



### Course Schedule<sup>1</sup>

Date	Lesson
9/9	<b>1. Introduction</b>
9/16	<b>2. Hebrew Poetry</b>
9/23	<b>3. Obtaining Wisdom</b>
9/30	<b>4. Defining Wisdom</b>
10/7	<b>5. Motivation for Wise Living</b>
10/14	<b>6. Life &amp; Death</b>
10/21	<b>7. Parents &amp; Children</b>
10/28	<b>8. Speech</b>
11/4	<b>9. Wives, Husbands, &amp; Harlots</b>
11/11	<b>10. Idleness, Drunkenness, &amp; Gluttony</b>
11/18	<b>11. Limitations of Wisdom</b>
11/25	<b>*NO CLASS (probably)*</b>
12/2	<b>12. Review</b>

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<sup>1</sup> Material created by Marty & Mason Broadwell (2013), adapted by Daniel Broadwell (2020)

## **Proverbs Course Lesson Goals**

### **1. Introduction**

- Show the role that Proverbs plays in Old Testament revelation.
- Give an overview of the book's contents.

### **2. Hebrew Poetry**

- Identify & illustrate literary devices used in Hebrew poetry (especially parallelism).

### **3. Obtaining Wisdom**

- Demonstrate that all wisdom, which may come to us in many ways, originates with God.
- Begin to define and explain the terms "wisdom" and "foolishness."

### **4. Defining Wisdom**

- Settle on a specific definition for wisdom by showing its origin and fruits.
- Contrast clearly the wise man and the fool.

### **5. Motivation for Wise Living**

- Show the many rewards for wise living.
- Show that the physical blessings are not the most significant motivation for wise living — that the knowledge of God and His presence is the real motivator.

### **6. Life & Death**

- Explain the use of the terms "way of life" and "way of death."
- Show that it is to this quality of living that the Proverbs is directing us.

### **7. Parents & Children**

- Explain the process of "gaining wisdom" during childhood.
- Show that real maturity (wise-son) is shown by an eagerness to learn and a willingness to listen, rather than independence from guidance.

### **8. Speech**

- Show how use of the tongue may be "life" or "death."
- Show that control of the heart is the key to control of the tongue.

### **9. Wives, Husbands & Harlots**

- Emphasize the elevated position that women hold in the Proverbs.
- Contrast a proper and improper relationship between men and women.

### **10. Idleness, Drunkenness & Gluttony**

- Understand the nature of problems resulting from a lack of self-control.

### **11. Limitations of Wisdom**

- Show that a man's wisdom, even when guided by Proverbs, still does not answer all of his questions or produce a perfect world.
- Show that there is a lesson to be learned from this incompleteness and imperfection.

## Lesson 1 – Introduction to the Proverbs

### **A. *The Role of the Proverbs in Old Testament Revelation***

1. What do the following three passages have in common? What makes them different?
  - Exodus 20:14
  - Proverbs 6:32
  - Jeremiah 5:7–9
2. Read Jeremiah 18:18 and Ezekiel 7:26. From these verses, identify three types of messengers to God's people along with the type of instruction that each gives.
3. Compare and contrast the general message of Proverbs to Ecclesiastes and Book of Job.

### **B. *Purpose and Style* (Read Chapter 1)**

1. What do the first few verses say is the purpose of the book? (1:1-6)  
  
Who will benefit? (1:4,5)
2. What will be the starting point (or foundation) of knowledge? (1:7)  
  
From what other source will wisdom come? (1:8)
3. The first obstacle. (1:10-19)
  - a. What is the first enticement to stray from the path of wisdom?  
  
What are its promises? (1:11-14) What are its consequences? (1:16-19)
  - b. Where (and what) is the real command in this passage?
4. The second obstacle. (1:20-33)
  - a. What is another way that Wisdom is rejected? (1:22, 25, 32)  
  
Was the call of Wisdom not obvious? (1:20, 21, 23, 24)  
  
What will be the long-term result of ignoring the advice of wisdom? (1:26-28)
  - b. What is the root cause of the rejection of Wisdom? (1:29)

## Lesson 2 – Hebrew Poetry

- I. Features of Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism
  - a. Parallelism is a defining feature of Hebrew poetry. Rather than pairing rhymed words, Hebrew poetry pairs thoughts that echo each other. There are 4 main types of parallelism:
    - i. **Synonymous:** stating the same idea in new words (examples: 17:27; 19:28)
    - ii. **Antithetic:** stating the opposite of the first idea (example: 11:6)
      1. Example:           C    A wise son hears his father's instruction,  
                                  (13:1)   C'   but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
      2. C states how a wise son acts; C' states the opposite: what scoffers do
      3. Often antithetic parallelism hinges on the word *but* (24:16), though not always (14:14)
      4. Antithetic parallelism is the most common form in Proverbs
    - iii. **Climactic (Stairstep):** stating an idea in increasingly forceful terms
      1. Example:           D    Let us lie in wait for blood;  
                                  (1:11-12)   D'   Let us ambush the innocent without reason;  
  D''   Let us swallow them alive like Sheol.
      2. The successive lines describe the intentions of the sinners in increasingly wicked terms.
    - iv. **Comparison:** using an image to describe an object or idea
      1. Through metaphor: *Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is one who takes a passing dog by the ears.* (26:17).
      2. Through simile: *The beginning of strife is like letting out water* (17:14).
      3. In Comparison, the *idea* and *image* are parallel, rather than the words
  
- II. Features of Hebrew Poetry: Personification
  - a. Personification: a literary technique that attributes human characteristics and actions to something that is not human. In 9:1–6, wisdom is described as a person, doing things only humans do: building houses, setting tables, and even speaking.
  
- III. Features of Hebrew Poetry: Acrostic
  - a. An acrostic is a poem in which the first letter of each line is a successive letter of the alphabet (first line starts with A, next with B, and so forth). Proverbs 31:10-31 (the description of the worthy woman) is an acrostic in the original Hebrew.

IV. Exercises on Poetic Devices

a. Identify the poetic devices used in these proverbs.

15:19

9:13

17:1

1:26, 27

16:9

26:1

17:5

20:14

17:17

23:13, 14

16:24

25:11

4:18

22:2

4:18, 19

19:16

b. List some reasons that the study of the poetic devices might be useful. See example in 15:11; see also Psalm 118.

### Lesson 3 – The Origin of Wisdom

- A. What is the original source of wisdom? (2:1–6)
- B. What is the starting point for obtaining wisdom? (9:10)
- C. Can a man discover some of the truths of the Proverbs without God revealing them through inspired men? Give examples.
- D. From the following proverbs, list some of the ways in which a man can gain wisdom from “everyday” sources.

9:8, 9

13:1

11:14

6:1–5

17:10

6:6–8

19:25

24:30–32

- E. What does Deuteronomy 4:5–8 say is man’s source of wisdom?
- F. If God is the source of all wisdom (2:6), then how can man gain wisdom apart from God’s revealed word? The Proverbs can help us to resolve this apparent paradox.
  - 1. Read Proverbs 8:22–31. What is the main point of this poem?
  - 2. Besides knowing the source, what else is necessary for us to gain wisdom? (20:12)
  - 3. What are some other passages that tell us that knowledge about God can or should be obtained from examining the natural world?
- G. Since God’s wisdom is revealed in the world of nature, science, personal relationships, and life circumstances, what do you think the writers of the Proverbs would say is the value of a general education? How might understanding the world better lead us to a better relationship with God?
  - 1. What if our life circumstances (education, family background, life experience, etc.) do not seem to teach us the lessons the Proverbs commend? How do we evaluate or filter our experiences to make sure we learn the practical lessons God intends?
  - 2. Look again at the “everyday” sources of wisdom in D. Which of those sources describes a role you have or could play in someone’s life? What responsibilities do you have in those roles to impart and receive wisdom? How can you better prepare yourself to fill that role?

## Lesson 4 – Defining Wisdom

### A. Wisdom and Folly

1. Wisdom in the Proverbs is both a commodity (something to ‘get’ and ‘own’) and a characteristic (something you ‘are’). What key words describe wisdom in both ways?
  - Commodity: 2:1–4; 8:11; 23:23 (see also Matthew 13:44)
  - Quality or Characteristic (as in 23:24): 1:5; 18:15
2. How does Folly—or the character of a Fool—interact with Wisdom (1:7)?
  - 17:16 –
  - 24:7 –
  - 28:26 –

**B. Your Definition.** Explain briefly what it means (in the Proverbs) to be wise.

### C. Definitions from others:

1. “...Faculty of acute observation, shrewdness in discovery or device, cleverness or invention.” S. R. Driver, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 392.
2. “...Seeing through things to their underlying causes and significance...” A. D. Power, The Proverbs of Solomon, p. 230.
3. “The fundamental antagonism between these two (wise man and fool) lay in a difference of world outlook, a difference of attitude towards men and things...” W. O. E. Oesterly, The Book of Proverbs, p. lxxxiv.

### D. The Wise Man and the Fool: Listening and Learning.

1. 18:15, 12:23, 10:19 — Is the wise man most often described as one who is always saying wise things or one who is hearing wise things?
2. 15:28, 15:2 — Does the wise man ever speak? Describe when and how.
3. Contrast the wise and foolish man’s outlook in relation to each of the following:

	<u>Wise Man</u>	<u>Fool</u>
God	9:10	Psalms 14:1
Law & Commandments	28:7, 9	10:8
Instruction & Reproof	19:20; 8:33; 15:31; 9:9	15:5
Knowledge & Understanding	10:14	1:22; 18:2
Wise Men & Wisdom	13:20	1:7
Evil & Sin	14:16; 8:12–13	13:19
Self	3:5, 7	12:15; 28:26; 18:2

**E. Further Characteristics of the Wise Man: Effect on his Life.**

1. How is the fear of Jehovah the beginning of wisdom and knowledge? (9:10, 1:7)
  - 15:33 (see also 13:10)
  - 1:29, 30
  - 28:5
2. How is it that seeking wisdom produces fear and knowledge of God? (2:3–5)
  - Compare 1:29 and Romans 1:20–23.

**F. The Wise Man and Life Discipline. (see 14:12, 16)**

1. Read Proverbs 3:1–12.
2. What blessings of wise living does the poem mention?
3. What limitations does the wise man live under? (and see 29:18; 30:5, 6)
4. In what areas of life does wisdom find expression? (3:6, 5:21, 15:3)

**G. Understanding the Lessons of the Proverbs**

1. Is there a perfect wise man or a perfect fool?

How are we to understand passages in which the wise man and the fool are contrasted?

2. Using this lesson's definitions of wisdom, list some ways in which we act foolishly.



## Lesson 5 – Motivation for Wise Living

### A. The Rewards for Wise Living

1. Do the Proverbs teach that a man is rewarded for his good works?
  - 13:21, 16:7
  
  - 22:4
  
2. Do the Proverbs teach that a man is punished for evil works or foolish living? (14:11)  
Are the Proverbs teaching a system of justification by works?
  - 20:9
  
  - 28:13
  
  - 16:6
  
4. Kinds of Rewards
  - 10:22; 22:4; 24:32–34
  
  - 12:24; 17:2; 11:29b
  
  - 12:8; 29:2; 14:17
  
  - 16:7; 16:28; 17:19, 20
  
  - 11:11; 14:34; 16:12
  
  - 3:1, 2; 9:10-11; 10:27
  
  - 13:22; 20:7; 10:7
  
5. What is not mentioned in the above list (or in the book)?
  
6. What do the Proverbs teach about life after death?
  - 11:7; 14:32
  
  - 15:11
  
7. What do the Proverbs teach about Redemption? Forgiveness?
  - 10:12; 17:9
  
  
  - 28:13, 14; 16:6
  
8. Why is so little said about these important theological topics?

## B. The Theology of the Book

### 1. Character of God

- a. What does God examine in our worship?
  - 15:18
  - 21:27
  - 21:3
  - 15:
- b. What does God examine in all our activities?
  - 15:11
  - 16:2 (also 21:2)
  - 20:27
  - 24:17, 18
- c. What else is said about the nature of God?
  - 3:19; 22:2
  - 3:19
  - 22:2
  - 19:21; 21:30, 31; 16:33
  - 19:21
  - 21:31
  - 16:33
  - 20:10; 6:16–19
  - 20:10
  - 6:16
  - 10:3; 15:25; 14:26, 31

2. Do those qualities suggest further motives for obedience? (15:3)

3. Summary — 16:1–9 (especially 3, 4, 5, 9)

## Lesson 6 – Life & Death

**A. Figures of Reward.** What figures are used to contrast the “ways” of wisdom and folly?

- 2:13
- 2:15
- 15:19
- 28:18
- 15:24; 16:25

**B. Wealth & Success.** Are wealth and success guaranteed rewards of righteous living?

1. Are they the most important things in life?

- 16:19
- 15:16, 17
- 16:8
- 11:16, 18
- 28:6

2. Are there disadvantages to having wealth?

- 13:8
- 11:4
- 18:11
- 27:23, 24 (see 23:4, 5)
- 11:28

**C. The Real Reward.**

0. What *is* the reward of doing right?

- 10:16, 17
- 11:30
- 13:14

1. Is this “Life” immortality? Heaven? Hell? (see 23:13, 14; 12:28)

If not, then what is it?

- 14:26, 27
- 21:16
- 13:12

- 16:22
- 18:21
- 2:16–22

3. What are some of the qualities of the “way of life”?

- 19:23 (see also 15:27)
- 14:30
- 13:2, 4
- 10:27, 28
- 10:29, 30 28:1

**D. *The Real World***

1. Are things in life always as we would wish them?

- 13:23
- 14:20
- 28:15
- 28:28
- 29:2

2. Do these things affect our ideas about the “way of life”?

- 24:10
- 24:15, 16
- 24:19, 20

**E. *The Ideal (30:7–9)***

## Lesson 7 – Parents & Children

### A. The Parent's Role.

1. What is the primary activity mentioned in connection with parenthood?

4:1–9

1:8

2. What is the purpose of this activity?

6:20–23

22:6

3. Is it always necessary? How is it to be done?

29:15

22:15 (see also 26:3; 19:25)

4. When is a mere rebuke sufficient? Compare 17:10 and 15:5

5. What is the motivation for correction?

3:11, 12            13:24

23:13, 14

6. Describe the learning process. (22:6)

22:15

4:20, 21; 23:19, 22–25

13:1

See again 4:1–27, especially 4–7, 10–12

7. What are the blessings of a disciplined child?

19:18

29:17

**B. The Child's Role**

1. What are the responsibilities of a child to his parents?

23:22

30:17

20:20

2. What are the effects of a wise or foolish son on his parents?

10:1

17:21, 25

19:26

28:7

23:15, 16, 24, 25

3. What does a foolish man show about his feelings for his parents? 15:20

4. In the ideal, what is the relationship between children and their parents?

23:24–26

17:6

## Lesson 8 – Speech

### **A. Importance of the Tongue**

1. What familiar terms are connected to the use of the tongue?  
18:20, 21  
13:3  
10:21  
15:4  
21:6
2. Why do the Proverbs use such forceful language to discuss the tongue?  
21:23  
12:13, 14  
13:2  
27:19

### **B. Misuses of the Tongue**

1. What ways of misusing of the tongue are mentioned in these verses?  
10:18  
19:5, 9  
11:13  
26:22–25  
25:23  
26:20, 21  
27:2  
29:20
2. What goals are those who misuse the tongue striving for?  
21:6  
11:9  
12:6 (26:28)  
18:8 (26:22)  
16:28

3. How permanent are these benefits?  
20:17  
12:19  
26:25–28
4. What deeper problem might a misuse of the tongue indicate?  
4:23, 24  
16:23  
10:20  
15:7, 28  
28:25  
14:3

**C. Proper Use of the Tongue**

1. What qualities are fundamental for appropriate speech?  
12:17  
14:5  
26:18, 19
2. Besides frankness and honesty, what else is required for proper speech?
  - a. 18:13  
10:19  
17:27, 28  
11:12, 13  
26:20
  - b. 15:1  
25:15  
(16:32; 17:27)
  - c. 25:11  
15:23
  - d. 12:18 (16: 24)  
15:4  
11:11  
10:31
3. What are some blessings that result from proper speech?  
15:1  
17:28



## Lesson 9 –Wives, Husbands, & Harlots

**A. Introduction** — How is the Husband-Wife relationship pictured in the Proverbs?

- 2:17 (see also 16:28; Psalm 55:13)
- 5:18, 19
- 23:22, 25

**B. The Role of the Wife**

1. Describe the importance of the wife to the family.

- 18:22; 19:14
- 31:10, 11
- 14:1

2. What effect can the character of the wife have on her husband?

- 5:18
- 12:4
- 19:13; 27:15, 16; 21:9; 21:19
- 6:34
- 31:23
- 30:23(?)

3. From the description of the worthy woman in 31:10–31,

b. Whom does she serve?

31:11, 12

31:15

31:20

c. What is the center of her concern? 31:15, 21, 27

d. List the types of work she does (verse 17)

- 31:13, 19, 22, 24
- 31:14–16
- 31:26

**C. The Responsibilities of the Husband**

- 31:11
- 31:28–31 (remember 11:16)

**D. The Harlot**

1. What familiar terms are used in connection with the “way” of the adulteress?

- 2:18
- 5:5, 6
- 5:23
- 6:26
- 7:24–27

2. Explain why these terms are appropriate.

- 2:17
- 5:4
- 5:21–22
- 6:27–29
- 6:30–35
- 7:21–23
- 5:7–14
- 23:27, 28

3. What is the bait of the adulteresses’ trap?

2:16; 5:3

6:24, 25

4. Examine the story in 7:6–23. Fill in the story details:

- a. Time of day:
- b. Location:
- c. Characters (and characteristics):
- d. Plot:
- e. Ending and Moral:
- f. What tricks did the adulteress use to seduce the young man?

v. 10

v. 16, 17

v. 13

v. 18

v. 15

v. 19, 20

5. With what can a young man protect himself?

- 5:7, 8
- 6:25
- 7:25 .
- 5:15–19

**E. A Contrast.** Fill in the chart below describing these two relationships.

<i>Faithful Wife</i> <u>31:10–31; 5:15–20</u>	<i>Adulterous Woman</i> <u>6:20–35; 7:1–27</u>
5:19, 20	7:22, 23; 6:25
31:23	6:30
31:11, 30	7:10, 21
31:26	30:20; 2:16, 17
31:12	7:25–27; 6:25–29; 2:18, 19

## Lesson 10 – Idleness, Drunkenness, & Gluttony

### A. A Common Problem

#### 1. Laziness

- a. How is the sluggard pictured in the Proverbs?

28:19

26:13–16

19:24; 12:27

10:26

- b. What is his side of the story? (26:16; 14:23)

20:4

22:13

15:19

- c. What are the consequences of his laziness?

13:4

12:24

12:11

- d. What is the real problem?

10:5

20:13

6:6–11

24:30–34

- e. Explain 18:9 in light of c and d, above.

#### 2. Drunkenness

- a. How is the drunkard pictured? 23:29–35

- b. What are the consequences in his life?

21:17

31:4, 5

#### 3. Gluttony

23:20, 21

23:1–3, 6–8

25:16

4. What common problem do these three share? (see 23:20, 21)

21:25 (see also 6:7)

20:1

25:28 (compare 16:32)

**B. *The Other Side***

1. What are the proper uses of sleep, wine, and food?

Ecclesiastes 5:12

31:6, 7

24:13, 14 (27:18)

2. Principles of diligent work

14:4

24:27

27:23–27

13:11

21:5

16:26

27:18

22:29

## Lesson 11 – Limitations of Wisdom

**A. Introduction.** Gathering wisdom from the Proverbs, one could be left with the impression that our world is entirely comprehensible, predictable, and fair. In other words, the more one learns, the less he finds confusing, and the more questions he answers, the fewer he has to ask. Does this match our experience in life? What are some things about the world that are imperfect or incomprehensible?

### **B. The Nature of the World**

1. Nothing in man's experience is absolutely (infinitely) good.

27:7

27:14

25:20

14:13

2. There is evil present.

29:2

29:10

20:9 (see also 20:6)

3. There is sorrow, disappointment, and imperfection.

15:13; 17:22; 18:14

13:12

27:20

14:10

4. Many things are incomprehensible.

18:17

13:7

27:1

5. Many things are unfair or inappropriate.

17:8

14:20; 19:4, 7

18:23

20:14

**C. Chapter 30 — Snapshots of Life**

1. 30:7-9

2. 30:11–14 (see also 30:17)

3. 30:15, 16

4. 30:18, 19 (also 20)

5. 30:21–23

6. 30:24–31

**D. Conclusion: 30:2–6 (also 32)**

1. What attitude should these thoughts inspire?

2. Where is the only hope of solution? (see 30:5-6)

16:4

29:26; 20:22

20:24

20:27; 21:2

3. Why is the world this way?