a man of understanding is even-tempered.
- Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent,
and discerning if he holds his tongue.
- Proverbs 18:2 A fool finds no pleasure in understanding
but delights in airing his own opinions.
- Proverbs 18:13 He who answers before listening—
that is his folly and his shame.
- Proverbs 18:17 The first to present his case seems right,
till another comes forward and questions him.
- Proverbs 20:25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly
and only later to consider his vows.
- Proverbs 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself from calamity.
- Proverbs 23:9 Do not speak to a fool,
for he will scorn the wisdom of your words.
- Proverbs 26:4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
or you will be like him yourself.
- Proverbs 26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
or he will be wise in his own eyes.
- Proverbs 27:14 If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning,
it will be taken as a curse.
- Proverbs 29:20 Do you see a man who speaks in haste?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.
- Proverbs 30:32 "If you have played the fool and exalted yourself,

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

or if you have planned evil,
clap your hand over your mouth!

Proverbs 30:33 For as churning the milk produces butter,
and as twisting the nose produces blood,
so stirring up anger produces strife.”

C

- Proverbs 10:18 He who conceals his hatred has lying lips,
and whoever spreads slander is a fool.
- Proverbs 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
- Proverbs 12:17 A truthful witness gives honest testimony,
but a false witness tells lies.
- Proverbs 12:19 Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.
- Proverbs 12:22 The LORD detests lying lips,
but he delights in men who are truthful.
- Proverbs 13:5 The righteous hate what is false,
but the wicked bring shame and disgrace.
- Proverbs 14:5 A truthful witness does not deceive,
but a false witness pours out lies.
- Proverbs 14:25 A truthful witness saves lives,
but a false witness is deceitful.
- Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension,
and a gossip separates close friends.
- Proverbs 17:4 A wicked man listens to evil lips;
a liar pays attention to a malicious tongue.
- Proverbs 17:7 Arrogant lips are unsuited to a fool—
how much worse lying lips to a ruler!
- Proverbs 18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;
they go down to a man’s inmost parts.
- Proverbs 19:1 Better a poor man whose walk is blameless
than a fool whose lips are perverse.
- Proverbs 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who pours out lies will not go free.
- Proverbs 19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who pours out lies will perish.
- Proverbs 19:22 What a man desires is unfailing love;
better to be poor than a liar.
- Proverbs 19:28 A corrupt witness mocks at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked gulps down evil.
- Proverbs 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence;
so avoid a man who talks too much.
- Proverbs 21:6 A fortune made by a lying tongue
is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare.
- Proverbs 21:28 A false witness will perish,
and whoever listens to him will be destroyed forever.
- Proverbs 25:18 Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow
is the man who gives false testimony against his neighbor.
- Proverbs 25:23 As a north wind brings rain,

- so a sly tongue brings angry looks.
- Proverbs 26:20 Without wood a fire goes out;
without gossip a quarrel dies down.
- Proverbs 26:22 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;
they go down to a man's inmost parts.
- Proverbs 26:23 Like a coating of glaze over earthenware
are fervent lips with an evil heart.
- Proverbs 26:24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips,
but in his heart he harbors deceit.
- Proverbs 26:25 Though his speech is charming, do not believe him,
for seven abominations fill his heart.
- Proverbs 26:26 His malice may be concealed by deception,
but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
- Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.
- Proverbs 27:5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.
- Proverbs 28:23 He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor
than he who has a flattering tongue.
- Proverbs 29:5 Whoever flatters his neighbor
is spreading a net for his feet.

STUDY 6: MONEY, WORK, AND GOOD BUSINESS (OR, GOOD REASONS TO GET UP IN THE MORNING)

“The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.” (22:2)

This study deals with economic life and the overlapping issues of wealth and poverty and work and laziness. Proverbs has strong teaching on all these areas, and it can be very helpful. There are a lot of sayings to get through, some quite odd; but persevere, because the combined effect is quite powerful. The study ends by looking at Jesus teaching in Luke 12:13-21, which is a helpful way of locating the material in Proverbs within the Bible's broader perspective. It is important to stress the negative (“be on your guard against all kinds of greed”, v.15) but all also to think positively (how can we serve God with our money?).

- A
- Proverbs 10:15 The wealth of the rich is their fortified city,
but poverty is the ruin of the poor.
- Proverbs 10:22 The blessing of the LORD brings wealth,
and he adds no trouble to it.
- Proverbs 11:24 One man gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.
- Proverbs 11:28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 12:9 Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant
than pretend to be somebody and have no food.
- Proverbs 13:7 One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing;
another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.
- Proverbs 13:8 A man's riches may ransom his life,
but a poor man hears no threat.
- Proverbs 13:11 Dishonest money dwindles away,
but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.
- Proverbs 13:23 A poor man's field may produce abundant food,
but injustice sweeps it away.
- Proverbs 14:20 The poor are shunned even by their neighbors,
but the rich have many friends.
- Proverbs 14:21 He who despises his neighbor sins,
but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.
- Proverbs 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.
- Proverbs 15:15 All the days of the oppressed are wretched,
but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.
- Proverbs 15:16 Better a little with the fear of the LORD
than great wealth with turmoil.
- Proverbs 15:17 Better a meal of vegetables where there is love
than a fattened calf with hatred.
- Proverbs 15:25 The LORD tears down the proud man's house
but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.
- Proverbs 16:8 Better a little with righteousness
than much gain with injustice.
- Proverbs 17:5 He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker;
whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 18:11 The wealth of the rich is their fortified city;
they imagine it an unscalable wall.
- Proverbs 18:23 A poor man pleads for mercy,
but a rich man answers harshly.
- Proverbs 19:4 Wealth brings many friends,
but a poor man's friend deserts him.
- Proverbs 19:6 Many curry favor with a ruler,
and everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts.
- Proverbs 19:7 A poor man is shunned by all his relatives—
how much more do his friends avoid him!
Though he pursues them with pleading,
they are nowhere to be found.
- Proverbs 19:17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD,
and he will reward him for what he has done.
- Proverbs 21:13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor,
he too will cry out and not be answered.
- Proverbs 21:17 He who loves pleasure will become poor;
whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.
- Proverbs 21:26 All day long he craves for more,
but the righteous give without sparing.
- Proverbs 22:1 A good name is more desirable than great riches;
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 22:2 Rich and poor have this in common:
The LORD is the Maker of them all.
- Proverbs 22:7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is servant to the lender.
- Proverbs 22:9 A generous man will himself be blessed,
for he shares his food with the poor.
- Proverbs 22:16 He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth
and he who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.
- Proverbs 22:22 Do not exploit the poor because they are poor
and do not crush the needy in court,
23 for the LORD will take up their case
and will plunder those who plunder them.
- Proverbs 23:1 When you sit to dine with a ruler,
note well what is before you,
2 and put a knife to your throat
if you are given to gluttony.
- Proverbs 23:3 Do not crave his delicacies,
for that food is deceptive.
- Proverbs 23:4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
have the wisdom to show restraint.
- Proverbs 23:5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone,
for they will surely sprout wings
and fly off to the sky like an eagle.
- Proverbs 23:6 Do not eat the food of a stingy man,
do not crave his delicacies;
7 for he is the kind of man
who is always thinking about the cost.
“Eat and drink,” he says to you,
but his heart is not with you.
- Proverbs 23:8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten
and will have wasted your compliments.
- Proverbs 28:6 Better a poor man whose walk is blameless
than a rich man whose ways are perverse.
- Proverbs 28:8 He who increases his wealth by exorbitant interest
amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor.
- Proverbs 28:11 A rich man may be wise in his own eyes,
but a poor man who has discernment sees through him.
- Proverbs 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed,
but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 28:21 To show partiality is not good—
yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread.
- Proverbs 28:22 A stingy man is eager to get rich
and is unaware that poverty awaits him.
- Proverbs 28:25 A greedy man stirs up dissension,
but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.
- Proverbs 28:27 He who gives to the poor will lack nothing,
but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.
- Proverbs 29:7 The righteous care about justice for the poor,
but the wicked have no such concern.
- Proverbs 29:13 The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both.
Proverbs 30:7 “Two things I ask of you, O LORD;
do not refuse me before I die:
Proverbs 30:8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.
Proverbs 30:9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you
and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’
Or I may become poor and steal,
and so dishonor the name of my God.
Proverbs 30:13 those whose eyes are ever so haughty,
whose glances are so disdainful;
14 those whose teeth are swords
and whose jaws are set with knives
to devour the poor from the earth,
the needy from among mankind.

B

Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard;
consider its ways and be wise!
7 It has no commander,
no overseer or ruler,
8 yet it stores its provisions in summer
and gathers its food at harvest.
Proverbs 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard?
When will you get up from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest—
11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit
and scarcity like an armed man.
Proverbs 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor,
but diligent hands bring wealth.
Proverbs 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
so is a sluggard to those who send him.
Proverbs 12:11 He who works his land will have abundant food,
but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.
Proverbs 12:14 From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things
as surely as the work of his hands rewards him.
Proverbs 12:24 Diligent hands will rule,
but laziness ends in slave labor.
Proverbs 12:27 The lazy man does not roast his game,
but the diligent man prizes his possessions.
Proverbs 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing,
but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.
Proverbs 14:23 All hard work brings a profit,
but mere talk leads only to poverty.
Proverbs 15:19 The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns,
but the path of the upright is a highway.
Proverbs 16:26 The laborer’s appetite works for him;
his hunger drives him on.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 18:9 One who is slack in his work
is brother to one who destroys.
- Proverbs 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep,
and the shiftless man goes hungry.
- Proverbs 19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
he will not even bring it back to his mouth!
- Proverbs 20:4 A sluggard does not plow in season;
so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.
- Proverbs 20:13 Do not love sleep or you will grow poor;
stay awake and you will have food to spare.
- Proverbs 21:25 The sluggard's craving will be the death of him,
because his hands refuse to work.
- Proverbs 22:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!"
or, "I will be murdered in the streets!"
- Proverbs 24:30 I went past the field of the sluggard,
past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment;
31 thorns had come up everywhere,
the ground was covered with weeds,
and the stone wall was in ruins.
- Proverbs 24:32 I applied my heart to what I observed
and learned a lesson from what I saw:
- Proverbs 24:33 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest—
34 and poverty will come on you like a bandit
and scarcity like an armed man.
- Proverbs 26:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road,
a fierce lion roaming the streets!"
- Proverbs 26:14 As a door turns on its hinges,
so a sluggard turns on his bed.
- Proverbs 26:15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.
- Proverbs 26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
than seven men who answer discreetly.
- Proverbs 28:19 He who works his land will have abundant food,
but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

C

- Proverbs 3:27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it,
when it is in your power to act.
- 28 Do not say to your neighbor,
"Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"—
when you now have it with you.
- Proverbs 11:1 The LORD abhors dishonest scales,
but accurate weights are his delight.
- Proverbs 11:15 He who puts up security for another will surely suffer,
but whoever refuses to strike hands in pledge is safe.
- Proverbs 11:26 People curse the man who hoards grain,
but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell.
- Proverbs 14:4 Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty,
but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 15:27 A greedy man brings trouble to his family,
but he who hates bribes will live.
- Proverbs 16:11 Honest scales and balances are from the LORD;
all the weights in the bag are of his making.
- Proverbs 17:8 A bribe is a charm to the one who gives it;
wherever he turns, he succeeds.
- Proverbs 17:18 A man lacking in judgment strikes hands in pledge
and puts up security for his neighbor.
- Proverbs 17:23 A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret
to pervert the course of justice.
- Proverbs 20:10 Differing weights and differing measures—
the LORD detests them both.
- Proverbs 20:14 “It’s no good, it’s no good!” says the buyer;
then off he goes and boasts about his purchase.
- Proverbs 20:16 Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger;
hold it in pledge if he does it for a wayward woman.
- Proverbs 20:17 Food gained by fraud tastes sweet to a man,
but he ends up with a mouth full of gravel.
- Proverbs 20:21 An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning
will not be blessed at the end.
- Proverbs 20:23 The LORD detests differing weights,
and dishonest scales do not please him.
- Proverbs 21:14 A gift given in secret soothes anger,
and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.
- Proverbs 22:26 Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge
or puts up security for debts;
27 if you lack the means to pay,
your very bed will be snatched from under you.
- Proverbs 22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will serve before kings;
he will not serve before obscure men.
- Proverbs 24:27 Finish your outdoor work
and get your fields ready;
after that, build your house.
- Proverbs 27:13 Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger;
hold it in pledge if he does it for a wayward woman.
- Proverbs 27:23 Be sure you know the condition of your flocks,
give careful attention to your herds;
24 for riches do not endure forever,
and a crown is not secure for all generations.
- Proverbs 27:25 When the hay is removed and new growth appears
and the grass from the hills is gathered in,
26 the lambs will provide you with clothing,
and the goats with the price of a field.
- Proverbs 27:27 You will have plenty of goats’ milk
to feed you and your family
and to nourish your servant girls.

STUDY 7: LIVING IN SOCIETY

(OR, HOW TO PUT UP WITH OTHER PEOPLE)

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan.” (29:2)

This study is in two main sections: Political life and Social life. The first deals specifically with what Good Government looks like and our relation to it. The second looks at how we should relate to wider society. The teaching of Proverbs is remarkably similar to two corresponding sections in Romans (12:14-21; 13:1-7 although the issues are in reverse order), which are used in the study to draw out the ideas. There will be plenty to talk about, and this can be broken up into two shorter studies. It may be helpful to draw out some of the ideas here by looking at Titus 3:1-7, which also deals with how Christians should relate to the world around them, including government.

A

- Proverbs 11:10 When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices;
when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.
- Proverbs 14:28 A large population is a king’s glory,
but without subjects a prince is ruined.
- Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a disgrace to any people.
- Proverbs 14:35 A king delights in a wise servant,
but a shameful servant incurs his wrath.
- Proverbs 16:10 The lips of a king speak as an oracle,
and his mouth should not betray justice.
- Proverbs 16:12 Kings detest wrongdoing,
for a throne is established through righteousness.
- Proverbs 16:13 Kings take pleasure in honest lips;
they value a man who speaks the truth.
- Proverbs 16:14 A king’s wrath is a messenger of death,
but a wise man will appease it.
- Proverbs 16:15 When a king’s face brightens, it means life;
his favor is like a rain cloud in spring.
- Proverbs 17:11 An evil man is bent only on rebellion;
a merciless official will be sent against him.
- Proverbs 17:15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—
the LORD detests them both.
- Proverbs 17:26 It is not good to punish an innocent man,
or to flog officials for their integrity.
- Proverbs 18:5 It is not good to be partial to the wicked
or to deprive the innocent of justice.
- Proverbs 19:10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury—
how much worse for a slave to rule over princes!
- Proverbs 19:12 A king’s rage is like the roar of a lion,
- Kiama Anglican Churches: Proverbs: May – July 2017

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- but his favor is like dew on the grass.
- Proverbs 20:2 A king's wrath is like the roar of a lion;
he who angers him forfeits his life.
- Proverbs 20:8 When a king sits on his throne to judge,
he winnows out all evil with his eyes.
- Proverbs 20:18 Make plans by seeking advice;
if you wage war, obtain guidance.
- Proverbs 20:26 A wise king winnows out the wicked;
he drives the threshing wheel over them.
- Proverbs 20:28 Love and faithfulness keep a king safe;
through love his throne is made secure.
- Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD;
he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.
- Proverbs 21:15 When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous
but terror to evildoers.
- Proverbs 22:11 He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious
will have the king for his friend.
- Proverbs 23:1 When you sit to dine with a ruler,
note well what is before you,
2 and put a knife to your throat
if you are given to gluttony.
- Proverbs 23:3 Do not crave his delicacies,
for that food is deceptive.
- Proverbs 24:21 Fear the LORD and the king, my son,
and do not join with the rebellious,
22 for those two will send sudden destruction upon them,
and who knows what calamities they can bring?
- Proverbs 24:23 These also are sayings of the wise:
To show partiality in judging is not good:
- Proverbs 24:24 Whoever says to the guilty, "You are innocent"—
peoples will curse him and nations denounce him.
- Proverbs 24:25 But it will go well with those who convict the guilty,
and rich blessing will come upon them.
- Proverbs 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter;
to search out a matter is the glory of kings.
- Proverbs 25:3 As the heavens are high and the earth is deep,
so the hearts of kings are unsearchable.
- Proverbs 25:4 Remove the dross from the silver,
and out comes material for the silversmith;
5 remove the wicked from the king's presence,
and his throne will be established through righteousness.
- Proverbs 25:6 Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence,
and do not claim a place among great men;
7 it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here,"
than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman.
- What you have seen with your eyes
- Proverbs 28:2 When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers,
but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains order.
- Proverbs 28:3 A ruler who oppresses the poor
is like a driving rain that leaves no crops.

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Proverbs 28:4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
but those who keep the law resist them.
- Proverbs 28:5 Evil men do not understand justice,
but those who seek the LORD understand it fully.
- Proverbs 29:4 By justice a king gives a country stability,
but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down.
- Proverbs 29:12 If a ruler listens to lies,
all his officials become wicked.
- Proverbs 29:14 If a king judges the poor with fairness,
his throne will always be secure.
- Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;
but blessed is he who keeps the law.
- Proverbs 29:26 Many seek an audience with a ruler,
but it is from the LORD that man gets justice.
- Proverbs 30:29 “There are three things that are stately in their stride,
four that move with stately bearing:
- 30 a lion, mighty among beasts,
who retreats before nothing;
- 31 a strutting rooster, a he-goat,
and a king with his army around him.
- Proverbs 31:1 The sayings of King Lemuel—an oracle his mother taught him:
- Proverbs 31:2 “O my son, O son of my womb,
O son of my vows,
- 3 do not spend your strength on women,
your vigor on those who ruin kings.
- Proverbs 31:4 “It is not for kings, O Lemuel—
not for kings to drink wine,
not for rulers to crave beer,
- 5 lest they drink and forget what the law decrees,
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.
- Proverbs 31:6 Give beer to those who are perishing,
wine to those who are in anguish;
- 7 let them drink and forget their poverty
and remember their misery no more.
- Proverbs 31:8 “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
- Proverbs 31:9 Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

B

- Proverbs 3:29 Do not plot harm against your neighbor,
who lives trustfully near you.
- 30 Do not accuse a man for no reason—
when he has done you no harm.
- Proverbs 6:1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor,
if you have struck hands in pledge for another,
- 2 if you have been trapped by what you said,
ensnared by the words of your mouth,
- 3 then do this, my son, to free yourself,
since you have fallen into your neighbor’s hands:

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- Go and humble yourself;
press your plea with your neighbor!
- 4 Allow no sleep to your eyes,
no slumber to your eyelids.
- 5 Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,
like a bird from the snare of the fowler.
- Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise,
but a companion of fools suffers harm.
- Proverbs 14:7 Stay away from a foolish man,
for you will not find knowledge on his lips.
- Proverbs 14:21 He who despises his neighbor sins,
but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.
- Proverbs 17:14 Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam;
so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.
- Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.
- Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
- Proverbs 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence;
so avoid a man who talks too much.
- Proverbs 22:24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man,
do not associate with one easily angered,
- 25 or you may learn his ways
and get yourself ensnared.
- Proverbs 24:1 Do not envy wicked men,
do not desire their company;
- Proverbs 24:28 Do not testify against your neighbor without cause,
or use your lips to deceive.
- Proverbs 24:29 Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me;
I'll pay that man back for what he did."
- Proverbs 25:8 do not bring hastily to court,
for what will you do in the end
if your neighbor puts you to shame?
- Proverbs 25:9 If you argue your case with a neighbor,
do not betray another man's confidence,
- 10 or he who hears it may shame you
and you will never lose your bad reputation.
- Proverbs 25:17 Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house—
too much of you, and he will hate you.
- Proverbs 25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
- Proverbs 25:22 In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.
- Proverbs 26:17 Like one who seizes a dog by the ears
is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.
- Proverbs 26:18 Like a madman shooting
firebrands or deadly arrows
- 19 is a man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I was only joking!"
- Proverbs 26:21 As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,

- so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
- Proverbs 27:6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted,
but an enemy multiplies kisses.
- Proverbs 27:10 Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father,
and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you—
better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.
- Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron,
so one man sharpens another.
- Proverbs 29:10 Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity
and seek to kill the upright.
- Proverbs 29:24 The accomplice of a thief is his own enemy;
he is put under oath and dare not testify.
- Proverbs 29:27 The righteous detest the dishonest;
the wicked detest the upright.

STUDY 8: FAMILY AND HOME LIFE

(OR, WHY GETTING OLDER IS NOT NECESSARILY A DISASTER)

“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.” (14:1)

This study covers a lot of ground and traverses important, but potentially difficult topics. The first section covers general proverbs about family life. There are some really wonderful ones about the value of generations, and some funny, but potentially tricky ones about the “contentious” wife. Following from this there is a discussion of discipline of children. The best approach is to be careful and respectful of different views. The second section is about sexual purity. The passages are long and it takes a while to read them, but they are powerful if taken together, so it's good to keep going. Here is some of the most practical help in the Bible for issues of lust and sexual sin. Finally, this study looks at the description of the excellent wife which closes the book of Proverbs. This is not just a description of an impressive woman (in that culture), it's also a way of capping off the whole book of Proverbs.

A

- Proverbs 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon:
A wise son brings joy to his father,
but a foolish son grief to his mother.
- Proverbs 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son,
but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.
- Proverbs 11:29 He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind,
and the fool will be servant to the wise.
- Proverbs 12:4 A wife of noble character is her husband's crown,
but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.
- Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house,

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.

- Proverbs 15:20 A wise son brings joy to his father,
but a foolish man despises his mother.
- Proverbs 16:31 Gray hair is a crown of splendor;
it is attained by a righteous life.
- Proverbs 17:1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet
than a house full of feasting, with strife.
- Proverbs 17:2 A wise servant will rule over a disgraceful son,
and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.
- Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are a crown to the aged,
and parents are the pride of their children.
- Proverbs 17:21 To have a fool for a son brings grief;
there is no joy for the father of a fool.
- Proverbs 17:25 A foolish son brings grief to his father
and bitterness to the one who bore him.
- Proverbs 18:1 An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends;
he defies all sound judgment.
- Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds what is good
and receives favor from the LORD.
- Proverbs 19:13 A foolish son is his father's ruin,
and a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping.
- Proverbs 19:14 Houses and wealth are inherited from parents,
but a prudent wife is from the LORD.
- Proverbs 19:26 He who robs his father and drives out his mother
is a son who brings shame and disgrace.
- Proverbs 20:7 The righteous man leads a blameless life;
blessed are his children after him.
- Proverbs 20:20 If a man curses his father or mother,
his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.
- Proverbs 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength,
gray hair the splendor of the old.
- Proverbs 21:9 Better to live on a corner of the roof
than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.
- Proverbs 21:19 Better to live in a desert
than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.
- Proverbs 23:22 Listen to your father, who gave you life,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.
- Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth and do not sell it;
get wisdom, discipline and understanding.
- Proverbs 23:24 The father of a righteous man has great joy;
he who has a wise son delights in him.
- Proverbs 23:25 May your father and mother be glad;
may she who gave you birth rejoice!
- Proverbs 25:24 Better to live on a corner of the roof
than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.
- Proverbs 27:8 Like a bird that strays from its nest
is a man who strays from his home.
- Proverbs 27:15 A quarrelsome wife is like
a constant dripping on a rainy day;
16 restraining her is like restraining the wind

- or grasping oil with the hand.
- Proverbs 27:18 He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
and he who looks after his master will be honored.
- Proverbs 28:7 He who keeps the law is a discerning son,
but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.
- Proverbs 28:24 He who robs his father or mother
and says, “It’s not wrong”—
he is partner to him who destroys.
- Proverbs 29:3 A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father,
but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.
- Proverbs 30:10 “Do not slander a servant to his master,
or he will curse you, and you will pay for it.
- Proverbs 30:11 “There are those who curse their fathers
and do not bless their mothers;
- Proverbs 30:17 “The eye that mocks a father,
that scorns obedience to a mother,
will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley,
will be eaten by the vultures.

STUDY 9: THE HEART AND ITS MASTER (OR, WHY WE’RE NOT ROBOTS)

“All deeds are right in the sight of the doer, but the Lord weighs the heart.” (21:2)

The last study focuses on some of the most fascinating sayings in the whole book of Proverbs: on “the heart”. It flows from sayings about the heart to sayings about God’s attributes, and then in particular to God’s “weighing the heart”. This leads to a discussion of Paul’s confident humility before God’s judgment in 1 Corinthians 4. These passages raise interesting and important questions about how we assess our lives. It will be worth going quite slowly through the first set of proverbs, as some of them require a bit of thought. Try to let people appreciate these sayings individually. This study will hopefully encourage a humility about our own hearts before God’s final judgment, but with confidence that ultimately and amazingly, there will be “commendation” (1 Cor. 4:5).

- A
- Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for it is the wellspring of life.
- Proverbs 12:25 An anxious heart weighs a man down,
but a kind word cheers him up.
- Proverbs 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.
- Proverbs 14:10 Each heart knows its own bitterness,

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

and no one else can share its joy.

- Proverbs 14:13 Even in laughter the heart may ache,
and joy may end in grief.
- Proverbs 15:13 A happy heart makes the face cheerful,
but heartache crushes the spirit.
- Proverbs 15:15 All the days of the oppressed are wretched,
but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.
- Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
- Proverbs 8:14 Counsel and sound judgment are mine;
I have understanding and power.
- Proverbs 19:3 A man's own folly ruins his life,
yet his heart rages against the LORD.
- Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure;
I am clean and without sin"?
- Proverbs 20:11 Even a child is known by his actions,
by whether his conduct is pure and right.
- Proverbs 20:27 The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man;
it searches out his inmost being.
- Proverbs 25:20 Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day,
or like vinegar poured on soda,
is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.
- Proverbs 27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,
and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.
- Proverbs 27:19 As water reflects a face,
so a man's heart reflects the man.

B

- Proverbs 6:16 There are six things the LORD hates,
seven that are detestable to him:
- 17 haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
- 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes,
feet that are quick to rush into evil,
- 19 a false witness who pours out lies
and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.
- Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are everywhere,
keeping watch on the wicked and the good.
- Proverbs 15:8 The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked,
but the prayer of the upright pleases him.
- Proverbs 15:9 The LORD detests the way of the wicked
but he loves those who pursue righteousness.
- Proverbs 15:25 The LORD tears down the proud man's house
but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.
- Proverbs 15:26 The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked,
but those of the pure are pleasing to him.
- Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.
- Proverbs 16:4 The LORD works out everything for his own ends—

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

- even the wicked for a day of disaster.
- Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD,
he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.
- Proverbs 17:5 He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker;
whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe.
- Proverbs 20:12 Ears that hear and eyes that see—
the LORD has made them both.
- Proverbs 20:22 Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!"
Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.
- Proverbs 21:3 To do what is right and just
is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.
- Proverbs 21:12 The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked
and brings the wicked to ruin.
- Proverbs 22:12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge,
but he frustrates the words of the unfaithful.
- Proverbs 29:13 The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:
The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both.
- Proverbs 30:5 "Every word of God is flawless;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
- Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to his words,
or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

APPENDIX: Proverbs arranged by theme (Andrew Errington)

OVERARCHING IDEAS

<i>The value of Wisdom (and the consequence of folly)</i>	<i>The wise and fools in life.</i>
1:1-6	9:13-18
1:20-33 (Wisdom personified)	10:23
2:1-3:2	13:16
3:5-10, 13-18, 19-20, 21-26	14:6, 8, 15, 18, 24, 33
4:1-27, esp. 5-9	15:7, 14, 21
4:6, 8-9 (Wisdom personified)	17:12, 16, 21, 24
6:12-15	18:15
8:1-36 (Wisdom personified)	20:5
8:10-11, 18-21, 35-36	22:3, 10
9:1-6 (Wisdom personified)	24:7
9:11-12, 18	26:1-12
13:14	27:12, 22
15:24	28:26
16:16, 22, 23	29:8-9
19:8, 29	
21:16, 20, 22	
22:17-21	
23:12, 15-18	
24:3-7, 13-14	
30:(1-4)	

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

The fear of the Lord

1:7

2:1-8

3:5-10

9:10

10:27

14:2, 9, 26-27

15:33

16:(6),

19:23

22:4

23:(17)

24:21-22

31:30

The fates of the wicked and the righteous

1:10-19

3:31-35

10: 2, 3, 6, 7, 16, 24-25, 27, 28, 29, 30

11:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 21, 23, 30-31,

12:2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 20, 21, 28

13:6, 9, 15, 21, 22, 25

14:11, 14, 19, 22, 32,

15:6, 8-9, 29,

16:(7), 17

17:19, 20

20:(17),

21:7, 12, 18, 21, 27

22:4

24:15-16, 19-20

26:(27)

28:10, 13, 18

29:6, 16

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

THE WISE AND RIGHTEOUS LIFE

The wisdom of virtue

29:1

t=temper, c=caution, i=integrity, ph=pride and humility, l=loyalty and faithfulness, sc=self-control

3:3-4(l)

10:9(i), 12

11:2(ph), 3(i), 16(b), 17, 20, 27

12:10, 16(t)

14:16(c), 17(t), 29(t), 30(t),

15:18(t), 33(ph)

16:5(ph), 6(l), 18(ph), 32(t)

17:9, 13, 27(t)

18:12(ph)

19:2(c), 11(t), 19(t), 22(l)

20:1(w), 3(t), 6(l), 7(i), 22

21:4(ph), 5(c), 8, 10, 24, 29(c)

22:5(c)

23:19-21(sc), 29-35(sc)

24:8-9, 10-12(b), 17-18

25:14, 16(sc), 19(l), 26(b), 27-28(sc)

27:2(p), 4, 20, 21(p)

28:1(b), 14(b), 20(l)

29:11(t), 22(t), 23(ph), 25(b)

30:12

Guidance and God's sovereignty

3:5-8

14:12,

16:3, 9, 25 (cf. 14:12), 33

19:21

20:24

21:30, 31

27:1 (cf. Js 4:14)

Wise listening (Being teachable)

1:8-9

3:11-12

9:7-9

10:8, 17,

11:14

12:1, 5, 15, 26

13:1, 10, 13, 18

15:5, 10, 12, 22, 31-32

16:20, 29

17:10

19:16, 20, 25, 27

20:18,

21:11

24:6

25:12

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

Wise speech

10:11, (13), 14, 18-21, 31-32
11:9, 11, 12, 13
12:6, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23
13:2, 3, 5
14:3, 5, 25
15:1, 2, 4, 7, 14, 23, 26, 28
16:1, (10), 13, 21, 24, 27, 28
17:4, 7, 20, 27-28
18:2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 13, (17), 20, 21
19:1, 5, 9, 22, 28
20:15, 19, 25
21:6, 23, 28
23:9, 16
24:26, (28-29)
25:11, 12, 15, 18, 23, 25

ECONOMIC LIFE

Money, wealth and poverty

10:4, 15, 22
11:24, 25, 28
12:9
13:7, 8, 11, 23,
14:20, 21, 31,
15:15-17, 25
16:8
17:5
18:11, 23
19:4, 6, 7, 17
21:13, 17, 26
22:1, 2, 7, 9, 16, 22-23
23:1-8
28:6, 8, 11, 20-22, 25, 27
29:7, 13
30:7-9, 13-14,
31:20

The wisdom of honest business

3:27-28
11:1, 15, 16, 26
14:4,
15:27,
16:11,
17:8(?!), 18, 23
20:10, 14, 16, (17), 21, 23
21:14
22:26-27, 29
26:6
27:13, 23-27

26:2, 4-5, 7, 9, 20, 22, 23, 24-26, 28
27:3, 5, 14
28:23
29:5, 20
30:32-33
31:26

The wisdom of sexual purity

2:16-19
5:1-23
6:20-35
7:1-27
22:14
23:26-28
30:20

Work and laziness

6:6-11
10:4, 26,
12:11, 14, 24, 27,
13:4,
14:23
15:19
16:26
18:9
19:15, 24
20:4, 13,
21:25
22:13
24:27, 30-34
26:13-16
28:19
31:13-19, 27

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

SOCIAL LIFE

Family and household

10:1, 5
11:29
12:4
13:24
14:1
15:20
16:31
17:1, 2, 6, 17, 21, 25
18:1, 22
19:13, 14, 18, 26
20:7, 20, 29, 30
21:9, 19
22:6, 15
23:13-14, 22-25
25:24 (cf. 21:9)
26:3, 17-19
27:8, (11), 15-16, 18
28:7, 24
29:3, 15, 17, 19, 21
30:10, 11, 17
31:10-31

Political life

11:10
14:28, 34, 35
16:10, 12, 13, 14, 15,
17:11, 15, 26
18:5, 17, 18, 19
19:10, 12
20:2, 8, 18, 26, 28
21:1, 15
22:8, 11, 28
23:1-3, 10-11
24:21-22, 23-25
25:1-7
28:2, 3, 4-9, 12, 15-16, 17, 28
29:2, 4, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 26
30:29-31
31:1-9

Neighbours and friends

3:29-30
6:1-5
13:20,
14:7, 21
17:14, 17,
18:24
20:19
22:24-25
24:1, 28-29
25:8-10, 17, 21-22 (cf. Rom. 12:20)
26:21
27:6, 10
29:10, 24, 27

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT REALITY

God

3:11-12

6:16-19

15:3, 8, 9, 11, 25, 26, 29

16:4, 7

17:3, (5), 15

18:10

19:3

20:12, 22

21:2, 3, 12

22:12

24:12

29:13

30:5-6

The Heart

4:23

12:25,

13:12

14:10, 13

15:11, 13, 15

16:2

17:22

18:14

20:9, 11, 27 (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11!)

21:2

25:20

27:9, 19

Miscellaneous observations

11:22

13:17, 19

15:30

16:30

18:3, 16

25:13

27:7, 17

30:15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 24-28

APPENDICES:

Parallelism in Hebrew Writing

Dennis Bratcher

A common literary feature of Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament is called **parallelism**, in which the words of two or more lines of text are directly related in some way. This feature can be found in any poetic passage, and sometimes even in narrative, although it is more common in the Psalms and Proverbs.

Recognizing parallelism as a poetic feature can sometimes aid in understanding or interpreting a passage. For example, the use of parallelism often means that the message of the text is in the larger passage and its overall point or impact rather than individual words or single lines. Also, specific words that may be ambiguous or used in unusual ways can be clarified or more narrowly defined by seeing them in the context of a parallel structure. The following types of parallel structure are simply attempts to organize this feature of Hebrew poetic writing as an aid to reading and study. It should be kept in mind that Old Testament writers were very creative, and a great number of variations and combinations of these basic types occur in the biblical text.

I. Synonymous- the second line repeats the first in different words having the same meaning.

Psalm 19:1-2

The heavens are telling the glory of God;	}	Synonymous
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.		
Day to day pours forth speech,	}	Synonymous
and night to night declares knowledge.		

II. Synthetic- the second line adds to the first

Psalm 24:3-4

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
 And who shall stand in his holy place?
 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
 who does not lift up his soul to what is false,
 and does not swear deceitfully.

III. Antithetic- the second line contrasts with the first

Psalm 73:26

My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
 and my portion for ever.

IV. Climactic- successive lines build to a climax or summary

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Though the fig trees do not blossom,
 nor fruit be on the vines,
 the produce of the olive fail
 and the fields yield no food,
 the flock be cut off from the fold
 and there be no herd in the stalls,
 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD
 I will joy in the God of my salvation.
 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;

Copyright © 2003, Christian Resource Institute

Proverbs

From Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002)

ORIENTING DATA FOR PROVERBS

Content: a series of opening poems praising wisdom and warning against folly, followed by several collections of proverbs from sages who taught wisdom to Israel, starting with Solomon

Author(s): collections of proverbs originating with Solomon, various wise men, Agur, and Lemuel's mother—gathered and arranged for later generations by someone otherwise unknown

Emphases: wisdom begins with the fear of and trust in Yahweh; at the practical level, it consists of making wise choices between good and evil behavior; such wisdom is to be desired above all else in order to live a full and godly life

OVERVIEW OF PROVERBS

The larger part of the book of Proverbs is made up of six collections of proverbs/aphorisms, that is, wisdom sayings, mostly couplets (two-liners) that offer guidance to the young—although their value is by no means limited to any age group—on how to live morally and beneficially in the world. On either side of these collections is a prologue of several poems (1:8–9:18) that stress the importance of listening to the sages, and an epilogue of one poem (31:10–31) that idealizes a wife who is characterized by wisdom. A preamble (1:1–7) sets forth the book's title, purpose, and theme.

The groupings of proverbs and aphorisms are all identified within the book itself:

Proverbs of Solomon I (10:1–22:16)

Sayings of the Wise I (22:17–24:22)

Sayings of the Wise II (24:23–34)

Proverbs of Solomon II (25:1–29:27)

Sayings of Agur (30:1–33)

Sayings of Lemuel (31:1–31)

All of these are intended to be read and studied in light of the prologue, with its emphasis on the need to attain wisdom and to reject folly (to walk in righteousness and to shun evil). Here you also find the book's fundamental theological perspective: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (9:10; cf 1:7). For even though many of the proverbs are common to other cultures, these have been especially tailored for life in the covenant community of Israel. They presuppose not only the covenant of law (6:16–19)—indeed, to fear Yahweh is to hate evil (8:13)—but also the life of the people of God in their promised land (2:21–22; cf. 10:27–30).

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR READING PROVERBS

As with the book of Psalms, reading through the book of Proverbs is not the ordinary way of handling the proverbs (who would read a collection of familiar quotations?). On the other hand, the preamble, the prologue, and the macrostructure of the whole indicate a rather careful overall arrangement, probably intended to be memorized by the young (see 3:3; 4:21; 7:3; 22:17–18). So two matters are of importance in order for you to read the book well.

First, some observations about *structure*. The preamble (1:1–7) prepares you for reading the book as a whole, setting forth its theme (v. 2, attaining wisdom), its purpose (vv. 3–5), the basic contrasts between wisdom and folly (v. 7), and its theological foundation (v. 7). At the same time verse 6 offers an outline of the book, according to its main "authors" (proverbs belonging to Solomon and the sayings of the wise).

It is important to observe that the contrast between wisdom and folly is also a contrast (primarily) between righteousness and wickedness. These contrasts become the predominant theme in the poems of the prologue (1:8–9:18), where the two main illustrative themes are *easy money* (money taken by corrupt means) and *easy sex* (being seduced by another man's wife). At the end of the prologue, wisdom and folly are personified as women calling the young men to follow them. It is therefore no surprise that the central section of these poems (chs. 5–7) admonishes the young man to a lifelong love of his wife (5:15–19) and not to be tempted by a wayward wife, which in turn also serve as analogies for loving wisdom rather than folly (chs. 8–9). This also helps to make sense of the acrostic poem with which the entire collection ends (31:10–31), where the idealized wife is a model of wisdom, while serving as an analogue for Lady Wisdom. It is also not surprising that these poems are primarily in the form of admonitions.

These contrasts between wisdom and folly carry through the first half of Solomon I (10:1–15:29), now with mostly antithetical couplets (the second line in sharp contrast to the first) rather than with admonitions. Here wisdom/righteousness means diligence in work and care of the land, prudent use of money (resources), caring relationships with neighbor and in family, proper use of the tongue, and proper attitudes and actions (being humble, avoiding anger, etc.); while folly is pictured as its opposites. The second half of Solomon I (15:30–22:16) continues these themes, now using predominantly synthetic couplets (the second line completes or builds on the first), with the noteworthy addition of several proverbs that focus on the king and his court.

Second, a few comments about proverbs themselves and what makes them work. First, their *form* is that of poetry. But the poetry is *Hebrew* poetry, which means that some things translate into English, and some do not. Think about how difficult it might be to put the following English aphorisms into another language: "A stitch in time saves nine," or "A penny saved is a penny earned," or "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Common to these are their rhythmic nature and "sound alike" pattern, which are what makes them memorable. Another language cannot always capture these qualities, even though the gist of the proverb may be plain. So it is with these Hebrew proverbs, which are pithy (typically only three or four Hebrew words to a line) and full of alliterations, catchwords, poetic meter, etc.—not to

mention allusions and metaphors that belong to their cultural setting, not all of which are easily captured in English.

Their *function* is to offer practical instruction for the young, with the focus on how to live uprightly and well in a society that understands itself to be under God. It is important to remember that these proverbs functioned primarily in the home to reinforce the benefits of living prudently and well in everyday life; they are not religious instruction as such. Nonetheless, their goal is to mold the character of the young in ways that conform to the law, even if the law itself is not mentioned.

Their *method* is the same as with proverbs universally—to express important truths for practical living in ways that are memorable and thus repeatable. This is done by overstatement, by “all or none” kinds of phrases, or by catchphrases that are not intended to be analyzed for their precision. Sometimes it is the overstatement—which speaks truth but not the whole truth—that makes the point. Take, for example, the American proverb, “A penny saved is a penny earned.” While true, its point is thrift, *not* that one should never spend. Or take its reverse, “A fool and his money are soon parted,” which reminds one of the need for thrift in a different way. The latter has an earlier counterpart in Proverbs 17:16, “Of what use is money in the hand of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?” Thus what is at stake for you in reading the proverbs is to determine their point by looking carefully at their content and poetic form, but to be careful also not to make them “walk on all fours”—and not to ignore counterproverbs, which also speak truth. (See *How to 1*, pp. 231–41.)

A WALK THROUGH PROVERBS

The Preamble (1:1–7)

Several important matters for reading the whole collection are presented here. The proverbs originate with Solomon, who is significantly noted as the son of David, king of Israel (v. 1); their purpose is given (vv. 2–5)—to attain a prudent life that is also righteous and just; they are addressed to the young and “simple” (v. 4, the latter word meaning something like “gullible”—those who are easily led astray); their content is anticipated (v. 6); and their basic perspective and basic contrasts are spelled out (v. 7).

The Prologue (1:8–9:18)

To understand the collection of proverbs that begins in 10:1, it is important for you to pay close attention to this prologue. You will see that it comes as a series of lessons from a father to his son(s), especially picking up the antitheses set out in 1:7; you will also see that most of this material comes as admonition. Each new lesson begins with an introduction of several couplets (“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction,” etc.), followed by the lesson itself. The lessons themselves are carefully structured and arranged, building toward the climax of chapter 9, where wisdom and folly make their final appeals.

1:8–33 Lesson 1 (and Interlude 1): Warning and Rebuke

Note that this first introduction (vv. 8–9) includes both the father and mother (cf. the beginning of the collection at 10:1). You will see that this lesson is a strong warning against the enticements of wicked men (vv. 10–19) who plot evil against others for easy money (“ill-gotten gain”).

You will also see that in the interlude (vv. 20–33), personified wisdom speaks, rebuking not the “son” but the “simple ones” and “mockers,” those who would entice the son away from his parents’ wisdom. Her rebuke basically describes the just end of such people.

2:1–22 Lesson 2: Safeguard against the Wicked

Watch for the four distinct parts of this lesson. A longer introduction urges the son to seek wisdom (vv. 1–4); then he will “understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (vv. 5–6), which in turn will protect his way (vv. 7–8) and enter his heart to guard him (vv. 9–11). What follows, then, are the two main ways in the prologue the son needs protection: (1) from “wicked men” (vv. 12–15) and (2) from the “wayward wife” (vv. 16–19). Verses 20–22 then return to his walking in the paths of the righteous.

3:1–35 Lessons 3 and 4: The Value of Wisdom

Lesson 3 (verses 1–10) sets forth God’s promises and the son’s obligations: love and faithfulness = favor with God and people (vv. 3–4); trust in the Lord = straight paths (vv. 5–6); humility = good health (vv. 7–8); tithes and offerings = abundant crops (vv. 9–10).

Lesson 4 (verses 13–26) presents three poems that highlight the value of wisdom (note the 6–2–6 couplet arrangement)—its blessings and value (vv. 13–18; note the “blessed” at the beginning and end); its role in creation (vv. 19–20), picking up on “the tree of life” from verse 18; and its blessings again (vv. 21–26), now picking up especially the theme of peace and prosperity from verse 2.

Now watch how verses 27–35 at the end of lesson 4 correspond to lesson 3 by offering negative admonitions and warnings.

4:1–27 Lesson 5–7: The Supremacy of Wisdom

The first of these three lessons (vv. 1–9) emphasizes the family’s heritage of wisdom and thus urges the sons to continue in it. Lesson 6 then urges the son to stay off the wrong way, the way of wickedness (vv. 10–19), while lesson 7 urges him not to swerve off the right way, the way of righteousness (vv. 20–27).

5:1–6:19 Lesson 8: Warnings against Adultery, Folly, and Wickedness

Picking up from 2:16–19, this lesson warns against adultery (5:3–14, 20), which also includes an admonition to marital fidelity (vv. 15–19); this is followed by a further warning against the wicked (vv. 21–23) and against two kinds of folly (securing strangers, 6:1–5; sloth, vv. 6–11). It concludes with the final warning in the prologue against the wicked (6:12–19).

6:20–35 Lesson 9: Further Warning against Adultery

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

Note how this introduction begins as the others did (vv. 20–23), but concludes on the warning note (vv. 24–25) that will then be elaborated. With a threefold series of couplets (vv. 26–29, 30–33, and 34–35), the lesson points out the fearful consequences of adultery (punishment, disgrace, a vengeful husband).

7:1–8:36 Lesson 10 (and Interlude 2): The Unfaithful Wife, and Wisdom’s Call

This final lesson corresponds to lesson 8, focusing now on the seductive tactics of the unfaithful, adulterous wife. Note that she will also serve as an analogue for the invitation of Folly at the end of the prologue (9:13–18; cf. 9:18 with 7:27; and 9:14 with 5:8).

Notice how the second interlude (8:1–36) corresponds to the first one (1:20–33), which followed the warning against the “wicked men.” This time Wisdom offers self-praise to the “simple” and “foolish” (v. 5) to recognize her value both to kings and the prosperous (vv. 12–21), not to mention to Yahweh himself (vv. 22–31). And at the end (vv. 32–36), she steps into the father’s shoes and invites the sons to watch daily at her doorway (vis-a-vis the seductress).

9:1–18 Epilogue: Rival Banquets of Wisdom and Folly

Note how this final series begins and ends with rival invitations to “all who are simple” to banquet at the houses of Wisdom and Folly (vv. 1–6; 13–18), and note especially how Folly both mimics Wisdom and echoes the seductions of the unfaithful wife. Between the two final invitations you will find two brief lessons (vv. 7–9, 10–12) contrasting the wise and mockers—all of this to lead you into reading the proverbs themselves with diligence and thoughtfulness.

Proverbs of Solomon I (10:1–22:16)

10:1–15:29 Solomon I, Part 1

Our division of Solomon I into two parts is intended to highlight the fact that most of the couplets in this section are antithetical, thus following hard on the antitheses of the prologue. But in contrast to the prologue, there is scarcely an admonition among them. They begin with a couplet (10:1) that not only picks up the “instruction” of the young from the prologue, but also puts both parents in the picture, along with the contrast between the wise and foolish child.

As you read through this collection, note how certain themes characterizing wisdom/foolly and righteousness/wickedness are replayed over and over in different ways and with different images. Scholars are only recently discovering various patterns that hold smaller groupings together, often in relationship to groupings that precede and follow. But many of these are difficult to trace in English translation. So two things may help you here as you set out to read through the proverbs.

First, be aware of the many educative proverbs that look very much like the introductions to the lessons in the prologue (e.g., 10:17; 12:1; 13:13). These usually mark “seams” in the collection, so you should look more closely at the smaller groupings before and after these educative proverbs.

Second, you might find it helpful to use a set of colored pencils and mark out some of the recurring themes. Along with the more generic wise/foolish and righteous/wicked themes, note the frequency of themes such as wealth/poverty, work/sloth, speech (truth/lying, etc.), relationships (neighbors, family, king), and attitudes (anger, love/hatred, etc.).

For example, the following may be marked out among the thirty-two couplets in chapter 10: Contrasts between the righteous and the wicked (either expressly or implied) occur 18x, both generically (10x, where this is the point of the proverb [vv. 3, 6–7, 9, 24–25, 27–30]) and in conjunction with other themes (8x, vv. 2, 11, 16, 20–21, 23, 31–32); contrasts between wisdom and folly occur 2x generically (vv. 1, 23) and 8x in conjunction with other themes (vv. 5, 8, 13–14, 18–19, 21, 31); contrasts between proper and improper speech occur 11x (vv. 8, 10–11, 13–14, 18–21, 31–32) and constitute the main theme in most of their occurrences; contrasts between work and sloth are the subject 3x (vv. 4–5, 26); and contrasts between wealth and poverty occur 3x (vv. 15–16, 22), occurring in conjunction with work/sloth in verse 4. The only proverb in this chapter that does not belong to these concerns is verse 17, which deals with discipline (cf. also v. 13). The fact that many of these are related and grouped suggests that the arrangement is not simply haphazard. You may wish to try this for yourself on other small groupings that emerge as you read.

15:30–22:16 Solomon I, Part 2

While this section of Solomon I continues the themes and emphases of part 1, they are noticeably different in two ways. First, you will see that, even though antithetical couplets still occur, the majority of couplets are now synthetic, so that both lines add up to one point. Second, there is an increase in couplets that reflect the king and his court (and other forms of “vertical” relationships, which began at 14:28, 35 in part 1).

The Sayings of the Wise (22:17–24:34)

22:17–24:22 First Collection of the Sayings of the Wise

Two things mark this collection to distinguish it from Solomon I: (1) The verses are not uniform, having from two to several lines each, and (2) they return to the admonitions that marked the prologue. Note also that they are introduced and numbered as “thirty” (22:20), which probably includes the introduction (22:17–21) as the first of these. Watch for the interesting and broad range of topics covered here.

24:23–34 Second Collection of the Sayings of the Wise

This collection is separate, because “thirty sayings” (22:20) sets limits to the preceding collection. The five sayings of this second collection are diverse both in form and content, dealing with relationships with

Life with the Grain of the Universe: Proverbs

neighbors and diligence in work.

Proverbs of Solomon II (25:1–29:27)

Observe how this collection of Solomonic proverbs moves away from the admonitory style that has just preceded it. These were collected by Hezekiah's "men." Two collections are in evidence (chs. 25–27; 28–29), while the whole is less uniform in style than Solomon I.

25:1–27:27 *Solomon II, Part 1*

You will find that in this first part the proverbs are more vivid and diverse in nature, with explicit comparisons becoming more frequent (note the number of verses that begin with "like")—The collection begins with a series relating to the king's court (25:2–8), which also sets a pattern for several longer units (sometimes called "proverb poems": 25:16–17, 21–22; 26:23–26; 27:23–27). Otherwise most of them repeat themes found in the first collection.

28:1–29:27 *Solomon II, Part 2*

This second collection is a series of fifty-five (mostly antithetical) couplets that focus primarily on the wicked and the righteous. Note how the first, middle, and final couplets make this theme explicit (28:1, 28; 29:27; but see also 28:12; 29:2, 7, 16), and that they frame couplets that are basically concerned with rulers, teaching, and justice for the poor.

More Sayings of the Wise (30:1–31:31)

30:1–33 *Sayings of Agur*

This diverse collection is full of interest, in terms of both form and content. Note especially the following: how verses 2–4 echo material in Job 38:5–11; the prayer in verses 7–9 (the only one in Proverbs); the four classes of wrongdoers singled out in verses 11–14; and the numerical sayings/riddles in verses 15–31, which seem to contain simply various kinds of observations about life as opposed to specific moral teaching.

31:1–9 *Sayings of Lemuel*

This final collection is unique in that it relates sayings of a king taught to him by the queen mother. Both parts of this concluding chapter, therefore, offer examples of wise women—thus serving to bookend the instruction of Lady Wisdom in chapters 1–9.

31:10–31 *Epilogue: A Wise/Ideal Wife*

This final, idealistic portrait of "a wife of noble character" is probably to be understood as another saying that Lemuel's mother taught him. It is an acrostic poem (each verse begins with a succeeding letter of the twenty-two-letter Hebrew alphabet). Note how it idealizes the wife in terms of the values that have been taught throughout the book—a fitting conclusion to the collection.

The book of Proverbs fits into the biblical story by giving practical instruction to the young (and all others listening in) in order to help them follow in the ways of the Lord and have a beneficial, fruitful life on earth.