

Proverbs

Proverbs 1:1-31:31

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-07-28

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I. Proverbs - a practical book of wisdom for everyone

Proverbs is a very practical book that teaches us how to live in this fallen world successfully. And the emphasis is on a fallen world.

The first nine chapters are framed as a father giving counsel to his son on how to control his lusts, how to avoid succumbing to peer pressure, how to guard one's heart against temptations, how to maintain the joy of the Lord in a broken world, and many other practical topics. But it is especially designed to give the kind of worldview that will enable Christians to make wise decisions. Too many people give just a surface skim over Proverbs, but when you really dig into them, they are transformational.

If you look at the introduction in chapter one, the first seven verses give the purpose for this book. Never skip over the introduction to a book, right? And it gives 16 Hebrew words related to epistemology and decision making. So this is a book that gives foundations for a true epistemology. Epistemology is just a \$100 word for the study of how we know that we know anything. Let's read the first seven verses.

Prov. 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion— 5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles. 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

It starts with the word “to know.” True Biblical epistemology does not come from man or any other aspect of this creation; it comes from God's revelation, the Bible. Bruce Waltke's commentary categorically states, “no text in the book of Proverbs teaches that creation reveals wisdom!”¹ The same is true of true knowledge. We tend to use the terms “to know” or “knowledge” rather loosely about things we learn from science and opinions that are pretty certain. For example, I might informally say that I know that my wife is in this room. And by that I mean that I have an almost certain opinion. It's not a justifiable knowledge, but I know it. But Proverbs uses the terms knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to refer to true knowledge;

1 Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 54.

justified knowledge, which comes from Scripture alone. I know that that is a different view of knowledge than some of you are familiar with, but these verses are a beautiful justification for Gordon H. Clark’s brilliant epistemology and apologetics. It is probably the most consistent apologetics against unbelief - more consistent than even Bahnsen’s. And if you don’t anything about his apologetics, the best introduction to his works is Gary Crampton’s book, *The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark*.²

I’ve given you a chart of those 16 words, and they relate to every facet of epistemology.

Proverbs enables us to have the following

To know	לדעת	v. 2a	epistemology
Wisdom 1	חכמה	v. 2a, 5a, 6b, 7b	Skillful application of knowledge
Discipleship (“instruction”)	מוסר	v. 2a, 3a, 7b	Training
Perceive	בין	v. 2b, 5b, 6a	Perception
Words	אמר	v. 2b	Communication
Understanding	בינה	v. 2b	Insight on relationships of facts; critical thinking
Assimilation (“to receive”)	לקח	v. 3a, 5a	Ability to take in truth
Wisdom 2	שכל	v. 3a	Intelligent comprehension on difficult things
Justice	צדק	v. 3b	Just thinking; ethical thinking; ability to sort through right from wrong
Judgment	משפט	v. 3b	Taking dominion of thoughts
Equity	מישרים	v. 3b	Upright thinking
Cleverness (“prudence”)	ערימה	v. 4a	Normally translated as “cunning,” “crafty,” or “shrewd.” It refers street smartness, business smartness, or cleverness
Knowledge	דעת	v. 4b, 7a	Justified knowledge
Plan (“Discretion”???)	מזמה	v. 4b	Strategic thinking. Translated variously as to plot, scheme, plan, devise, cunning plan.
Hear	ישמע	v. 5a	Paying attention, following through on instruction
Wise Counsel	תהבילות	v. 5b	“art of leadership” HALOT), direction, steering

The first word, lahdaat, refers to how to know. How do you know that you know? Because God has revealed knowledge to you. There is an internal revelation of knowledge called natural revelation (but it is not justifiable unless it lines up with the inerrant revelation of the Bible. Everything else is opinion. It might be true opinion, but you can’t justify it.

The second word, chakmah, refers to wisdom, which is the skillful application of that revealed knowledge. This book will show that there is a huge difference between being smart (in other words, having your head filled with facts) and being wise (knowing how to apply those facts in everyday life). There are a lot of smart people out there who don’t have a lick of wisdom. How do I know? Because Proverbs over and over says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. You don’t even get to first base without knowing the Lord and fearing the Lord and reading and studying His Word.

And as you go through that list of Hebrew words you realize that we need to use the Scriptures if we are going to train our children properly. You should

² W. Gary Crampton, *The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1999)

never discipline your child without including some Scripture. It is not simply a situation of “Do as I say; I’m the smart one here.” No. Proper training of our children involves application of Scripture to every nook and cranny of their lives, which means that we parents need to be immersed in the Proverbs.

Perception, the next word, is a huge part of epistemology. It is that aha moment when you finally get it. God is the giver of those aha moments - what we speak of as cognitive rest; you’re finally convinced; you’ve settled it in your mind.

The next word, “words,” is a major part of epistemology because knowledge is composed of propositions and propositions are made of words. And part of true knowledge is the ability to communicate what you have assimilated. And Proverbs helps you to do that. It is a fabulous training tool for good communication.

The next word, “understanding,” deals with insight into the relationship of facts. It deals with critical thinking. When you have mastered math and geometry you have understanding of the subject. You might not have the wisdom to apply it to an engineering project yet, but you have understanding. And yes, an entire system of math and geometry are in the Bible. The Bible says that unbelievers can understand certain facts. God has placed that understanding in them. But unbelievers cannot justify even mathematics. They just use it because it works. And we say it works because God made it and made the universe. We can justify mathematics because God has given us all the foundations for mathematics in the inerrant Bible. So ours is justified knowledge. We say that they have knowledge and understanding by general revelation, but they can’t prove it. The provability of these things comes from the Bible.

The next word “to receive” deals with the ability to take in truth; to assimilate it into a worldview fabric without contradiction. The opposite of this is a person who has no interest in learning. His epistemology is warped and he is dull of mind and heart. But it is interesting that even this word is said to be developed as we dig into Proverbs.

Then comes a second Hebrew word that is translated as “wisdom,” but this one deals with the ability to comprehend difficult things. That doesn’t happen overnight. It happens only as we wrestle with proverbs, enigmas, riddles, and other ways in which this book applies the Word of God, and eventually it becomes easier and easier for us to get it. For an analogy, just as mathematical problems stretch the mind and make it able over time to

master more and more practical applications, the enigmas and riddles in the book of Proverbs are worldview real-life problems that help us to over time to become more useful or practical.

The next word is “justice,” and it actually deals with ethical thinking. It is the ability to sort through right and wrong. That is more difficult than it sounds when you start having conflicts between your children or when you have end of life decisions. But daily immersion in the book of Proverbs gives us clear ethical thinking for every area of life - yes, even for medicine and technology. Ethics impacts everything.

The next word, “judgment,” deals with taking dominion of our thoughts. The word is used of rulers. And everything that is needed to be a ruler or a dominion taker is needed to be a Biblical thinker. It takes planning, work, self-discipline, rule over your spirit, discernment, and wisdom from the Lord.

The word “equity” deals with upright thinking - as opposed to upside down thinking. We want to do what is right.

The word “prudence” is completely mistranslated. Normally this Hebrew word is translated as “cunning,” “crafty,” or “shrewd,” but when used positively it relates to how to be street smart, or business smart, or smart in the way we make decisions for any area of life. What we normally think of as prudence or a willingness to do what is right is actually encapsulated in the previous Hebrew word and the second to last Hebrew word. So prudence is involved, but it is given a different translation in this chart.

Then comes a repetition of the word for justified knowledge.

Then comes the word for planning or strategic thinking. It is translated in the NKJV as “discretion,” but in looking up many dictionaries and seeing how it is used elsewhere, it has more the idea of plotting or scheming when it is used negatively, or planning, devising, or being strategically wise when used positively.

The next word is “to hear.” This is an inner disposition similar to prudence. It is paying attention. It is a willingness to learn and to follow through on the instruction.

The last word is wise counsel. HALOT dictionary summarizes the nuances of this term in the phrase, “the art of leadership.” It is translated elsewhere in the Bible as steering or direction. And that is another facet of wisdom - knowing how to lead. If you pull your hair out in knowing how to lead your

children, start meditating deeply on the Proverbs. This introduction says that this was one of the reasons God gave the book. And by the way, don't take the references to dad and mom in this book to passing on your own opinions. It is Scripture and Scripture alone that the dad and mom of these proverbs is passing on.

If you lack one or more of those words, it is going to affect your life negatively. If you have the reality of what is communicated with those 16 Hebrew words, you will have everything you need to make wise decisions in the everyday practical issues of life.

Many Christians have made it a habit to read one chapter of Proverbs for each day of the month, going through the book twelve times in a year. So on the 12th of the month they would always read chapter 12, on the 30th, they would read chapter 30, etc. And after 60 years, you will have read through the book 720 times. And that is a fantastic idea.

In chapters 1-9 you have fourteen lectures given to young men. Ten of those lectures are from a father to a son. And four of them are from Lady Wisdom to the same young man. Actually, we will see that it is an inspired father (Solomon) speaking on behalf of lady wisdom. So they are his lectures as well. Over and over the father says, "Listen my son" and that phrase, "my son" occurs 26 times in the first nine chapters.

So some people just label the whole of Proverbs as a book for boys. That is a mistaken conclusion. On the bottom chart of your first page you will see that there is a progression in the book from youth, to adulthood, to leaders. But every section can be of benefit to both sexes and all ages. In fact, the woman of chapter 31 exemplifies the principles of this book. That's what makes her such a mature virtuous woman.

But let me give you some proofs that this book goes way beyond boys. We have already seen that chapter 1:1-7 tells us why we should read Proverbs, and take a look again at verse 5. Verse 4 had said that the simple and the young can benefit. But verse 5 says, "A wise man will hear and increase learning..." So even a mature man who is already wise because he has been reading the Proverbs for a lifetime can still increase his wisdom and learning even in his old age. And the reason is obvious - the proverbs are the revelation of God's infinite mind, and you will never fully plumb the depths. Almost every new commentary that comes off the shelf (and I have over 90 commentaries on Proverbs now) keeps coming up with new insights on the book of Proverbs that others have not seen. It is a lifetime source of wisdom. Later I will be showing how we are just beginning to understand the

beautiful structures that hold these proverbs together. It is just in the last couple of decades that people have begun to see this - again, illustrating that even the wisest of men keep learning by reading and re-reading the book of Proverbs. And these guys have been digging far deeper than I have ever dug.

But it is not just boys and men who should study this book. Chapters 8 and 9 have lady wisdom teaching a lot of the same things that the father has been teaching his son. And yes, she is a personification of divine revelation, and not a literal lady, but the very act of making her a woman shows that wisdom and women belong together. Indeed, as I have already mentioned, the literal woman in Proverbs 31 exemplifies all the wisdom issues that this book has been teaching. And who was it that taught king Lemuel the words of wisdom in chapter 31? It was his prophetess mother. So this is a book of wisdom for all.

II. But Proverbs can be misused if we are not careful

But the next point in the outline says that Proverbs can be misused if we are not careful. They can easily be misunderstood and misapplied. Proverbs 26:7 says, "Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools." It says that these proverbs will be useless in his hands because he doesn't know how to use that tool. You must have wisdom to properly apply these proverbs, which means that since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," you will misapply these Proverbs if you don't have the context of grace and are not walking in the Spirit. Some of the commentaries on Proverbs that I own are beyond horrible - they are beyond worthless; they are dangerous. Why? Well, I have discovered that they were written by unbelievers. So that proverb hit me full force when it said, "Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools." There is no power there. It is empty.

Likewise, Proverbs 26:9 says, "Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." You can bring needless pain to yourself and to other people by misusing these proverbs - just like a thorn in the hand.

Let me give an example of how I brought pain and trouble to myself by misusing a proverb. When I was at Prairie Bible Institute, I used Proverbs 20:13 out of context as my justification for pushing my body to its limits on sleep loss. I also pushed my body to its limits on numerous 2-3 week fasts from all food, and overzealous exercising. But I'll stick to the sleep. It says, "Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will

be satisfied with bread.” I took the first phrase, “Do not love sleep” as an excuse to hate sleep as a waste of time - which I didn’t realize at the time was unwittingly accusing Jesus of wasting time when He slept soundly in the boat. But I hated sleep. I was sleeping 3-4 hours a night and wishing I could cut it down to zero. I hated the need to sleep - which was really a rebellion against my creaturely limits.

So what was wrong with my interpretation? It failed three principles of interpretation of proverbs. It didn’t take seriously the full import of the parallel phrase in the verse that indicates at some point we need to open our eyes, which implies we have been sleeping.

Second, it failed to realize that Proverbs 20:4-13 is a chiasm. And Proverbs is loaded with chiasms. That’s why people who are not Hebrew thinkers miss the connections; they are not used to thinking of the parallels to help interpret. Well, the parallel verses - verse 13 and verse 4, show that God is not opposing sleep at all. He is opposing laziness.

And then thirdly, I failed to interpret this proverb in light of the other proverbs on sleep. This is the broader context of the book. Proverbs 3 tells us that if we follow God’s laws consistently, this will be the reward: “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.” So which is it? “Do not love sleep” or “your sleep will be sweet” - it will be a reward from the Lord? It depends on the person, the context for sleep, the purpose, and the attitudes. There are a number of proverbs related to sleep. When those contexts are taken into account, it means that while God made our bodies to need sleep, and has even blessed us with the gift of sleep, and has commanded us to sleep, such gifts of God can be abused through laziness. It is laziness that is the focus.

What are some other ways that people have abused Proverbs? Health and wealth people point to proverbs that promise health, long life, and wealth, and then accuse you of lack of faith if you have sickness, died young, or are poor. That hurts. That’s just like Job’s friends, right? In overreaction to that, some commentaries try to remedy these abuses by saying that Proverbs never gives us principles, laws, or promises. Or others say that these are probabilities, not promises. They say that Proverbs gives us the ideal and Job and Ecclesiastes give us the reality, or the exceptions to those proverbs. I don’t buy that. And I say that is a misinterpretation of Job and Ecclesiastes as well. Bruce Waltke rightly reacts against that, saying,

The popular evangelical solution that these are not promises but probabilities, though containing an element of truth, raises theological, practical, and psychological problems

by stating the matter badly.³

The right approach is to say that they are indeed promises of a God who cannot lie. But the promises are conditioned in the immediate and broader context by the same three things I outlined in the previous example.

For example, Prov. 24:16 is quite clear that the righteous man may fall seven times and yet he still gets up again. So obviously the righteous can fall; they can have calamity; they can have economic disaster. But it says, “For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.” So it is possible to yank proverbs out of their context which gives specifications and exceptions to the general principles. God can sovereignly test us like He tested Job. But that does not contradict the laws of Deuteronomy 28 or the same laws in Proverbs.

Some Proverbs seem absolute in their application, but the context limits the absolute promise to a specific situation. I’ll give you an example that has puzzled people. People claim that Proverbs 22:15 guarantees that the rod of correction will always drive foolishness from a child. And on the surface, that is exactly what it looks like. Proverbs 22:15: “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”

So is it always the parent’s fault when a child remains foolish? Not necessarily. Prov. 27:22 says, “Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him.” In Proverbs, a fool is an unbeliever. He does not have a regenerate heart. You may be able to get outward conformity from an unbeliever, but because his heart is that of a fool, the only thing that his heart can produce is foolishness. This is why we speak of the importance of shepherding children’s hearts and leading them to the Gospel, not simply enforcing outward conformity. Until they are changed in their hearts from a fool into a regenerate person, discipline will only have so much impact.

But does a regenerate heart also have foolishness? Yes. And Proverbs 22:15 does give an absolute promise to such a situation. Praise God! So if the child is a fool, or an unbeliever, no amount of discipline will completely remove his or her foolishness. Will it remove some? Yes. But the person will still think like a fool, even though outwardly conforming. But it is imperative that we disciple foolishness out of the heart of regenerate children as well. And with regenerate children, we will indeed have success. But I don’t believe that proverb applies to Esau’s or Ishmaels.

³ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 107.

So you might respond, “OK, that’s very convenient Phil, but on what basis can I say that the child being spoken of in Proverbs 22:15 is a regenerate child?” It doesn’t say that in the text. Well, I can affirm that because Proverbs 22:15 is part of a chiasm, and the heart of the chiasm is verse 11 which calls all in the family to be friends with God the King. It says, “He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the king will be his friend.” Which king? The next verse tells us which king rules in every segment of life. It is Yehowah.

But let’s also look back at the parallel part of the chiasm, which is verse 6. As translated in the NKJV, it says much the same thing as verse 15. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” If that is the correct translation, then this is the same promise that verse 15 gives. It would be an example of synonymous parallelism within chiasms. So that would give two promises that if you discipline and disciple your regenerate children, they will outgrow their foolishness - guaranteed. Don’t give up; don’t be discouraged; it will happen. That is one possibility.

But many scholars translate verse 6 differently, showing that even with a regenerate child, there will be problems without consistent discipline and training. Bruce Waltke, who has probably done more analysis of the structuring of the Proverbs than just about anybody, translates it this way: “Dedicate a youth according to his foolish way, and when he is old he will not depart from it!” So on that translation it is an antithetic parallelism that fills out and complements via contrast, the ideas in verse 15 and doesn’t just duplicate them. God has set things up among Christians that when you allow your child to go “in the way he wants to go” (which is another way some scholars have translated that - you let your kid do what he wants or what comes naturally) it is guaranteed that this child (whether regenerate or not) will turn out badly when he grows up. He won’t depart from his ways of doing things. You don’t want to have child-centered education. It’s disastrous.

Now, I am not going to settle the debate on which way to translate it. There is no contradiction either way. But Jay Adam’s takes it this second way as do some other scholars. So on their interpretation, verse 6 is parallel to Proverbs 29:15, which says, “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” Any child left to himself.

We haven’t even dealt with the structure of the book yet, but I am already giving you clues on how structure helps us to properly interpret the book, and keeps us from using proverbs like the fool who pokes a thorn through

his hand.

Another phrase that has been taken completely out of context comes from Proverbs 23:12-16 (which is a unit and needs to be kept together as a unit), but they have ignored the unit as a whole and only quote part of verse 13, “if you beat him with a rod, he will not die...” Have kids died from ungodly beatings? Yes. And a few years ago there was a cult that took that verse out of context saying that no beating of any sort would cause a child to die. And they brutally beat this kid to death. But that proverb needs to be taken in context of the whole interpretive unit of verses 12-16 which speaks of a very godly caring discipleship. God dictates how the rod should be used, not us.

I liken these proverbs to the secular proverb that gun owners like to use with their children - “Every gun is loaded!” Really? Well, what they mean by that is, “We should treat every gun as if it is loaded or we will end up at some point facing a tragedy.” So it is still giving us the direction that we should always guide our children in, but the contexts give nuances that are missed by careless interpreters.

But I will give you one more example of misuse of proverbs. This time the misinterpretation is solved when you realize that these two verses form a couplet. Atheists love to quote Proverbs 26:4 and 5 as if they are contradictory Proverbs. Here is Proverbs 26:4-5.

4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Are those two proverbs contradictory? Absolutely not. Those two verses are foundational for Presuppositional Apologetics. Far from being contradictory, they show the two stages of debate that are absolutely needed when debating with fools. The first proverb insists that we must not start (that’s why that proverb is first - we must not start) with independent reasoning (like the evidentialists do) or we will end up with the same independent reasoning as the fool and never expose that fool’s folly. We must always start with Scripture as the only foundation for a rational explanation of life. But when the fool rejects the Bible, you then move to the second strategy of showing how on a fool’s own worldview he cannot account for logic, wisdom, ethics, law, or have any rational account for life. And Greg Bahnsen has done a masterful job of fleshing out these proverbs in his apologetic courses. It’s slightly different from Clark’s, but is a helpful addition. I actually have found benefit from both. I like Clark’s beginning point being Scripture and I like Bahnsen’s transcendental argument.

The point is, it takes wisdom to use proverbs, and the more we read the

whole book of Proverbs (emphasis on the word whole), the more wisdom we get in applying proverbs to real life situations.

III. The structural arrangements of the Proverbs help us to understand the proverbs

Proverbs Structure

Collection 1	Collection 2	Collection 3	Collection 4	Collection 5	Collection 6	Collection 7
1:1-9:18	10:1-22:16	22:17-24:22	24:23-34	25:1-29:27	30:1-33	31:1-31
Solomon I	Solomon 2	Sages 1	Sages 2	Solomon 3	Agur	Mother of L
ABCDDCBA	Many interlocking chiasms	?	ABCABC	Many interlocking chiasms		
This is composed of 14 lectures from father to son (with the lady wisdom sections also being given by the father). All are inspired speeches.	37 units of 5 proverbs 5 units of 5 proverbs 37 units of 5 proverbs	I haven't researched this section enough to draw out the structure				
Youth	Adults			Statesmen & Other Leaders		
"my son" is repeated 26x; "my children" 4x; "youth" 3x; "young man" 2x	"man" is repeated 107x; "father" 15x; "mother" 6x; "woman" 6x; "old men" 4x			"king" is repeated 13x; "servant" is 8x; "ruler 7x; father 6x; "justice" 4x; "master" 3x; See also references to throne, judge, gates, palace, troop, club, sword, arrow, and other terms related to some sort of leadership.		

The way the book of Proverbs was structured helps us to avoid some of these common mistakes. I've already hinted at it with parallelisms and chiasms and couplets. But there is a lot more to it than that.

Last week we saw how important it is to understand the structure of the Psalter in order to fully appreciate the meaning of the Psalter. But we also saw how the church has been maturing in its understanding of that structure over the past 2000 years. The early church recognized that each of the five books of the Psalter correspond thematically with the first five books of the Bible. They saw a few other structural things that helped in interpretation. But it really wasn't until the last few decades that Christian scholars have seen an accelerated understanding of the structure of Psalms.

There is a similar thing happening with the book of Proverbs, even though we are not nearly as far along in the discovery process as we are with the Psalms. Over the last 2000 years there have always been some scholars who

have recognized that there must be an order and arrangement to the Proverbs because Solomon and later editors have said there was. Here are some of their reasons.

- First, everyone acknowledges that chapters 1-9 are very ordered, so why not the rest of the book? However, until people realized that Proverbs is chalk full of chiasms and other Hebrew structures, they were confused. They could see the same topics coming up in the same section, but they seemed like they were randomly mixed. But they are only randomly mixed to a western reader. There is beautiful Hebrew structure all the way through it.
- Second, in the introduction Solomon had said that this book contains riddles, or more literally, “hidden things” (hidah - הִדַּח). The idea that word conveys is that some of the things of Proverbs are well enough hidden that it would require wise men to figure out. They are hidden. That has certainly been the case with the amazing structure of this book. They have been riddles until recently. For example, Matthew Henry said, “it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses...”⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown claimed, “the verses are entirely unconnected...”⁵ And that was the opinion of many. But even as early as 1871, Bengel stumbled upon some organizational clues and declared that they were incredibly beautifully organized.⁶ It’s like God had turned the lights on for him. Everybody wishes he would have recorded his discoveries. But then, others have recently been making major progress of their own.
- Third, Ecclesiastes 12 appears to look back to this time when it says that Solomon “pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.” “Pondering” how the proverbs should be put into the book does not indicate that they have just randomly been thrown together. You don’t have to ponder that. And the phrase “set in order many proverbs” indicates anything but an arbitrary hodge podge. There is order, arrangement, and rational purpose. Ecclesiastes also calls Solomon a master of those collections, not just a collector, and claims that each word was well ordered (verse 10) and like a well-driven nail (verse 11). So you would expect every verse to have its purpose and place. It’s nailed in place.
- Fourth, several of the proverbs are repeated in a way that suggests a structural purpose. And authors are beginning to understand that.

Now, of the 90+ commentaries that I own on Proverbs, there are three that stand out as providing the most help on understanding the structure. And I am going to mention these books because there is no way that I can dig into all of this structure. I’ve already given you hints of how it works, but you will have to study on your own for the details. The first commentary is by

4 Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 974.

5 Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Bible Text*, vol. 3 (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), xv.

6 He said, “I have often been in such an attitude of soul, that those chapters of the Book of Proverbs in which I had before looked for no connection whatever, presented themselves to me as if the proverbs belonged in the most beautiful order with one another.” J. A. Bengel, as quoted in Doug Meier, *Solomon’s Enduring Treasure: Commentary on Proverbs* (Xulonpress.com; 2012), p. 250.

Duane Garrett,⁷ and he was the first to clue me in to the presence of very clear chiasms.

The second is Bruce Waltke,⁸ who has done fabulous work on the microstructures that are not reflected in the chart on your handout, but which are super-helpful in interpreting individual proverbs. His book is super-technical and might bore the daylights out of most of you, but anyone who wants to dig deeper will find helpful stuff in his commentary. It's two fat volumes. I don't agree with all of his conclusions, but hey - we are in the infancy of figuring these things out.

But my highest recommended commentary for you is by Doug Meier.⁹ Some of you may know him. He used to be a member of our former church. He has written a splendid layman's commentary on Proverbs called, Solomon's Enduring Treasure. It is super-easy to read, and it collects some of the main conclusions from the other commentaries without all the boring details that the other scholars have had to go through. Doug Meier, Solomon's Enduring Treasure.

But having said that, as boring as Bruce Waltke is, he has made some astounding forward progress on discerning the microscopic intricacies of this book that Doug Meier does not get into. He has been using the science of poetics to uncover these patterns. Once they are uncovered, they are rather obvious, but it takes hard work to uncover them. Here is a brief definition of poetics: It is the science by which we

...find the building blocks of literature and the rules by which they are assembled...

[Thus] poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language.¹⁰

In essence, poetics is the grammar of literature. Its value to hermeneutics cannot be overstated. We must first know how a text means before we can know what it means.¹¹

So let's look at the broadest structure that is reflected on the chart in your outlines. It's easy to know exactly where the collections of poems and proverbs begin and end because the text explicitly tells us. Sadly, the

7 Duane A. Garrett, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 20.

8 Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs, chapters 1-15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004) and Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs, chapters 16-31, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005).

9 Doug Meier, Solomon's Enduring Treasure: Commentary on Proverbs (Xulonpress.com; 2012).

10 A. Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative (BibLit 9; Sheffield: Almond, 1983), p. 15. As quoted in Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

11 B. Waltke with C. Fredricks, Genesis: A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 33. As quoted in Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), p. 46.

outlines in many books completely miss these textual clues. I'll read each clue that starts a new collection of proverbs.

Chapter 1:1 has the heading, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel", so we know that the first collection of proverbs was written by Solomon.

Now look at the first verse of chapter 10. It says, "The proverbs of Solomon." So we know that all of chapter 10 through 22:16 was also written by Solomon, but it now constitutes a second collection quite distinct from the first. He wants us to see these as being two volumes of proverbs.

In chapter 22:17-21 Solomon tells us that this next collection of proverbs was in part written by him and in part written by other inspired wise men. So he was in part an author and in part a collector and organizer of those proverbs. But the way that he grouped proverbs has a purpose, and it is understanding that purpose that aids in the interpretation of those proverbs.

Collection 4 begins at chapter 24:23. It seems to have been added later by Solomon because verse 23 says, "These things also belong to the wise [men]." The word "also" indicates a later addition of proverbs by exactly the same men. If the same "wise men" wrote these proverbs, why not lump them together? Why have a separate collection? And the answer is, "Because there is an inspired structure to the book - with the number seven being the number of perfection." Some people believe that they can identify the specific wise men who wrote those proverbs. In any case, Solomon put those collections together by inspiration. He ordered them, but he kept the fourth collection separate from the third for a reason.

But then we have an unusual title in chapter 25:1. "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied." Interesting! Why would Solomon have not included any of those proverbs in his book of proverbs? And the answer is easy. The canon that God gave in Solomon's day was sufficient for the saints of his day. They had access to other revelation that we don't have. And 1 Peter 1:11-12 tells us that the growing canon of the Old Testament was specifically being prepared for New Covenant times. It says, "To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things..." that they wrote. So Solomon's proverbs were providentially preserved and by divine inspiration included in yet another collection by Hezekiah.

Miller demonstrates a beautiful symmetry to this new edition as well.¹² At

12 John W. Miller, *Proverbs*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2004). See

each stage, there was perfection. Parts 1 and part 3 of this edition of the book of Proverbs was the same size and beautifully surrounded part 2, which was the main collection of proverbs for his day. His part 2 is also our collection 2, and on our chart you can see a little bit of that structure. His main collection has exactly 375 verses, which many scholars point out is the numerical value for the name “Solomon.”¹³ So Solomon’s name was written right into the structure of his book. But as the chart shows, those 375 are divided up into three sections, each of which are composed of symmetrical units. And I do have this on your chart on the bottom of page one. The first section has exactly 37 units of 5 proverbs paralleled by the last section in Collection 2 that also has 37 units of 5 proverbs. And it is linked with the middle section that has 5 units of 5 proverbs. And each of those smaller units of five proverbs clearly belong together, with the five proverbs in each unit filling out the meaning of that whole unit. And there are some other fascinating things when you dig down into the Hezekiah edition of the book of Proverbs. We know from other Scripture that Hezekiah was a prophetically endowed king.¹⁴ He took some of the 3000 proverbs that 1 Kings 4:32 says that Solomon wrote by inspiration. Only about a sixth of those 3000 proverbs were included in Hezekiah’s collection. Why were the others left out? Because they were needed for that time, and not for our own time. Keep in mind that the canon was being developed specifically for New Covenant times when it would be our only form of inspired revelation. They had many forms of inspired revelation other than the Bible back then.

Then chapter 30:1 begins the next collection with these words: “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel - to Ithiel and Ucal” and then comes a bunch more inspired proverbs of this prophet, Agur. I say they are inspired because the literal meaning of “utterance” is “oracle,” and is used by the prophets to speak of their inspired revelations.

And the seventh collection of proverbs is in chapter 31, which begins with the title, “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him.” The word “utterance” again is literally, “oracle,” which refers to an inspired prophetic utterance from God. So it appears that King Lemuel was the scribe and his mother was the prophetess.

So Proverbs is really a book of books, or a book of seven collections of proverbs. And the amazing thing about it is that all seven books are knit

especially pages 21 and following.

13 “As often observed (Murphy, 1981:50), this number equals the numerical value of the Hebrew consonants of the name “Solomon” (in 10:1), which in Hebrew are: š (300), l (30), m (40), h (5).” John W. Miller, Proverbs, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2004), 21.

14 See for example Isaiah 38.

together in such a way with chiasms and other interlinking structures that seem like they were written all at one times. That's amazing because the proverbs were written over the span of many lifetimes. But in one sense, that shouldn't surprise us. If God is the author, he could give each piece of the intricate puzzle as it was being prophesied, and give it in a way that it all fits together perfectly.

The Hebrew lets us know how the sections will break out within each collection, and it does so via obvious Hebrew markers.¹⁵ And piecing together the evidence of several scholars, those markers break the book down into: 1. Collections (that's what we just went through) 2. Sections (that's the three divisions of the book into youth, adults, and statesmen/leaders on the chart I've given you) 3. Then comes units 4. Then subunits or stanzas 5. Then proverb pairs, or what scholars call strophes 6. Then lines 7. Then verses 8. Then half-verses 8. Then phrases 9. Then words 10. Then syllables 11. Then sounds

Fascinatingly, even the sounds of the words in the Hebrew are significant. But what makes people miss the logical connections of many of the proverbs is that they are arranged as chiasms. Surprise, surprise! Duane Garret's commentary outlines intricate chiasms within chiasms where the parallels within smaller chiasms interpret each other, and the parallels within the larger chiasms help us to further understand the smaller chiasms, which also give added meaning to the individual proverbs. And all of these form a seamless chain of chiasms throughout that collection. It's just amazing. It would take quite a few sheets for me to write all of those chiasms out, so I have decided not to. Anyway, I ran out of time.

15 The earliest preserved unit divisions are Masoretic *pisqa'* of "sections." The existence of *pisqa'* is mentioned as early as Sifra (Lev 1:1), ca. third century C.E. A *pisqa'* is indicated by beginning a verse on a new line or, if the preceding line is complete, leaving one line blank. (The letter *peh*, for *petuhah* "open" is used as well, but inconsistently.) The *pisqa'* are maintained in formal manuscripts, such as the Aleppo and the Leningradensis. The *pisqa'* of Prov 1–9 are as follows: 1:1–7; 1:8–19; 1:20–33; 2:1–22; 3:1–10; 3:11–18; 3:19–35; 4:1–19; 4:20–5:6; [5:7–23]; [6:1–5; 6:6–11; 6:12–15; 6:16–19]; [6:20–26; 6:27–35]; [7:1–23; 7:24–27]; [8:1–21; 8:22–31; 8:32–36]; 9:1–9; 9:10–18 "These divisions are based on content, and almost all agree with the units demarcated previously (as lectures or interludes) or with sections of them, which will be defined in the Commentary. I have italicized cases when we agree on the boundaries (of units or sections) and bracketed *pisqa'* that constitute sections of my units. Disagreements are marked by boldface. Even in cases where we disagree on the compass of a unit or section, the starting or ending points usually coincide (3:11; 3:18; 4:20; 5:6). It is interesting that the Masoretes begin a *pisqa'* at exhortations beginning *we'attah* "and now" (5:7; 7:24; 8:32), which always introduces a new exhortation. They did not, however, always recognize the addresses to "my son" in the exordia as starting a new unit (3:21; 4:10; 5:1). This comparison shows that the boundaries of the divisions of Prov 1–9 proposed here (which are widely recognized by modern commentators) are natural and were recognized in ancient times." Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 18A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 47.

No one commentary contains all of these structures. I have pulled them out of numerous books, but Doug Meier has probably collected the most chiasms of any book that I have seen. In that book he not only shows the overall progress of the book from youth (chapters 1-9), to adults (chapters 10-24), to statesmen and other leaders (chapters 25-31), but he also shows within sections a progress from sowing, taking root, bearing fruit, and a growing relationship with God. I hope you are getting a feeling that this is not a hodge podge of unrelated proverbs. It is a structurally integrated book.

And there is a lot more to structure than is even present on the chart I have given to you. Waltke shows that as you work with the microstructures, including syllables and Hebrew sounds, you begin discovering all kinds of cool stuff that links proverbs together in ways that I had previously been completely blind to. Most of Waltke's discussions are for the technician and would bore the daylights out of you. It bored the daylights out of me. I don't know why scholars have to write in such boring manners. Anyway, if you do happen to read Waltke's book, you will see that this rediscovery of the rules of Hebrew poetics is beginning to open up the meaning of Proverbs in a whole new way. There are sets of Proverbs that must be read together to interpret all of them correctly. And I've tried to give you examples of those. There are couplets where each proverb helps to fill out the meaning of the corresponding couplet, like the answering a fool according to his folly couplet.

Waltke shows how even the way the phrase "the fear of the LORD" structures the whole book puts the definitive kabosh to liberal ideas like Whybray's claim that Proverbs is a book promoting a man-centered view of life, or Brueggemann's claim that Proverbs is supposedly the good news that mankind can steer its own ship, or Crenshaw's weird claim that Proverbs teaches us that we can find well-being in life apart from divine assistance. No! It is not a self-help book. Far from it. If the fear of the Lord is the origin of wisdom, and if the fear of the Lord structures the whole book, then apart from God, nothing that is said about any part of life makes sense apart from God. The tight structure of the book shows that we can do nothing without God and the book calls us to fear God and to commit our ways to Him in all of life.¹⁶

16 Waltke says, "Whybray finds, in addition to the wisdom books' distinctive vocabulary, that they are humanistic. 16 To be sure, they are primarily concerned with man and his world, and in particular with the potentiality and limitations of the individual, but to brand the genre as humanistic is misleading. Brueggemann claims that the wisdom corpus announces the joyous news that God trusts people to steer their own lives, and Crenshaw asserts that what was distinctive about Israelite wisdom was its belief "in the sufficiency of human virtue to achieve well-being in this life, apart from divine assistance." 18 These claims, however, can hardly be reconciled with the corpus itself. The book anchors its teachings in "the

As Bob Deffenbaugh words it, “Proverbs does away with the distinction between the sacred and the secular.”¹⁷ Proverbs speaks to sex, money, civil government, contracts, courts, business, childrearing, bargaining, taking care of your property, and many other so-called secular areas of life as if they belonged to the Lord (which they do) and must follow the laws of King Jesus (which they must).

In this, Proverbs is similar to the prophets who were simply interpreting and enforcing the Pentateuch. But where Amos writes in general terms - “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream” (Amos 5:24), Proverbs puts feet to that. For example, Proverbs 20:10 says, “Diverse weights and diverse measures, are both alike abominations to the Lord.” Put into modern lingo this means that any coin minted by the United States government after 1963 is an abomination to the Lord because the silver was taken out and yet it pretended to have the same value. That’s to put it bluntly, but that’s exactly what it means. And there are many other proverbs that are a rebuke to our modern political system. Proverbs shakes up the modern tendency to leave public affairs out of religion. It insists that true wisdom and knowledge must invade every nook and cranny of public and private life.

IV. Overview of the book

Let me give you an extremely brief overview of the book. I’ve given you the main sections.

A. Collection 1 - Wisdom for Youth

Introduction: Proverbs 1:1-7

And I’ve already read the first seven verses that form the introduction to the first section.

fear of the LORD” (see p. 100-101), not in humanity. Prov. 3:7 warns against being wise in one’s own eyes (i.e., autonomous), and 3:6 calls for trust in the LORD instead of one’s self. Nel argues that wisdom’s ethos “does not result from the goodness of man or the superior functions of human reason.” Because of humanity’s limitations, the righteous commits his way to the LORD for success (16:1–3). Piloting his own life under the sun, Qoheleth found death better than life (Eccl. 4:2), and Job found no resolution to his questions of suffering and to the question, Why be righteous? Job’s “Angst” was relieved only when the LORD answered him out of the chaotic whirlwind (Job 38:1).” Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 51–52.

17 <https://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-proverbs>

Key verse: Proverbs 1:7

Verse 7 stands as the foundation for the rest of the book. It is the key verse. If you are looking for a key verse, almost everyone agrees that Proverbs 1:7 is the key verse.

Fourteen lectures from an inspired father to a son - Wisdom for youth

Then come fourteen lectures from a father to a son that are crafted in the form of a chiasm. You won't discern it from my chart because there are overlapping aspects that are amazing. Anyway, some people see Lady Wisdom as not being a lecture from the dad, and so they only see ten lectures of the dad (with four interludes). But as we will see later, Lady Wisdom is simply a metaphor for Solomon's divinely revealed wisdom in the book of Proverbs. He speaks wisdom. He is speaking out Lady Wisdom by inspiration. And even the structure shows that Lady Wisdom is the revelation of Proverbs and/or all of Scripture.

Sadly, I won't have time to cover everything in my notes on the fourteen lectures, other than to say that they provide fascinating and powerful discipleship material for our kids - assuming of course that you really understand them and have delved into them. But I can't skip over point 4 - "Who is Lady Wisdom in this book?" This is such a controversial subject that I think it has to be address. [Skip down to Lady Wisdom below.]

Lecture one is in verses 8-19, and calls upon the son to resist the peer pressure of a gang that is trying to conscript him into their midst. It is a powerful lecture on the dangers of peer pressure and the kind of Biblical sense that a father must instill in his son. Now, the peer pressure that Solomon's son was getting was probably far worse than any peer pressure your kids will face, but the principles are still the same.

Lecture two (in verses 20-33) is in the form of Lady Wisdom speaking to the son. It calls upon him to not be gullible and in various ways motivates the son to seek the Lord and avoid immoral choices.

Lecture three is in chapter 2:1-22. It shows how diligent study of God's wisdom will protect one's character and protect you from God's judgments

Lecture four (in chapter 3:1-12), gives a number of beautiful promises to those who keep their obligations to the Lord.

Lecture five (in verses 13-35) is about Lady Wisdom, and gives the value of wisdom to mankind, to the Lord, and to the son.

Lecture six (in chapter 4:1-9), gives words from the grandfather that the father is passing on, and they all relate to the family heritage of wisdom. David was inspired, and he passed those inspired words on to Solomon.

Lecture seven (in verses 10-19), is a call to avoid the pathway of the wicked.

Lecture eight (in verses 20-27), is a call to guard the heart and not swerve from the right way. If we are not applying proverbs to our inner life, our outer life is only going to be superficial.

Lecture nine (which is all of chapter 5), we have lessons on sexual temptation, how to avoid falling into adultery, and how to stay happily married. It is a call to monogamy, and ties in with the Song of Solomon. Which is weird, because Solomon violated his own inspired teaching. Oh well, we can learn from that and do better.

Lecture ten (which is chapter 6:1-19), gives practical lessons on finances, the dangers of laziness, the dangers of associating with people who won't submit to authority, and seven things that God hates with a passion. By the way, there is a commentary that applies the book of proverbs to work and business.

Lecture eleven (in verses 20-35) gives lessons on how to guard the heart against lust and adultery. There is a lot about sex because young men struggle in that department and need practical advice that can give them total victory.

Lecture twelve is all of chapter 7, and is a fascinating illustration of using real life to teach life lessons to our children. He asks his son to look out the window at a simpleton who is walking near a harlot. He describes how this woman is trying to associate her sinful product with beauty and everything desirable. The dad switches that advertising principle of association upside down, and he associates the woman's product with ugliness, demons, danger, and death, and hell. It is powerful turning upside down of the advertising principle of association. As you meditate deeply on each word and phrase you begin to despise the thing that you were previously tempted by. It's a great lecture.

Lectures thirteen and fourteen are Lady Wisdom's calls and contrasting them once again with Lady Folly's banquet. We've already been introduced to Lady Wisdom two times earlier.

Who is Lady Wisdom in this book?

And the question comes up, “Who is this Lady Wisdom?” One of the common errors in the church is to treat her as the preincarnate Christ. And I want to spend a bit of time on her because godly men are divided on this question, and yet there are dangers in holding to the theory that this is the preincarnate Son of God. Let me first of all give the reasons why people have been persuaded that it has to be Jesus. There are indeed striking similarities between this personification of Wisdom and the Gospel of John’s representation of Jesus Christ as the Logos, which some have translated as the wisdom of God. Of course, on my interpretation there would have to be these similarities too. But here is the case for Jesus being Lady Wisdom.

- First, both existed with God before creation existed. Let’s read chapter 8:22-31
22 “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. 23 I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; 26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. 27 When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, 29 When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, 31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men.

- Second, those last verses indicate that both played a role in creation.
- Third, both descended from heaven to dwell with humanity. You can see this in the earlier chapters that describe her. But that actually fits my view better because Lady Wisdom came down and was incarnated so-to-speak before Jesus was. I believe her to be revelation of God’s Mind, which also has to descend from heaven to dwell with humans through prophets in the form of Scripture. Anyway, continuing with their arguments.
- Fourth, both Lady Wisdom and Jesus were rejected by the bulk of humanity. (Well, the same is true of Scripture.)
- Fifth, both Lady Wisdom and Jesus teach us what God thinks.
- Sixth, both call those who listen to them “children.”
- Seventh, both lead believers to life and immortality and both threaten death to those who do not believe.
- And finally, both offer blessings in the symbols of food and drink.

What’s not to like about saying that Lady Wisdom is Jesus Himself? Bruce Waltke and many other scholars point out that if we take her as the preincarnate Son of God, there are huge dangers. These are the Scriptures that were used by the Arians to teach their heresies about Jesus having been brought into existence and not being eternal. This is a go-to passage for

modern Jehovah's Witnesses. This is also the go-to passage for modern radical evangelical feminists who claim that Jesus must have been a female since He is wisdom, and wisdom is female. Other feminists go even further and say that this is the goddess Sophia, a separate entity. So Waltke says that Lady Wisdom is not Jesus Himself. At most she would be a type of Jesus, and all types of Christ are inferior to the antitype, Jesus. So that is one way that godly scholars have dealt with this.

But I don't see her as even being a type of Jesus. There are many scholars who point out that the dissimilarities are just as striking as the similarities. For example, Chapter 8:12 has Lady Wisdom saying, "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion." That makes it look like wisdom, prudence, knowledge, and discretion are all sisters or persons. Are there four divine persons who are all female? No.

Likewise, in chapter 7:4 the father tells the son, "Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,'" and call understanding your nearest kin." Again, there are two personifications. But how can Solomon's call one a sister and the other nearest kin? It's obvious they are not literal.

Here's the bottom line. I think it is better to see wisdom, understanding, prudence, knowledge as all coming from God's mind, and because they are with us it is the revelation of God's mind. And all three Persons of the Godhead speak this wisdom and knowledge. Certainly in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3) but the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of wisdom, understanding and knowledge (Is. 11:2), and the Father is the giver of wisdom (Eph. 1:17). So this is merely a personification of Proverbs (which is God's wisdom) and the personification of all God's revelation. If wisdom is on our tongue (as Proverbs commands us to have it on our tongue) then we speak as Lady Wisdom every time we quote the Scripture. Peter says we are speaking as the oracles of God. That means that we need to have Scripture constantly on our lips.

Proverbs 2:6 says, "For Yehowah gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright." So the wisdom is communicable.

Furthermore, the inspired writer (who is the father) also gives exactly that same wisdom as Lady Wisdom. Why? Because his prophecies are not his own words; they are the words of the Lord. He is a mouth piece for the Lord. So Waltke says that it is significant that there are numerous parallels between the father's speeches and Lady Wisdom's speeches. Both are giving the same wisdom. If the father is not a type of Jesus, then Lady Wisdom is

not a type of Jesus. And indeed, I believe the inspired father is the one giving the Lady Wisdom speeches. Both what the father says and what Lady Wisdom says are divine wisdom because both come from God. Here is how B.C. Newton worded it,

Jesus is wisdom, but wisdom is not Jesus. Jesus is certainly the perfect embodiment of wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:23-24), but wisdom itself is not Jesus. Similarly, we know that God is love, but love is not God. God perfectly embodies love and He gives definition to what love is, but love is not to be equated with being God. Love is only a fragment of God's character, and wisdom is only one attribute of Jesus. So the danger of equating wisdom to Jesus is that wisdom is not the fullness of Christ's person.

But if Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the world with wisdom, then it makes sense to go to His wisdom (as revealed in the Bible) to understand this world. If God by wisdom created us, we should study proverbs to understand us.

But here is the thing that Tremper Longman derives from this Lady Wisdom section. He says that she invites us to eat with her and to enter into intimacy with her and to invite her into our lives. This wisdom needs to become part of our lives. By reading and internalizing Proverbs, we make Proverbs part of us.

And finally, this is why Lady Wisdom is contrasted with Lady Folly. Lady Folly is the personification of the wisdom of the world. Lady Folly is not literally Satan or any other person. It is simply the wisdom of the world. So it is the wisdom of Scripture versus the wisdom of the world.

Well, suddenly, all the wisdom passages come to life because Lady Wisdom is in the city square, in the king's house, in the marketplace, in people's marriages, instructing children. In short, she is in every nook and cranny of life, and we need to receive her into every nook and cranny of our lives. That's the purpose of the powerful contrasts between Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly.

B. Collections 2-4 - Wisdom for adults

After chapters 1-9, which form an introduction (so to speak) to the rest of the book, we have all the collections of chapters 10-30, which form a bunch of pithy sayings that are practical guidance for living. If chapters 1-9 can be labeled as "Fear and Hear," chapters 10-31 can be labeled as "Do." Chapters 1-9 prepared us for those sayings.

And this whole section of Collections 2-4 is addressed to adults. Where the previous section talks to sons, youth, children, and young men, this section speaks to adults. By the time you have been disciplined in chapters 1-9, you

should be mature enough to be able to handle proper interpretation of the rest of the book.

If you look at the bottom two rows of my chart, I have counted up who is addressed in each section, and the labels that are given to them. I believe my statistical analysis vindicates Doug Meier's division. In the first section, the phrase "my son" is repeated 26 times, "my children" 4 times, "youth" 3 times, and "young man" 2 times. In contrast, the next major section (which encompasses all of collections 2-4), has the word "man" repeated 107 times, father 15 times, "mother" 6 times, "woman" 6 times, and "old men" 4 times. So there is a clear progression.

C. Collections 5-7 - Wisdom for statesmen and other leaders

And finally, collections 5-7 gives us wisdom for statesmen and other leaders. The first two sections are preparing us for the leadership of this section. The first proverb is: "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings to search out a matter." And the next proverb talks about kings. And my statistical analysis shows that the whole grouping is focused upon statesmen and other leaders. The word "king" occurs 13 times, "servant" 8 times, "ruler" 7 times, "father" 6 times, "justice" 4 times, "master" 3 times, and also has references to throne, judge, gates, palace, troop, club, sword, arrow, and other terms related to some sort of leadership. Just seeing those three major groupings of the collections helps you to understand the proverbs better.

The Virtuous Woman in the last chapter was the husband of a statesman. Verse 23 says, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land." So obviously he has an office as a statesman. But she is singled out as a person who embodies all of the wisdom of the Proverbs, showing that it is possible to live these proverbs out in real life. Her husband also appears to live them out. And so there is a real life exemplification of Proverbs in that chapter.

V. The Christ of Proverbs - 30:4

But let me end with the Christ of Proverbs. If Lady Wisdom is not the Christ, who is?

I believe the only clear reference to Christ is in Proverbs 30:2-6, which says,
2 Surely I am more stupid than any man, And do not have the understanding of a man. 3 I neither learned wisdom Nor have knowledge of the Holy One. 4 Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name,

and what is His Son's name, If you know? 5 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. 6 Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

It starts in verses 2-3 by saying that even Agur is stupid and utterly without understanding, wisdom, or knowledge apart from God's revelation. You and I are stupid and utterly without understanding, wisdom, or knowledge without God's revelation in the Scriptures. This is the epistemology of Proverbs. So this links with the introduction. True knowledge is what is revealed in the Bible and can be extrapolated from the Bible by logical deduction. Science is not true knowledge; it is merely probable opinion. And that's why we don't get distressed when science keeps changing its opinions. Opinions are legitimate, and may even be true. We speak of them as operational - we operate with them because they seem to work. You can say in a loose sense that you know certain facts of science. But philosophically it is impossible to justify that opinion. Only what is in Scripture can be justified, and therefore only what is in Scripture can technically be said to be epistemologically justified knowledge.

He then goes on to show that no one has ascended into heaven or come down from heaven. But he points to one who will. The Son of God, who is the Word, and who has given the revelation of the Word - to which we must not add. He has revealed the Father. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And by fully revealing the Father to His people in the Scriptures, He has given to us everything that we need for life and godliness. Amen, and Amen.