

# 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 <b>Intro</b>	Proverbs	<b>Wise? What is Wise?</b>	THE WISE MAN BUILT .....	4
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Sun 21 May <b>2</b>	Proverbs	<b>Righteousness Works</b>	WHY CRIME DOES NOT PAY	10
Sun 28 May <b>3</b>	Proverbs	<b>The Wisdom of Virtue</b>	WHY IT'S BETTER NOT TO BLOW YOUR TOP	12
Sun 4 Jun <b>4</b>	Proverbs	<b>The Wise Listener</b>	WHY IT'S GOOD TO BE TOLD WHEN YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING DUMB	14
Sun 11 Jun <b>5</b>	Proverbs	<b>The Wise Speaker</b>	HOW TO SHUT UP	16
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## **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?**
- 2. Look up Proverbs 1:7; 9:10. What is the 'beginning of wisdom'?**
- 3. Read Proverbs 4:7. What is wisdom worth?**
- 4. Read James 3:17; James 1:5. What does James say wisdom is like? How does he say we can get it?**
- 5. From James 3:13, how is wisdom to be expressed?**

### **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?**

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?

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

**APPLY**

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

10. How can you be more wise?

***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 it's 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.

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#### A Select 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.

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)*

*What do you think it is to be a wise person? What does wisdom involve?*

The book of Proverbs has three main sections (1-9; 10:1-22:16; 22:17-31:31). Read the introductions to sections 1 and 3, in 1:1-6 and 22:17-21 *What, according to these introductions, is Proverbs all about?*

*Is there anything here you find particularly interesting?*

Read the following proverbs.

1:20-33    3:13-18    13:14    15:24    16:16    16:22    19:8  
21:16    21:20    21:22    24:13-14

*Why, according to these sayings, is wisdom so good?*

Read the following proverbs and, in the space below, note the ways in which the wise and fools are characterised. (A)

9:13-18	14:15	15:14	17:24	24:7
10:23	14:18	15:21	18:15	26:1-12
13:16	14:24	17:12	20:5	27:12
14:6	14:33	17:16	22:3	27:22
14:8	15:7	17:21	22:10	28:26
<b>The wise</b>		<b>Fools</b>		

*Are there any sayings you particularly appreciate?*

According to Proverbs, wisdom starts with relating to God rightly. This is the basis of one of the central refrains running through the book, the idea of “the fear of the Lord.” Read the following proverbs and, as you go, mark any that stand out to you. (B)

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1:7	9:10	14:9	16:6	23:17
2:1-8	10:27	14:26-27	19:23	24:21-22
3:5-8	14:2	15:33	22:4	

---

*Which of these did you think was especially powerful or important? Why?*

*Do all these proverbs make sense to you? If not, why not?*

*Read 2:1-8 and 3:5-8 again. What do you think it means to fear the Lord?*

*In what ways do you think we can “rely on our own insight” or “be wise in our own eyes”?*

*What do these proverbs see as the antidote to these mistakes? How can we do that?*

Proverbs insists that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Read Jesus’ conclusion to the sermon on the mount in Matthew 7:24-27. *How does Jesus redefine what it is to be wise here? How does this fit with the idea of “the fear of the Lord?”*

Proverbs 23:17 says, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always continue in the fear of the Lord.” *How can we do that as Christians today?*

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)*

*Do you think the world is a generally just place? If not, do you think there is any justice?*

Read Proverbs 8:1-36. *How is wisdom described here?*

*What, according to this passage, is the connection between wisdom and righteousness?*

*How is this connection made in the following proverbs?*

3:31-35      4:10-15      9:9      14:2

One of the major reasons for this connection is what Proverbs sees as the inevitable consequences of wickedness and righteousness, which the following sayings explain. Read through this list and mark any that stand out especially. (A)

---

10: 2-3	11:21	12:28	14:11	15:29	24:15-16
10:6-7	11:23	13:6	14:14	16:17	24:19-20
10:16	11:30-31	13:9	14:19	21:7	28:10
10:24-25	12:2-3	13:15	14:32	21:12	28:18
10:27-30	12:7	13:21-22	15:6	21:21	29:6
11:4-8	12:12	13:25	15:8-9	22:4	29:16
11:18-19	12:21				

---

*How would you summarise the main message here?*

*Do you think there's any problem with this teaching? Does it always work like this?*

Read the following passages from the book of Ecclesiastes: 2:12-17; 7:15-18; 9:11-12.

*In what ways do these words stand against the teaching of Proverbs? What, according to the author of Ecclesiastes, is the fundamental problem that undercuts this teaching in Proverbs that righteousness works and wickedness doesn't?*

Turn back to Proverbs and read the following sayings: 11:4, 18, 21; 12:28; 23:15-18. *Do you think these sayings show a recognition of the problem faced by Ecclesiastes?*

Read the very end of Ecclesiastes (12:13-14), and then read John 5:25-29.

*How does the promise of resurrection and ultimate judgment change the way we think about:*

*(a) the hopeless fear in the earlier passages of Ecclesiastes that death makes wisdom and righteousness meaningless?*

*(b) the teaching of Proverbs that righteousness pays off? (How, for example, can we understand sayings like Proverbs 14:14 or 13:9 in the light of the gospel?)*

*How might these reflections inspire us to live more godly lives?*

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)*

*What is a virtue? What virtues do you think are important in the Christian life?*

Read through the following list of proverbs and try to group them under one of the headings below. Don’t worry if they don’t all fit perfectly. As you go through, make a mark next to any proverbs that you find particularly interesting or challenging. (A)

---

3:3-4	15:18, 33	20:1, 3, 6, 7, 22	25:14, 16, 19,
10:9, 12	16:5, 6, 18, 32	21:4, 5, 8, 10,	26, 27-28
11:2, 3, 16, 17,	17:9, 13, 27	24, 29	27:2, 4, 21
20, 27	18:12	22:5	28:1, 14, 20
12:10, 16	19:2, 11, 19, 22	23:19-21, 29-35	29:11, 22, 23,
14:16, 17, 29,		24:8-9, 10-12,	25
30		17-18	30:12

---

**Temper / Anger**

**Carefulness**

**Integrity / “crookedness”**

**Pride and humility**

**Loyalty and faithfulness**

**Self-control**

**Courage**

**Forgiveness and vengeance**

**Other**

*Did any of these proverbs particularly strike you? Why?*

*How would you sum up the overall impression these proverbs give of a wise and virtuous person?*

*Which of these virtues do you think you, or our Christian community in general, need to grow in? Why?*

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)*

*What things do you think you, or others you know, look to for guidance in the important aspects of life?*

Read the following proverbs and consider: *What truths do these sayings remind us of? Do you think we need this reminder? Why, or why not?*

14:12      16:9      16:25      16:33      19:21      20:24      21:30  
21:31      27:1.

*What do you think these truths should mean for how we live and how we make decisions?*

Read through the following proverbs and make a mark next to any that particularly strike you: (A)

---

1:8-9	13:1	15:12	19:27
9:7-9	13:10	15:31-32	21:11
10:17	13:18	17:10	25:12
12:1	15:5	19:20	29:1
12:15	15:10	19:25	

---

*Which of these proverbs appeal to you in particular? How would you summarise the message here?*

*Why do you think this idea is emphasised so frequently?*

If you have time, have a look at how in the following proverbs, the same idea is used for Israel's military and political life: 11:14; 15:22; 20:18; 24:6

Read the following proverbs.

10:8    12:5    12:26    13:13    16:29    19:16

*What do they teach us about who it is wise to listen to?*

*How do you think we can apply this in our own context?*

Read the following proverbs, and consider: *How does this advice make sense in the light of what we've been reading?*

3:5-8    3:11-12

*How do you think you personally can become wiser person in the areas we have been looking at?*

STUDY 5: THE WISE SPEAKER

(OR, HOW TO SHUT UP)

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

Read the following proverbs which, in different ways, describe the power of words.

11:9    11:11    12:14    12:18    18:20    18:21    25:15  
27:3

*Do any of these sayings particularly stand out to you? Why do you think words are so powerful?*

Read the following proverbs. (A)

---

10:11	10:31-32	13:2	15:14	17:20
10:20	12:6	14:3	16:13	18:6-7
10:21	12:13	15:7	16:27	22:12

---

*How are the righteous/wise and the wicked/fools contrasted in these verses?*

*Which descriptions particularly strike you?*

*What is the overall message of these proverbs?*

**Good Speech I**

Read the following proverbs and mark any that particularly strike you. (B)

---

10:14	12:23	15:28	18:13	21:23	27:14
10:19	13:3	17:27-28	18:17	23:9	29:20
11:12	15:2	18:2	20:25	26:4-5	30:32-33

---

*How would you summarise the message of these proverbs?*

*Do you think we need to take notice of this encouragement to be careful in our speech? Why?*

## **Good Speech II**

Read the following proverbs and, again, mark any that strike you. (C)

---

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

---

*What, according to these proverbs, makes for good speech?*

*Do you think we need to take special notice of any of these ideas? Why?*

*How might the advice of these proverbs about Good Speech be relevant to the way we communicate in other ways, e.g. over the internet?*

Read Matthew 12:33-37. *How do Jesus' words here connect with ideas we've looked at in proverbs?*

Finally, read the following proverbs and consider: *How can we be people who value and cultivate speech that is truly good?*

15:1    15:4    15:23    16:24    18:4    20:15    24:26  
25:11

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)*

*How would you describe someone who was wise in regard to money and work?*

**Money, wealth, and poverty**

Read the following proverbs. (A)

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

*What are the main themes that come out in these proverbs?*

*Which sayings particularly stand out to you? Are there any you have trouble understanding?*

*Do you think we need to take special notice of any of these ideas?*

*Why?*

**Wise work**

**a. Work and laziness** Read the following proverbs and make a mark next to any that strike you for any reason. (B)

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

*Which of these proverbs do you particularly like or find challenging?  
How would you summarise the main message here?  
Is it easy to be lazy at work these days? If so, in what ways can we  
avoid this temptation?*

**b. Prudent business**

Read the following proverbs about shrewd business. (C)

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3:27-28	11:26	16:11	17:23	20:16-	21:14	24:27
11:1	14:4	17:8	20:10	17	22:26-	27:13
11:15	15:27	17:18	20:14	20:21	27	27:23-
				20:23	22:29	27

---

*Which of these sayings do you think are still relevant? In what ways?  
Which of them do you find hard to understand?*

**Keeping money in its place**

Read Luke 12:13-21. *How does this parable strike you after all we've  
been reading? What is the same and what is different?*

*What, according to Jesus, is the great danger with wealth?*

Read Proverbs 3:9-10. *How can we be people who "honour the Lord  
with the first fruits of all our produce?"*

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)*

**Political Life**

*Why do you think we pay so much attention to politics and politicians?*

The book of Proverbs has much to say about political life. Although some of its wisdom can seem odd to us in the modern day, we can learn a lot about what good political authority looks like from its teaching about the king and his responsibilities. Read the following proverbs and make a mark next to any that stand out to you. (A)

---

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

---

*Do any of these proverbs strike you as particularly insightful, or interesting, or confusing? Why?*

*What things, according to these sayings, make for good and just government?*

Read the following proverbs which speak of the consequences of bad political authority:

28:12      28:15-16      28:28      29:2      29:16

*Do you feel like these sayings ring true to what we hear about governments around the world?*

Read Romans 13:1-7. *How does the apostle Paul's description of good government parallel the teaching of Proverbs?*

*From all this, what things do you think we should consider in deciding how to vote?*

## **Social life**

Read the following proverbs. (B)

---

3:29-30	14:21	20:19	25:8-10	26:21	29:10
6:1-5	17:14	22:24-25	25:17	27:6	29:24
13:20	17:17	24:1	25:21-22	27:10	29:27
14:7	18:24	24:28-29	26:17-19	27:17	

---

*How would you sum up the description given here of the person who is wise in the way they live amongst diverse people?*

*What, in particular, do these proverbs teach us about who it is wise to associate with?*

*In what ways might these proverbs help us to know how to obey God's command to love our neighbours as ourselves?*

Read Romans 12:14-21. *How do Paul's words here parallel the teaching of Proverbs?*

*In what ways can you, personally, grow in the way you relate to your neighbours?*

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)*

What aspects of living as part of a family, or families, do you find particularly challenging?

**Families and home life**

Read the following proverbs which speak of wise family and home life. As you go, remember that these come from a different culture, and that many things have changed between then and now. (A)

---

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

---

*Do any of these sayings strike you as particularly wise or helpful?*

*Do you find any particularly irrelevant?*

*A number of these sayings highlight the challenges a “contentious” wife can pose. What adjective might you emphasise if you were writing porverbs about difficult husbands, e.g. “disconnected” or “indifferent” or “passive”?*

One significant theme in Proverbs is the importance of discipline of children. Read the following proverbs and then discuss the questions below. As you discuss, please bear in mind the sensitivity of this issue and the reality of differing opinions.

13:24      19:18      22:6      22:15      23:13-14      26:3  
 29:15      29:17      29:19      29:21

*Do you think these sayings are still relevant? Why, or why not?*

*Could other methods of discipline be equally wise?*

## **Sexual purity**

Related to the issue of family and home life is the extensive teaching in Proverbs on sexual purity and adultery. Read the following passages, some of which are remarkably extended compared to most of Proverbs.

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

*What things do these passages repeatedly emphasise?*

*How do these passages describe the allure of illicit sex? Why do you think these things are mentioned?*

*What do these passages commend as the wise path instead?*

*How might this teaching help us to give practical advice to a friend who was struggling with looking at pornography?*

## **An excellent wife**

To conclude, read the description of a “capable,” or “noble,” wife in Proverbs 31:10-31. *What qualities stand out to you in this description?*

*In what ways does this excellent wife sum up many of the themes of the book of Proverbs?*

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)*

*Do you ever find it hard to understand your own thoughts or actions? Why do you think that might be?*

Read the following proverbs and for each consider: *What do you think this proverb means? Do you think it is insightful in any way?*

Make a note of any that particularly strike you. (A)

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4:23	14:13	18:14	20:27
12:25	15:13	19:3	25:20
13:12	15:15	20:9	27:9
14:10	17:22	20:11	27:19

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Read the following proverbs and group them under the ideas below.

(B)

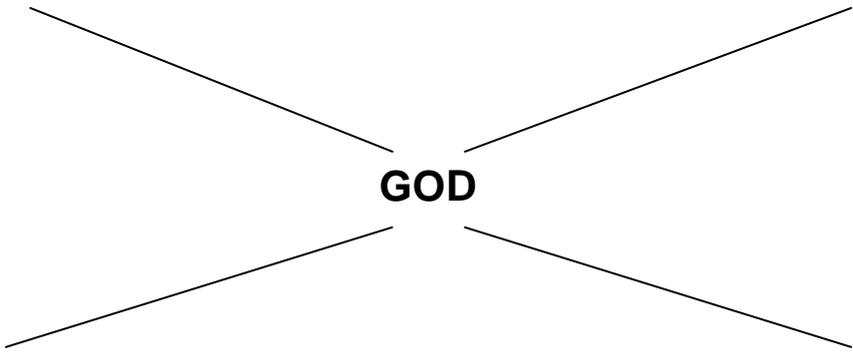
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6:16-19	15:29	18:10	21:12
15:3	16:4	20:12	22:12
15:8-9	16:7	20:22	29:13
15:25-26	17:5	21:3	30:5-6

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**loves righteousness  
and hates wickedness**

**is sovereign**



**GOD**

**cares about justice**

**is trustworthy**

*Can you think of any other places in the Bible where these characteristics of God are emphasised?*

Read the following proverbs, which connect these two ideas of God and the heart.

15:11    16:2    17:3    21:2    24:(10-)12

*What difference does this teaching make to the way we reflect on our lives and think about how we're going as Christians?*

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. *In what ways does Paul's sense of himself reflect the teaching of Proverbs?*

*Is there anything about Paul's confidence, especially in verse 5, that surprises you?*

*How can we be people who both respect that, "it is the Lord who judges", and also "keep our hearts with all vigilance" (Prov. 4:23)?*

## *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;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

}  
}

**Synonymous**

**Synonymous**

Day to day pours forth speech,  
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;

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