

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Class Description:

Wis-dom \ˈwiz-dem\ ... 1 a: accumulated philosophic or scientific learning KNOWLEDGE
b: ability to discern inner qualities and relationships INSIGHT
c: good sense JUDGMENT
... (Webster's, 1986)

The book of Proverbs contains knowledge, insight, and judgment from God's perspective. In this book we learn how to be wise by acting in the fear of the Lord. We learn the blessings of right living and the pitfalls of those that choose foolishness.

This class will look at the book of Proverbs from several different perspectives. We will look at the structure of Hebrew poetry and the insight that it brings to understanding the Proverbs. We will look at the structure of the book and study some of its main passages. We will look topically at the Proverbs and study scattered verses on various themes. We will study the man who wrote most of Proverbs and will see what he has to say to men and women of the twentieth century.

Schedule:

April 24 Introduction, Overview and Structure
May 1 Wisdom
May 8 The Woman of Virtue
May 15 Folly
May 22 Communication
May 29 Work / Wealth
June 5 Society / Justice
June 12 Family / Discipline
June 19 Personal character / Friends
June 26 The Man of Wisdom

Sources:

J. Sidlow Baxter, "**Explore the Book**", Zondervan, 1966

Derek Kidner, "**Proverbs - An Introduction & Commentary**", Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D.J. Wiseman, Editor, IVP, 1964

William E. Mouser, Jr., "**Walking in Wisdom**", IVP 1983

Allen P Ross, "**The Expositor's Bible Commentary**", Frank E Gaebelein, editor, volume 5, Zondervan, 1991

Charles R. Swindoll, "**Bible Study Guide - Proverbs**", Word, 1980

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Structure of Proverbs:

from: J. Sidlow Baxter, "Explore the Book", Zondervan, 1966

Book 1: Sonnets Extolling Wisdom (1-9)

- Introduction (1:1-9)
- Wisdom's Warnings (1:20-33)
- The Reward of Piety (3:1-10)
- Wisdom and Security (3:21-26)
- Tradition of Wisdom (4:1-9)
- Wisdom and Health (4:20-27)
- Suretyship (6:1-5)
- The Discord Sower (6:12-19)
- Wisdom and the Strange Woman (7-8 - Monologue)
- House of Wisdom versus that of Folly (9 - a sonnet quartette)
- Enticements of Sinners (1:10-19)
- Wisdom the Deliverer (2:1-22)
- Wisdom the Supreme Prize (3:11-20)
- Wisdom and Perversity (3:27-35)
- The Two Paths (4:10-19)
- The Strange Woman (5:1-23)
- The Sluggard (6:6-11)
- Adultery (6:20-35)

Book 2: Maxims Enjoining Prudence (10-24)

375 Proverbs in couplet form (10:1-22:16)

16 Epigrams (a short poem dealing concisely, pointedly, and often satirically with a single thought or event and often ending with an ingenious turn of thought)

- Introduction (22:17-21)
- Awe before Appetite (23:1-3)
- Evil Hospitality (23:6-8)
- Gluttony (23:19-21)
- Whoredom (23:26-28)
- Mixed Epigrams (24:1-10)
- Wisdom and Honey (24:13-14)
- Respect of Persons (24:23-25)
- The Field of the Slothful (24:30-34)
- Mixed Epigrams (22:22-29)
- Fleetingness of Riches (23:4-5)
- Mixed Epigrams (23:9-18)
- Three Sayings (23:22-25)
- Wine and Woe (23:29-35)
- Duty of Rescue (24:11-12)
- Four Epigrams (24:15-22)
- Three Sayings (24:26-29)

Book 3: More Maxims on Prudence (25-31)

- Epigrams and Proverb-clusters:
- The King (25:1-7)
- On Fools (26:3-12)
- Social Pests (26:17-26)
- Good Husbandry (27:23-27)
- Various (25:8-26:2)
- The Sluggard (26:13-16)
- Various (26:27-27:22)

55 Proverbs (28-29)

The Thirteen Sayings of Agur (30)

The Oracle of Lemuel's Mother (31:1-9)

An Acrostic on the Virtuous Woman (31:10-31)

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Parallelism in the Proverbs:

from: William E. Mouser, Jr., "Walking in Wisdom", IVP 1983

Synonymous - saying the same thing in different words.

- 16:28 A perverse man spreads strife
 And a slander separates intimate friends
- 18:20 With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied;
 He will be satisfied with the product of his lips.

Antithetical - when two ideas are contrasted with one another.

- 10:1 A wise son make a father glad,
 But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
- 10:29 The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright,
 But ruin to the workers of iniquity.

Symmetrical Antithetical - contrasts between the two ideas are all explicit in the words of the proverb.

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|---|
| 15:1a | A gentle answer
turns away
wrath | 15:1b | A harsh word
stirs up
anger |
| 10:1a | A wise son
makes
a glad
father | 10:1b | A foolish son
is
a grief
to mother |

Asymmetrical Antithetical - not all ideas are directly paralleled in both halves. The reader must "fill in" the missing parts to fully understand the proverb.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--------|--|
| 10:5a | he who gathers
in summer
is a son who
acts wisely
(acts honorably) | 10:5b | he who sleeps
in harvest
is a son who
(acts foolishly)
acts shamefully |
| 28:27a | he who gives to the poor

(he who opens his eyes)
will never want
(will have many blessings) | 28:27b | (he who withholds from the
poor)
he who shuts his eyes
(will want)
will have many curses |

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Emblematic - The first line is an emblem, illustration, type or example drawn from natural or daily life.

27:15 A constant dripping on a day of steady rain

 And a contentious woman are alike

11:22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout

 is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

Synthetic - Broad class of proverbs that do not fit into the classes above. Some examples:

Classifying - delimit a class or equate one class with another

17:15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous,

 Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

Argument from lesser to greater - identified by the phrase "how much more".

15:11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD,

 How much more the hearts of men!

Better this than that - first line begins with "better", second line begins with "than".

21:19 It is better to live in a desert land,

 Than with a contentious and vexing woman.

Statement/consequence or application - second line states the consequence or application of the first.

20:4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn,

 So he begs during harvest and has nothing.

20:19 He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets,

 Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

Statement/basis - second line provides the basis for the first.

16:12 It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness,

 For a throne is established on righteousness.

Statement/purpose or result - second line states a purpose or result of the first.

17:23 A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom

 To pervert the ways of justice.

15:24 The path of life leads upward for the wise,

 That he may keep away from Sheol below.

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

The purpose of Proverbs (1:1-7)

Wisdom:
Instruction:
Understanding:
Insight:
Prudence:
Knowledge:
Discretion:
Learning:
Discernment:
Guidance:

The Motto - The fear of the Lord:

- *Fear*: dread (Deut 2:25), terrified (Jonah 1:10), standing in awe (I Kings 3:28), or reverence (Lev 19:3)
- "*Fear of the Lord*" is a common theme in the Old Testament:
 - Lev 19:14; 25:17 Deut 6:2, 13, 24; 10:12, 20; 31:12, 13
 - Josh 24:14 I Sam 12:14, 24 Psalm 19:9It is less common, but also found in the NT: Acts 9:31 and Philippians 1:14
- "*Fear of the Lord*" = Wisdom also found in Job 28:28 and Psalm 111:10
- "*Fear of the Lord*" is found 15 other times in Proverbs:
 - 1:28-29 – failure to do it leads to calamity
 - 2:5 – leads to the knowledge of God
 - 3:7 – contrasted to being wise in ourselves
 - 8:13 – causes you to hate evil
 - 9:10 – is the beginning of wisdom.
 - 10:27 – adds length to life
 - 14:27 – is a fountain of life
 - 15:16 – better than great wealth
 - 15:33 – teaches a man wisdom
 - 16:6 – causes a man to avoid evil
 - 19:23 – leads to life
 - 22:4 – bring wealth and honor and life
 - 23:17 – something to be zealous for
 - 24:21 – contrasted to rebellion
 - 29:25 – how to avoid the snare

Warning Against Enticement (1:8-19)

Warning Against Rejecting Wisdom (1:20-33)

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Moral Benefits of Wisdom:

How do we get wisdom? (2:1-4)

Where does wisdom come from? (2:5-8)

What does wisdom produce? (2:9-11)

Who will wisdom protect you from? (2:12-15)

Who else will wisdom protect you from? (2:16-19)

Conclusion (2:20-22)

Practical Wisdom: The Benefits (6 Couplets):

Verses	What we are to do	What we will gain
3:1&2		
3:3&4		
3:5&6		
3:7&8		
3:9&10		
3:11&12		

Practical Wisdom: The necessity:

Wisdom the most valuable possession (3:13-18)

Wisdom essential to creation (3:19-20)

Wisdom essential to safety (3:21-26)

Wisdom essential to living with neighbors (3:27-30)

Choose wisdom instead of the way of the wicked (3:31-35)

Chapters 4-9

Much of the material on chapters 5-9 was extracted from: Allen P Ross, *"The Expositor's Bible*

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Commentary", Frank E Gaebelein, editor, volume 5, Zondervan, 1991

The Importance of Wisdom: (chapter 4)

Seduction:

Actions to keep us from seduction (from both the evil woman and the world)

Seek (5:1-2)	Stay far from (5:7-8)	Be satisfied with (5:18)
Avoid (5:6)	Pay attention to (5:12-13)	Don't lust after (5:20)

Laziness:

1. Commitments (6:1-5)
 - a. The situation: a foolish commitment (6:1-2)
 - b. The solution: resolve the debt quickly through hard work (6:3-5)
2. Laziness (6:6-11)
 - a. An example of diligence: the ant (6:6-8)
 - b. A warning against the sluggard (6:9-11)
3. Dishonest gain (6:12-15)
 - a. A description of the dishonest man (6:12-14)
 - b. The end of the dishonest man (6:15)

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Conduct the Lord Hates: (6:17-19)

What the Lord hates

What the Lord desires

17a	haughty eyes	
17b	a lying tongue	
17c	hands that shed innocent blood	
18a	a heart that devises wicked schemes	
18b	feet that are quick to rush into evil	
19a	a false witness who pours out lies	
19b	a man who stirs up dissension	

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Warnings about Immorality:

Cycle 1:

Introduction (6:20-24)

Warning to avoid seduction (6:25-35)

Cycle 2:

Introduction (7:1-5)

Description of seduction (7:6-23)

- the victim (7:6-9)

- the temptress (7:10-12)

- the seduction (7:13-20)

- the capitulation (7:21-23)

Deadly results (7:24-27)

The Appeal of Wisdom:

Introduction (8:1-3)

Cycle 1:

Invitation: Listen and gain understanding (8:4-5)

Motivation: Wisdom is noble, just, and true (6:6-9)

Cycle 2:

Invitation: Receive instruction and knowledge (8:10)

Motivation: Wisdom is valuable (8:11-21)

Cycle 3:

Motivation: Wisdom is the basis of creation (8:22-36)

Invitation: Listen to wisdom and be blessed (8:32-36)

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

The Invitations of Wisdom and Folly:

1. Accepting wisdom (9:1-12)
 - a. Wisdom's preparation (9:1-3)
 - b. Wisdom's invitation (9:4-6)
 - c. Possible response (9:7-11)

The Scoffer (Mocker)

The Wise Man

How they respond to correction:	How they respond to correction:
Reward:	Reward:

2. Accepting folly (9:13-18)

- a. Folly's preparation (9:13-15)

The Invitation

The Result

--	--

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Speech

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. Proverbs 15:2

Gossip:

- 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.
17:9 Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.
18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.
20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.
25:18 Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is the man who gives false testimony against his neighbor.
26:22 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

Questions:

- *What wisdom does these passages give to us about what we should do about the person who is a gossip?*
- *Why do 18.8 and 26:22 repeat the same thing?*
- *How do we sometimes justify gossiping about someone?*
- *When do you think it is appropriate to talk about another person? How should we do it?*

Criticism:

- 9:7 "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man in curs abuse.
9:8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.
9:9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.
11:12 A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue.
12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.
12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.
25:12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.
28:23 Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.

Questions:

- *What wisdom is given to us about accepting criticism?*
- *What wisdom is given to us about giving criticism?*
- *What's the best way to have our criticism accepted by those we are giving it to?*

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Flattery:

- 10:10 He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin.
10:18 He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.
15:4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.
15:4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.
26:18f Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I was only joking!"
26:23 Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart
26:24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit.
26:25 Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart.
27:14 If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.
29:5 How do we sometimes use humor to hide what we are really thinking?

Questions:

- *Based on these verses, how would you describe "flattery"?*
- *These verses call us to be honest in expressing our thoughts and feelings. Does this mean that we should always say what we are thinking or feeling?*
- *What's the best way to have our criticism accepted by those we are giving it to?*

Holding our Tongue:

- 10:19 When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.
12:23 A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly.
13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.
15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
15:23 A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word!
17:28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.
19:11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.
21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.
25:8 Do not bring hastily to court, for what will you do in the end if your neighbor puts you to shame?

Questions:

- *What are sometimes you can think of that silence is the better part of wisdom?*
- *When is it not wise to keep silent?*
- *What do these verses say about how we say something vs. what we say?*

Diligence / Laziness

- 1) Read Proverbs 6:6-11 and Proverbs 24:30-34.
 - a. Notice both have the same conclusion – one from a positive example (the ant) and one from a negative example (the field of the sluggard).
 - b. “like a thief” – not planned, not seen ahead of time
 - c. “like a armed man” – sure, completely overpowering (Mark 3:27)
- 2) The rewards of delayed gratification:
 - a. Proverbs 6:9 – stores in summer
 - b. Proverbs 10:5 – gathers crops in summer
 - c. Proverbs 20:4 – sluggards do not plow in season
- 3) The sluggard is too lazy to even meet his own needs:
 - a. 13:4 – appetite is never filled (or perhaps, always wants more?)
 - b. 19:24 – too lazy to lift the spoon to his mouth.
- 4) The sluggard always has excuses – Compare 22:13 and 26:13
- 5) How can we apply these to our spiritual life?
 - a. Spiritual discipline takes time – the rewards come later in life (perhaps at a time that is unexpected)
 - b. It’s really easy to make excuses as to why to not follow spiritual disciplines.
 - c. Lack of spiritual diligence (being a spiritual sluggard) will surely lead to failure in our spiritual life.

Prosperity / Rewards

- 1) How we earn wealth is important
 - a. 13:11 – dishonest (not through honest work – taking advantage of others)
 - b. 20:21 – claimed too soon – taken greedily (the prodigal son)
 - c. 21:6 – lying tongue
 - d. 28:8 – Taking from the poor
- 2) Generosity
 - a. Read 11:24-25
 - b. What does it mean to live generously?
 - c. Holding on to things loosely
- 3) Again, the rewards of delayed gratification
 - a. 13:11b – little by little
 - b. 21:6 – through careful planning
 - c. 31:16 – investment
- 4) Prosperity Gospel
 - a. What is it?
 - b. Read 10:3, 13:21, 13:25, 15:6, and 28:10
 - c. Do these verses teach the prosperity gospel?

Reward, Punishment, and Duty – Wilkerson: Reward is used the most.

A Perspective on Wealth

- 1) Security is in the Lord, not in wealth
 - a. 11:28 – trusting in riches leads to a fall
 - b. 18:10-11 – the Name of the Lord vs. the wealth of the rich
 - c. 23:5 – Wealth is fleeting
 - 2) Contentment is in the Lord, not in wealth
 - a. 15:16-17 – Better a little ...
 - b. 10:22 – Wealth doesn't come through toil
 - c. 23:4 – Don't wear yourself out
- Psalm 127:1-2

Family / Discipline

Blessings of Family (Children are a Heritage)

17:6 Children's children are a crown to the aged,
and parents are the pride of their children.

- The blessings of proper family relationships go both ways.
- There could be some irony here – of course grandchildren are a delight, but it's not so much of a given that children take pride in their parents (especially teenagers!)

20:7 The righteous (the idea here is one of integrity) lead blameless lives;
blessed are their children after them.

23:24 The father of a righteous child has great joy;
man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him.

- What attributes of the righteous life lead to blessings for our children?
- Notice again, 23:24 paints the relationship in both directions.

17:25 A foolish son brings grief to his father
and bitterness to the mother who bore him.

- This puts the teaching of the above in the negative – we are often much more quick to see this in other people's children.
- Proverbs 1:8 and 6:20 point out clearly that teaching is to be done as father and mother as a unit.
- Proverbs 10:1 – “wise ... joy to his father ... foolish ... grief to his mother” (also 15:20) I think is based on the idea that it sometimes takes a lot for a father to see good in their children and a mother to see the bad in their children

19:14 Houses and wealth are inherited from parents,
but a prudent wife is from the Lord.

- See also 18:22 – “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.”
- This verse is especially effective in giving credit to God since many (most) marriages were arranged at this point.

Disunity in the Family

- In reading these remember that you can substitute “husband” for “wife”.

19:13 A foolish child is a father’s ruin,
 and a quarrelsome wife is like
 the constant dripping of a leaky roof.

21:9 & 25:24 Better to live on a corner of the roof
 than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

21:19 Better to live in a desert
 than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.

27:15 A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping
 of a leaky roof in a rainstorm;

- Get ideas from the class – What does it mean to be quarrelsome?
- 1 Corinthians 3:3 – Jealousy and quarreling are a sign of worldliness
 - Contrast this to some of the normal definitions of worldliness – drinking, partying, etc.
- James 4:1-3 – Fights and quarrels come from:
 - Evil desires (selfishness)
 - Unfulfilled desires
 - Wrong motives
 - Focusing on our own pleasures
- 2 Timothy 2:14 & 23 and Titus 3:9– Point out that quarrels are often based on foolish and stupid arguments, often about words.
- 1 Timothy 3:3 and 2 Timothy 2:24 list “not quarrelsome” among the characteristics of church leaders.
- SO WHAT? What is the opposite of being quarrelsome?
 - Philippians 2:1-11 – Humility - The example of Jesus
 - Philippians 4:2-7 - Gentleness, prayer, peace
 - James 4:6 - humility

Discipline – Applying it

20:11 Even small children are known by their actions,
so is their conduct really pure and upright?

- I think this is a rhetorical question – the answer is clearly “no”
- This points to the idea of original sin, i.e. we are sinful by nature, from birth

22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.

22:6 Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

19:18 Discipline your children, for in that there is hope;
do not be a willing party to their death.

- What is the purpose of discipline?
- It is the goal of discipline to bend the child’s heart from the way of sin to the way of God

13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates their children,
but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

29:15 A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom,
but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.

29:17 Discipline your children, and they will give you peace;
they will bring you the delights you desire.

- Notice the irony – lack of discipline shows hate, discipline shows love.
- Discuss how this goes against the popular idea that if we love our children we give them freedom
- Also, notice the contrast between the thought that discipline leads to conflict, but it actually results in peace

23:13-14 Do not withhold discipline from a child;
if you punish them with the rod, they will not die.
Punish them with the rod
and save them from death.

- Discipline doesn’t harm the child, but rather keeps the child from harm

Note: We are not considering Proverbs 29:21 (which was on the original list). The Hebrew is somewhat unclear. Most translations are similar to the NIV “A servant pampered from youth will turn out to be insolent.”, but the KJV uses “a son” instead of “insolent”.

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Discipline – Accepting it

- 13:1 A wise son heeds his father's instruction,
but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.
- 15:5 A fool spurns a parent's discipline,
but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.
- 15:20 A wise son brings joy to his father,
but a foolish man despises his mother.

- I think the meaning of these is fairly straightforward.
- It's interesting in the last one we see the interplay of father and mother that we saw in 10:1.

God's Discipline – Hebrews 12:4-11

- v.5b-6 are quoted from Proverbs 3:11-12
- What ideas from Proverbs do you see in these verses?
 - Discipline is to free us from sin
 - Good parents discipline their children
 - Discipline brings respect
 - Discipline leads to life (not death)
 - Discipline brings about holiness (right behavior)
 - Discipline is painful
 - Discipline brings about righteousness and peace
- Disciple and discipline clearly share the same root.
- How do we know when God is disciplining us?
 - How does God discipline us?
 - We often pray that God will take people out of suffering, do you think that sometimes we are short-circuiting the discipline of God?
 - Human parents talk about discipline with their children, how does God communicate with us about discipline?
 - Clearly the Bible, but encourage exploration of other ideas.
 - Disciple and discipline clearly share the same root.
 - Does God use others to discipline us?
 - Hopefully after Brandt's sermon of last week the answer will be "yes, through the church"
 - 1 Corinthians 4:21 talks about if Paul needed to come to them with "rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?"
 - Proverbs 27:17 says "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."
 - How can we help to discipline each other?

Society & Justice

Wisdom for the King

God's Sovereignty:

21:1 In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.

16:10 The lips of a king speak as an oracle, and his mouth does not betray justice.

29:26 Many seek an audience with a ruler, but it is from the Lord that one gets justice.

- The message here is that although the king thinks they are acting on their own, they are actually doing the work of God. This is a very difficult concept, especially when the king is evil and is saying and doing things that are contrary to the revealed will of God. See Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-14

Ruling in Righteousness:

11:10-11 When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.

14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.

- This is interesting since it's one of the few verses in Proverbs that seems to be written to the nation, not individuals. However, the verses before (11:10-11), which have a similar thought, show the connection between the actions of individuals and the community or nation as a whole.
- How can we as individuals remind ourselves that our "small" acts of righteousness can make a difference even in the great sea of evil in our nation?

16:12 Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.

- What if the king doesn't detest evil?

20:28 Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love his throne is made secure.

25:5 remove wicked officials from the king's presence, and his throne will be established through righteousness.

- This is a good reminder that we need to not only pray for our leaders, but also for those who

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

advise them.

29:2 When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice;
when the wicked rule, the people groan.

29:14 If a king judges the poor with fairness,
his throne will be established forever.

The Wicked Ruler:

28:15-16 Like a roaring lion or a charging bear
is a wicked ruler over a helpless people.
A tyrannical ruler practices extortion,
but one who hates ill-gotten gain will enjoy a long reign.

29:12 If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked.

- These are important ideas. The challenge here will be to talk about this without it turning political. Perhaps one way would be to start with the idea that all human leaders are fallen (are evil) and what can we do to have an influence for good.

The King's Judgments:

17:15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—
the Lord detests them both.

17:26 If imposing a fine on the innocent is not good,
surely to flog honest officials is not right.

- The ideas in the two verses above is a lament that David (and other psalmists) pick up often in the Psalms, for example 13, 73, and 93.
- Also consider Job 7:13,20 and Habakkuk 1:2-4

19:12 A king's rage is like the roar of a lion,
but his favor is like dew on the grass.

20:2 A king's wrath strikes terror like the roar of a lion;
those who anger him forfeit their lives.

The Importance of Good Counselors:

11:14 For lack of guidance a nation falls,
but victory is won through many advisers.

14:28 A large population is a king's glory,
but without subjects a prince is ruined.

15:22 Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

- 20:18 Plans are established by seeking advice;
so if you wage war, obtain guidance.
- 24:6 Surely you need guidance to wage war,
and victory is won through many advisers.
- 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter;
to search out a matter is the glory of kings.
- 25:3 As the heavens are high and the earth is deep,
so the hearts of kings are unsearchable.
- 28:2 When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers,
but a ruler with discernment and knowledge maintains order.

Two ideas come from this set of verses:

- The importance of advisors in directing the king (we've seen this several times already)
- The idea that the king has a special responsibility to search out the deep things, to have a special level of wisdom. Since we know that wisdom comes from God, this is a call for the king to listen clearly to the God (in our day through His word.)

Bribes Corrupt Justice:

- 17:23 The wicked accept bribes in secret
to pervert the course of justice.
- 19:6 Many curry favor with a ruler,
and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.
- 21:14 A gift given in secret soothes anger,
and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.

Wisdom for the Subjects

Blessing for Good Actions:

- 16:13-15 Kings take pleasure in honest lips;
they value the one who speaks what is right.
- A king's wrath is a messenger of death,
but the wise will appease it.
- How can we appease the king's wrath? (see 22:11, below)
- When a king's face brightens, it means life;
his favor is like a rain cloud in spring.
- 22:11 One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

will have the king for a friend.

Fear for Bad Actions:

20:8 When a king sits on his throne to judge,
 he winnows out all evil with his eyes.

20:26 A wise king winnows out the wicked;
 he drives the threshing wheel over them.

- Notice in the first verse the king winnows out evil, in the second he winnows out the wicked – one seems to be concentrated on the actions, the second on the individual. I know that is might be somewhat of a controversial topic, but when should we concentrate on fixing evil behaviors and when should we seek to remove wicked people from society. I think that most people fall on one of the two extremes here, not seeking a balance between the two.

24:21-22 Fear the Lord and the king, my son,
 and do not join with rebellious officials,

 for those two will send sudden destruction on them,
 and who knows what calamities they can bring?

So, Be Careful:

14:35 A king delights in a wise servant,
 but a shameful servant arouses his fury.

23:1 When you sit to dine with a ruler,
 note well what is before you,

25:6-7 Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence,
 and do not claim a place among his great men;

 it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here,"
 than for him to humiliate you before his nobles.

- See Mark 12:38-40 (notice the connection to how they treat the poor) and Luke 14:7-11 (notice again the immediate connection to the poor in v.12-14)

The Poor

God Protects the Poor:

15:25 The Lord tears down the house of the proud,
but he sets the widow's boundary stones in place.

- In the land of Israel land was divided by families and was to be kept in the families permanently (being return in the year of jubilee even if lost through debt.) I think this was designed by God as a way to combat generational poverty. To cheat the poor (by moving the boundary stones, i.e. reducing their land) was a direct affront to God. We see this idea picked up in the next verse also and in 23:10-11, below.

17:5 Whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker;
whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.

22:23 for the Lord will take up their case
and will exact life for life.

23:10-11 Do not move an ancient boundary stone
or encroach on the fields of the fatherless,

for their Defender is strong;
he will take up their case against you.

The Situation of the Poor:

19:1 Better the poor whose walk is blameless
than a fool whose lips are perverse.

28:6 Better the poor whose walk is blameless
than the rich whose ways are perverse.

- I think of the beatitudes in reading the above two verses. Matthew 5:3-11 is the more common, but Luke 6:20-26 concentrates more on the same contrasts.
- I think the parallelism here is very interesting. The first part of the two verses is identical, but in the second halves we see “a fool” = “the rich” and “lips” = “ways”. Makes me think of the story of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) – instead of building bigger barns to consume his wealth on himself, perhaps what he needed to be doing is giving his abundance to the poor. (Be careful here, it's clear from context that Jesus's primary teaching in this parable is one of dependance on God vs. dependance on our own wealth as the source of security.)

19:7 The poor are shunned by all their relatives—
how much more do their friends avoid them!
Though the poor pursue them with pleading,
they are nowhere to be found.

22:2 Rich and poor have this in common:
The Lord is the Maker of them all.

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

- And he is the provider for all – Matthew 5:45 and Acts 14:16-17

22:7 The rich rule over the poor,
 and the borrower is slave to the lender.

Blessings for Giving:

14:21 It is a sin to despise one’s neighbor,
 but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy.

- See James 2:1-10 – Showing favoritism (neglecting the poor) is the same as breaking the whole law. Don’t let this go unnoticed – we as Christians often take pride in not breaking the big commands (violence, sexual sins, lying, etc.) but miss the fact when we don’t treat the poor as God desires we are breaking the whole law.

14:31 Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
 but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

19:17 Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
 and he will reward them for what they have done.

- See Matthew 25:31-46

22:9 The generous will themselves be blessed,
 for they share their food with the poor.

22:16 One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth
 and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.

Warnings Against Ignoring:

21:13 Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor
 will also cry out and not be answered.

- See Luke 16:19-31

22:22-23 Do not exploit the poor because they are poor
 and do not crush the needy in court,

 for the Lord will take up their case
 and will exact life for life.

- Note, I didn’t have v.23 in the original list.
- The idea of “oppression” is of something that be legally acceptable, but morally unacceptable. What are some examples of this in our modern culture?

28:3 A ruler who oppresses the poor
 is like a driving rain that leaves no crops.

- Note the word “ruler” might be “poor man” – they are textually very similar. “Poor man” is

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

closer to the original script, but “ruler” seems to make more sense. If you use “poor man” then the idea seems to be one of betrayal. The story of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) comes to mind.

28:27 Those who give to the poor will lack nothing,
 but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.

29:7 The righteous care about justice for the poor,
 but the wicked have no such concern.

Personal Character

Friendship

17:17 A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

18:24 One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

- Focus on faithfulness, even in the bad times.

25:20 Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day,
or like vinegar poured on a wound,
is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.

- How should we be “a friend” when the other person is hurting?

27:17 As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.

- What are ways that we can “sharpen” each other?
- Why does it take a good friend to do this?
- Talk about the importance of truthfulness & humility in doing this.

Encouragement

12:25 Anxiety weighs down the heart,
but a kind word cheers it up.

15:13 A happy heart makes the face cheerful,
but heartache crushes the spirit.

17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

25:25 Like cold water to a weary soul
is good news from a distant land.

- What are things that we learn about how to encourage each other in these verses?

Integrity

16:2 All a person's ways seem pure to them,
but motives are weighed by the Lord.

17:3 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold,
but the Lord tests the heart.

- Mark of integrity #1: Right motives

20:6 Many claim to have unfailing love,
but a faithful person who can find?

- Mark of integrity #2: Faithfulness

20:23 The Lord detests differing weights,
and dishonest scales do not please him.

- Mark of integrity #3: Honesty

Plans

14:12 There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

16:3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do,
and he will establish your plans.

16:20 Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers,
and blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord.

21:2 A person may think their own ways are right,
but the Lord weighs the heart.

22:3 The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring.

28:26 Those who trust in themselves are fools,
but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.

29:20 Do you see someone who speaks in haste?
There is more hope for a fool than for them.

- Our own thoughts often lead us in the wrong direction
- Don't be in too much haste
- Wait on the Lord's direction

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Bergen EPC Adult SS

Rob Willhoft – Spring 2022

Prudence

13:16 All who are prudent act with knowledge,
but fools expose their folly.

14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways,
but the folly of fools is deception.

14:15-16 The simple believe anything,
but the prudent give thought to their steps.

The wise fear the Lord and shun evil,
but a fool is hotheaded and yet feels secure.

- Take time to seek God's direction
- Fools don't even see the danger coming

Counsel

18:4 The words of the mouth are deep waters,
but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream.

18:13 To answer before listening — that is folly and shame.

- What does this teach us about when friends ask for advice?

20:27 The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord
that sheds light on one's inmost being.

- Literally, "the breath" – I think this refers to the image of God
- Romans 8:26-27 and Hebrews 4:12

27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,
and the pleasantness of a friend
springs from their heartfelt advice.

- How is good advice like perfume or incense?

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

Anger

14:29 Whoever is patient has great understanding,
but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.

16:32 Better a patient person than a warrior,
one with self-control than one who takes a city.

- Anger is our response when someone or something keeps us from getting what we want.
- What is the contrast to anger?

20:22 Do not say, “I’ll pay you back for this wrong!”
Wait for the Lord, and he will avenge you.

29:22 An angry person stirs up conflict,
and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.

Pride

16:18-19 Pride goes before destruction,
a haughty spirit before a fall.

Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed
than to share plunder with the proud.

26:12 Do you see a person wise in their own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for them.

27:2 Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth;
an outsider, and not your own lips.

- What is the opposite of pride?

Strife

15:18 A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict,
but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

20:3 It is to one’s honor to avoid strife,
but every fool is quick to quarrel.

22:10 Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife;
quarrels and insults are ended.

26:21 As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.

- Why do we have strife in the home, church, etc?
- Where do quarrels come from?
- How do anger, pride, and strife connect together?

Proverbs: The Gospel in Overalls

The Woman of Noble Character (31:10-31):

I. Ways to view the passage:

- The passage describes a particular wife is being described (no likely)
- The passage contains a description of the qualities that should be sought in a wife (traditional)
- The passage is a summary of Proverbs using a personification of wisdom (as the woman of noble character)

II. Outline of the passage:

- A. Praise in General (v.10-12)
- B. Industrial Pursuits of the Household (v.13-15)
- C. Financial Enterprise (v.16-18)
- D. Provision for the Family and the Poor (v.19-21)
- E. Distinction by Work (v.22-24)
- F. Wisdom and Prosperity (v.25-27)
- G. Merits Recognized (v.28-29)
- H. Summary (v.30-31)

III. The Attributes of Wisdom

11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	