

Proverbs Bible Study

Week 4

Proverbs 25-31

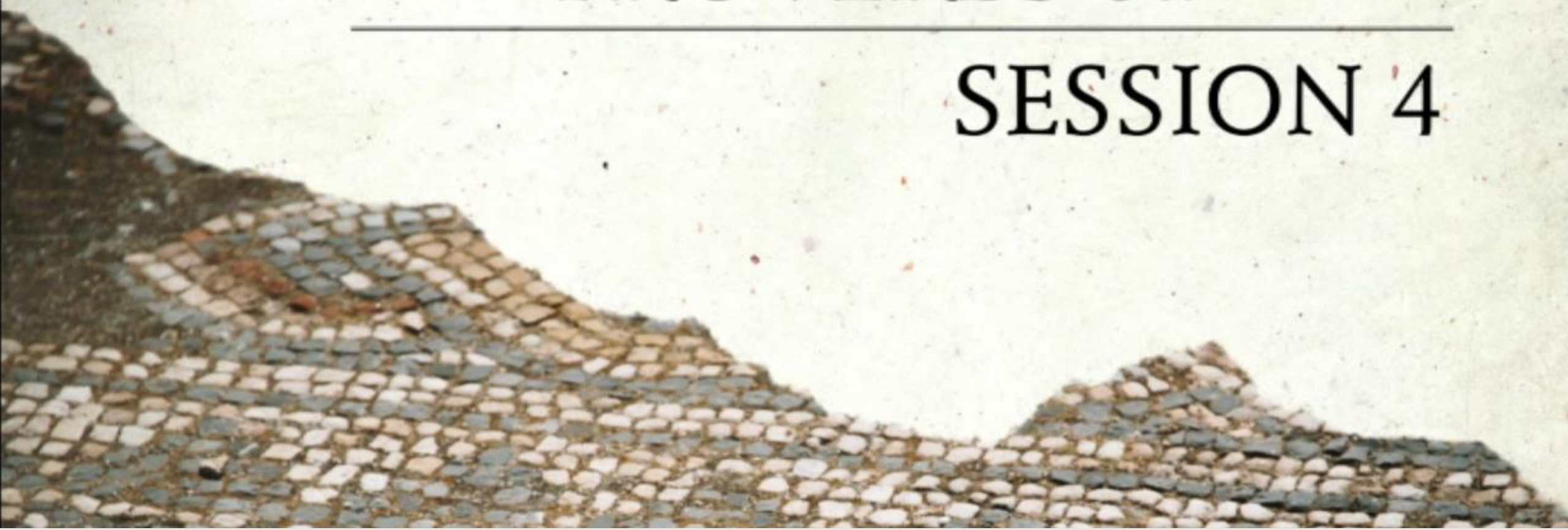
Opening Prayer



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WISDOM IN PRACTICE: PROVERBS 31

SESSION 4



Discussion



An Outline of the Wise Man According to Proverbs

- He is teachable, not intractable
 - He receives and loves instruction
 - He grows in wisdom
- He is righteous, not wicked
 - He fears the LORD
 - He hates what is false
 - He shuns evil
 - He does what is righteous
 - He speaks the truth
- He is humble, not proud
- He is self-controlled, not rash
 - He has a calm spirit
 - He is slow to anger
 - He is cautious, not rash
 - He thinks before he acts or speaks
- He is forgiving, not vindictive
 - He is patient
 - He is concerned with goodwill/peace
- His Relationship to the Lord
 - He fears the Lord
 - He trusts in the Lord
 - He is ever mindful of the Lord
 - He chooses the Lord's way/wisdom
 - He submits to the Lord's discipline
 - He confesses his sin to the Lord
- His Relationship to his family
 - He respects and listens to his parents
 - He seeks to bring his parents honor and glory by being wise, righteous, and diligent
 - He appreciates his wife as a gift from the Lord. He praises her, trusts her, and is faithful to her
 - He loves his children and is concerned about them and trains them
 - He provides for his children's physical needs and spiritual heritage

An Outline of the Wise Man According to Proverbs

His Relationship to his Friends and Neighbors

- He values his friends
- He is constant to his friends
- He gives them counsel
- He fulfills obligations to his neighbors
- He strives for peace with his neighbors
- He does not outstay his welcome
- He does not deceive or mislead his neighbors

The Power and Limitations of His Words

- The power of life and death
- The power to heal or wound
- Words can't substitute for deeds
- Words can't substitute for facts
- Words can't compel response

• The Character of his Words

- They are honest, not false
- They are few, not many
 - Not boastful, argumentative, contentious, slanderous
- They are calm not emotional
 - They are rational, gentle, peaceful, persuasive
- They are apt, not untimely

• The Source of his Words

- His heart/character
 - He is righteous, not proud or hateful



**WHY IS WISDOM
REFERRED TO AS
A SHE IN
PROVERBS?**



More Proverbs of Solomon (Proverbs 25:1-29:27)

- Five main sections in this group of proverbs
 - God and the king and the Righteous and the Wicked (Proverbs 25:2-27)
 - Seven moral inferiors (Proverbs 25:28-26:28)
 - Friendship (Proverbs 27:1-22)
 - Sustaining blessings for the future (Proverbs 27:23-27)
 - God and kings, instruction and righteousness (Proverbs 28:1-29:27)
- These proverbs are said to be “Compiled by the men of Hezekiah”
 - The men of Hezekiah likely were court scholars
 - Hezekiah’s scribes attributed the Collection to Solomon
 - Hezekiah was king of Judah from 715-687 BC; he was mostly one of the good kings known for his devotion to God and for reform and renewal of worship following the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722 BC
 - Hezekiah initiated care in the transmission of sacred literature, which is represented in the compilation of these proverbs

Proverbs 25

- There are many things God has concealed, and this is an expression of his glory. It is one of God's way of saying "You are amazed by what you see; yet what you don't see, what I have concealed, is even greater.
- The glory of kings is to search out what God has concealed. When men and women seek out scientific knowledge, trying to understand the mystery and brilliance of what God has concealed in His creation, they express an aspect of the glory of humanity, even the glory of kings. But we must always remember it is the glory of God to conceal a matter.
- We can not understand what is another person's heart. Yet God knows the heart of each of us.
- We should avoid self-exaltation and not exalt ourselves in the presence of the king. When we properly humble ourselves before God and kings we may be invited to higher places.
- We should avoid courts.
- We should take care in how we interact with others. Our speech should be pure. We should not falsely boast. We shouldn't abuse our neighbors hospitality nor bear false witness against our neighbor. We should care for our neighbor and feed our enemy when he is hungry.

Proverbs 26: The Fool and the Lazy Man

- Honor doesn't fit the fool
- Sometimes we should not answer a fool or we become foolish. We should just remain silent. Other times it is right to answer a fool to expose his folly and prevent him from being wise in his own eyes.
- The fool's possession of wisdom is useless and the fool should never receive honor. When a fool tries to sound wise it often brings pain.
- The man who doesn't know he is a fool - and thinks he is wise in his own eyes, is a particularly bad type of fool.
- Lazy people create excuses not to work and even fails to take care of his personal need. The lazy man may lack energy and initiative, but still has a high opinion of himself.
- A wise person avoids the sins of speech. They do not interfere in disputes of others and are not practical jokers. Storytellers should be careful not to overembellish their stories.
- There are some who use kind words but have a wicked heart. The secret hater disguises his hate with his lips. He often imagines himself to be a better man than he is.
- A lying tongue brings destruction to the liar. He doesn't feel sorry for the ones he crushes. Flattery is another way the lying tongue brings ruin. They build pride and manipulate others for deceptive goals.

Proverbs 27: Planning for the Future, Receiving Honor

- We should never boast about tomorrow for we don't know what the future brings.
- Honor means more when it comes from an outside source, we should avoid self-promotion and self-praise.
- Anger is dangerous and difficult to control.
- There is a power and destructive capability in jealousy.
- Love does little good when it is concealed. The honest love of an open rebuke can be better than the carefully concealed love.
- A true friend will offer loving correction. Not all kisses are the greetings of friends.
- We have a place appointed by God and we can be as out of place as a bird without a nest if we wander from it. We need to understand the place God has for us, not the one society may assign us.
- Friends should never be forsaken. Careful correction is appropriate.
- Wisdom will lead a person to anticipate danger and to take action against evil.
- Riches are not forever. We should give ourselves to diligent leadership and management because the future is uncertain. Take good care of what God has given us now and it may provide for us in the future.

Proverbs 28: The Blessings and Courage of Wisdom

- Confusion and fear belong to the wicked, not the godly and wise. The righteous should be bold.
- Having many rulers is not a blessing. Great and godly leaders can be a blessing to a nation.
- There are poor who oppress the poor and this is bad.
- When the fundamental principles of justice are forsaken, it doesn't benefit the righteous but benefits the wicked. Those who honor and promote the rule of law will resist and oppose the wicked.
- Evil people do not understand justice. Justice is not that which benefits one party - that is not justice. The godly understand justice. They seek the Lord and have His wisdom.
- There are worse things than poverty. Being wicked and not living in integrity is worse than poverty. A rich person who is twisted before God is worse off than the poor.
- God wants us to have an open ear to his law. The have no hunger for God's word or give it no attention is a sign of spiritual sickness.
- God know how to put the wicked in their place.
- When those who live in wisdom and righteousness rejoice because of the condition of their community it is good for everyone. There is great glory. When the wicked rise up men hide.
- He who covers his sins doesn't benefit. We cover sin with excuses and justification, secrecy, lies, schemes, time, tears, and ceremony. Those who confess their sins are blessed.
- A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor.
- One who walks blamelessly will be saved. A faithful man person will be blessed.
- To show partiality is not good. We should not favor or condemn based on race, class, nationality or influence.
- It is bad for the community when the wicked rule.

Proverbs 29: Rulers, Servants, and the Fear of Man

- The stubborn will continue in disobedience until destroyed.
- Children of any age bring happiness to their parents when they love and live wisdom.
- A nation can only expect strength and progress when it is ruled with justice. Bribes destroy the foundations of fairness and equality.
- Flattery is a trap that the wise man knows how to avoid.
- The righteous consider the cause of the poor. The wicked can't understand compassion because they are so drawn to self-interest.
- Wise men turn away wrath and shows self-restraint.
- If a ruler pays attention to lies, his servants become wicked.
- God gives some kind of light (revelation) to everyone - wicked and good.
- We learn through correction. Everyone requires discipline.
- Those who trust in the Lord are safe. Justice comes from the Lord.

Who is Agur?

- He was the son of Jakeh
- Agur translates to the word “gathered.”
- Jakeh means pious or carefully religious.
 - Jakeh may be from an Ishmaelite tribe others say he may be from Massa
- He penned chapter 30 of Proverbs
- Ithiel (God is with me) and Ucal (devoured), mentioned in Proverbs 30, were probably disciples of Agur. Ithiel was from the tribe of Benjamin during Nehemiah’s time.



JESUS IN ALL OF

PROVERBS 30



Who is King Lemuel?

- Nor much is known about him but he was not an Israelite
- May have been from Edom
- His name translated from Hebrew means “devoted to God”
- The wisdom in Chapter 31 attributed to Lemuel is the wisdom his mother taught him about being a good king



JESUS IN ALL OF

PROVERBS 31



NIV AUDIO BIBLE

PROVERBS 31

Themes in Proverbs

Prov 1:1-31:31

This diagram collects some of the most prominent proverbs on each topic. The proverbs address many of the most important topics in life and teach wisdom for a wide variety of situations.



Wisdom Themes and A Wife of Noble Character

Theme	Proverbs 31 Woman
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaks with wisdom• Faithful instruction is on her tongue
Foolishness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not eat the bread of idleness
Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brings good not harm• Her children call her blessed
Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Husband has confidence in her• Her husband is respected• Her husband praises her
Righteousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opens her arms to the poor• Extends her hands to the needy• Clothed with strength and dignity• Provides portions for female servants


Theme	Proverbs 31 Woman
Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works with eager hands• Provides food for her family• Brings food from afar• She sets about her work vigorously• Her arms are strong for her task• Her lamp does not go out at night• Watches over the affairs of her household• Makes coverings for her bed• Makes linen garments and sells them• Supplies the merchants with sashes
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worth more than rubies• Husband lacks nothing of value• She buys a field and out of her earnings and plants a vineyard• She is clothed in fine linen and purple• Her trading is profitable

Is not prideful, wicked or foolish
Trusts God; has no fear for her household
Many women do noble things, but she surpasses
them all



HOW DO I LIVE?





GOD I LOOK
TO YOU

WEEK 4 STUDY GUIDE: PROVERBS 25-31

Proverbs 25: Kings and Commoners

Hezekiah's men were not mere copyists; they edited and arranged their material. Here they have brought together a number of isolated sayings about kingship to give a comprehensive picture of the power of governments. The chapter contains several admonitions to care for "friends" or "neighbors." This chapter includes sayings and admonitions, moving between positive and negative groups of sayings.

- Similarities and differences between God and kings are described. The king is beneath the God he represents, but above the people, who look up to him as he to God. The king's knowledge (Proverbs 25:2-3) is beneath the God he represents, but above the people, who look up to him as he to God. His power of appointment (Proverbs 25:4-7b) is required as unlike God, he needs advisors.
- Disputes will arise between neighbors and advice is given on how to resolve them (Proverbs 25:7c-10) wisely
- Well-chosen words (Proverbs 25:11-15, 25) that can bring peace and comfort are needed. These proverbs provide advice on: the aptly-spoken word (v 11), the wise rebuke (v 12), the faithful message (v 13, 25), the empty boast (v 14), and the gentle tongue (v 15).
- Advice on relationships (Proverbs 25:16-24, 26-28) tell us how to avoid spoiling our relationships. We are to avoid: over-familiarity (v 16-17), false reporting (v 18), unreliability (v 19), lack of sympathy (v 20-22), spreading slander (v 23), domestic disputes (v 24), compromise (v 26), ambition (v 27), and impatience.

The ethical instruction of Proverbs are embodied; it assumes an organic integration of heart, head, body, emotion, and desire. The proverbs in this chapter also rely on our sense of and dependency upon, the world around us. There are nature sayings, particularly related to weather and water. Proverbs turns us to nature to renew our sense of wonder, identity, and responsibility. Most of our knowledge of Jesus in the Gospel comes to us through interaction with nature: being baptized in a river, suffering in the desert, walking on water, stilling waters and storms, multiplying bread and fish, healing diseases with mud and spittle, and filling fishermen's nets. All of these interactions remind us of the great mystery of the incarnation, in which Jesus assumed our bodily nature to redeem this world.

Proverbs 26: Fools and Knaves

This chapter is entirely about the behavior of bad characters: the foolish, the lazy, the quarrelsome, and the malicious. There could be various reasons for this choice of subject. One would be to warn those trained in righteousness that not everyone is so favored, that they will encounter such people and need guidance in identifying and handling them. Another would be to look to ourselves lest we become like them. Perhaps above all, to be thankful God is showing us a better way.

- Proverbs is a book about wisdom, and its opposite is never far away—folly. Fools and their follies are mentioned frequently but this is the fullest treatment (Proverbs 26:1-12).

The emphasis is on what is unfitting to the fool – things good in themselves but in the hands of a fool at best ridiculous and at worst dangerous. These include: honor (v 1-3, 8), serious discussion (v 4-5), taking messages (v 6), wise sayings (v 7, 9), employment (v 10), repentance (v 11), and conceit (v 12).

- The lazy have been previously discussed and is now summarized in a tongue-in-cheek fashion (Proverbs 26:13-16). Topics about the lazy include: his excuses (v 13), his incurability (v 14), his weakness (v 15), and his self image (v 16).
- The quarrelsome (Proverbs 26:17-22) are handled by showing the foolishness of quarrelling. Quarrels arise from: meddling (v 17), joking (v 18-19), and gossiping (v 20-22).
- The malicious are presented on a sliding scale (Proverbs 26:23-28). The malicious are described from the standpoint of: hypocrisy (v 23-26), “come-uppance” (v 27), and harmfulness (v 28).

These verses echo many familiar sayings and accounts of misfits in the Old and New Testaments. The scoundrel in verses 23-26 closely resembles the duplicitous behavior forbidden in the law (Leviticus 19:35-37 and Deuteronomy 25:13-15). Both Proverbs and the law regard this behavior as an abomination. The ironic way the wicked fall subject to their plots and schemes is a common image in Psalms (Psalms 7:16; 9:16-17; 35:7-8; Ecclesiastes 10:8-9). Finally, both the “dog returns to its vomit” and the “fool to his folly” appear in Pharaoh’s reversing course after each of the plagues (Exodus 8:8-15) and Israel after judgment (Isaiah 56:9-12).

Proverbs 27: The Attitude Question

The attitudes and relationships of bad characters is examined.

- Good relationships are impossible when bad attitudes (Proverbs 26:1-4) are not corrected. These bad attitudes include: boasting (v 1-2), provocation (v 3), and jealousy (v 4).
- Good relationships (Proverbs 26:5-11, 17-18) are impossible until bad attitudes are righted so that relationship can be improved. Good relationships require: frankness (v 5-7), tolerance (v 8), encouragement (v 9, 17), constancy (v 10), and consideration (v 11, 18),
- Wise living is not only a matter of what we think and do when we have the initiative, but how we react to those events and persons we can’t control. Cautions (Proverbs 26:12-16) are given regarding: incautiousness (v 12), suretyship (v 13), flattery (v 14), nagging (v 15-16).
- Counsels for wise living (Proverbs 26:19-27) are provided that allow us to make progress in wisdom. These counsels include: searching your heart (v 19), controlling your desires (v 20), listening to others (v 21), seeking God’s grace (v 22), and doing your work (v 23-27).

The overwhelming focus on friends and family members in this chapter alerts us to the vast number and variety of biblical passages concerned with the friend. We are given examples of good friends like Ruth and Jonathan as well as traitorous friends. Similarly we remember the

many biblical passages concerned with the shepherd and shepherd-king. Affection and friendship are throughout the chapter.

Proverbs 28: Personal and Public

Since Wisdom is “fear of the Lord,” and the Lord is “the Righteous One,” the wise will make righteousness their chief aim in both their personal lives and public affairs. Key themes are:

- Righteousness as the basis of confidence (Proverbs 28:1, 4, 17)
- Righteousness forming good financial principles, which include: righteousness being superior to riches (Proverbs 28:6), rejecting all dubious methods (Proverbs 28:8, 21, 22) including lending on interest (v 8), partiality (v 21), miserliness (v 22), riches not providing security (v 22), and the need to work for money (v 19-20).
- Righteousness means respect for parents (Proverbs 28:7, 24)
- Righteousness governs the devotional life (Proverbs 28:9, 13, 14) in terms of prayer (v 9), repentance (v 13), and consistency (v 14).
- Righteousness acts responsibly toward others (Proverbs 28:10, 23). It does not mislead (v 10) and it is frank (v 23).
- Righteousness is consistent in its conduct (Proverbs 28:18).
- Righteousness lives by trust (Proverbs 28:25-26). It avoids quarrels (v 25) and enjoys safety (v 26).
- Public righteousness or national righteousness is the way the nation is governed. Aspects of righteous government includes: justice (Proverbs 28:5, 12, 28), order (Proverbs 28:2), and freedom (Proverbs 28 v 3, 15-16)

The way this chapter is laid out – with royal sayings fanning the chapter, allow us to see that the individual sayings about justice and righteousness always apply equally to royal dealings and common life. We are all responsible for the justice and welfare of a nation and God so ordered that world that God, king, and subject all share the same moral framework. God’s character and actions represent the standard for the king while the king’s character and actions set the standard for the individual and community. Of course, God’s chosen kings and subjects throughout history repeatedly fail to imitate their royal creator. Our political structures have changed significantly, but the moral order has not.

Proverbs 29: Justice

There are more explicit references to justice here than in any other chapter, and where the word itself is not used, the idea can be perceived without putting to much strain on the text.

- Divine Justice is the justice God shows to various kinds of people: to obstinate sinners (Proverbs 29:1), to habitual sinners (Proverbs 29:6), to the proud (Proverbs 29:23), to the untrusting (Proverbs 29:25), to the wronged (Proverbs 29:26), and to all (Proverbs 29:13).
- Political Justice is discussed in similar terms to those in Proverbs 28 under public righteousness. Governments exist to uphold justice. Where justice is maintained there is: happiness (Proverbs 29:2), stability (Proverbs 29:4, 14), and there is social concern

(Proverbs 29:7). Where justice breaks down, there is: instability (Proverbs 29:8), deception (Proverbs 29:12), corruption (Proverbs 29:16), and anarchy (Proverbs 29:18).

- Domestic Justice deals with the way members of a household treat each other, including: children (Proverbs 29:15, 17), youth (Proverbs 29:3), and servants (Proverbs 29:19, 21).
- Personal justice concerns the way we treat each other. Some of the unjust ways we treat others includes: flattery (Proverbs 29:5), controversy (Proverbs 29:9), hatred (Proverbs 29:10, 27), anger (Proverbs 29:11, 22), thoughtless talk (Proverbs 29:20), and perjury (Proverbs 29:24).

It could be said that all of humanity's problems arise from an unwillingness to receive correction from another. Most of this chapter falls under the categories of rejecting and submitting to correction, whether by nations, children, servants, the wise or the fool. The Bible knows no division between our secular lives and the sacredness of our salvation. This chapter reinforces the union between the two aspects of our lives with its natural blending of legal, prophetic, and wisdom terms. Paul prays for wisdom and understanding so the church might discern the mystery of the gospel and live wise and righteous lives. Biblical discipleship today needs to be refreshed with the Spirit of Wisdom—that God-given insight into life and the world made possible by the Son who is “before all things” in whom fulness dwells, and in whom “all things hold together.”

Proverbs 30: The Sayings of Agur

Agur, son of Jakeh was one of a number of wise men contemporary either with Solomon himself or Hezekiah. Agur's sayings are of a different kind from Solomon's. Agur's style is neither the continuous discourse of the Prologue (Proverbs 1-9) nor the strictly proverbial style of Solomon, but something in between. The collection centers around two themes: Man and God and Man and Nature.

- Man and God (Proverbs 30:2-17) confesses man's ignorance of God (v 2-3), confirms man's ignorance of God (v 4), discusses how God reveals himself to ignorant man (v 5-6) and describes praying to God in the face of death (v 7-9) against the temptation to speak falsely (v 8a) and for sufficient money or goods to meet needs (v 8b-9). The proverbs then describe how God favors the disadvantaged (v 10) and describes four behaviors God disapproves of (v 11-14, 17), which include the unfilial (v 11, 17), the self-righteous (v 12), the arrogant (v 13), and the cruel (v 14). The condition underlying this behavior is described (v 15-16).
- Man and Nature (v 30:18-31) describes the wonder and majesty of nature (v 18-20), its disorder (v 21-23), its wisdom (v 24-28), and its movement (v 29-31).

Most of Proverbs provides a parental voice of basic life lessons. Agur, meanwhile, is a taskmaster who offers almost no reprieve from sayings that confront the weakness of our human desire and pride and expose the limits of our understanding. Common threads are humility and wonder. Agur is less interested in addressing our ethical conduct than he is with the task of opening up a long, reflective gaze on the theological, social, political, psychological, and spiritual mysteries of life. Silence, reflection, and contemplation have become rare in the modern

technological age where we are saturated by images and sounds. But Agur echoes the command in Psalm 46:10 to “be still and know that I am God...” Our neglect of this still time of contemplation will rob us of the wisdom Agur has to offer.

Proverbs 31:1-9: The Sayings of King Lemuel

Sayings are recorded from Lemuel, King of Massah, a north Arabian territory. The sayings recorded here are attributed to the Queen mother, who may, following the death of her husband, have occupied the position of Regent while Lemuel was under age. The brevity of this passage may indicate it was an extract from a larger collection, or that these sayings were chosen because they accord with the teaching of Proverbs.

- Warnings against women (Proverbs 31:2-3) show a passionate concern of Lemuel’s mother for the success of his reign. Her knowledge of the past and her experience as a King’s consort have taught her that the greatest threats to the stability of the throne lie not in ambitious rivals, factions in the state or hostile neighbors, but within the King himself.
- Warnings against wine (Proverbs 31:4-7) describes another danger to which kings and rulers are exposed: drunkenness. This is not saying wine is evil in itself – it has its uses as well as its abuses.
- An encouragement to reign justly (Proverbs 31:8-9) concludes the proverbs, showing why the king should avoid overindulgence and providing an idealized view of kingship.

It is not uncommon in ancient wisdom literature for women to be featured and even admired, but the advice from Lemuel’s mother here is the only known incidence where a queen mother gives advice to a king. This is a first of several signs that this poem offers a subtle critique of royal culture that viewed women as sex objects and intellectually inferior.

Proverbs 31:10-31 The Wife of Noble Character

That the whole book should end in this way is a surprise and a puzzle. Why should the woman have the last word? It is a deliberate choice on the part of the final editor, but why? Some of the strongest reasons say that 1) it continues the advice given to King Lemuel by his mother 2) it is marriage guidance for all, to be put alongside all the other advice given to the young to make them wise 3) it continues in the cynical vein of the earlier sayings about women who are impossible to live with 4) cynically, it is a male view of womanhood 5) it shows that the home and family are foundational to life, and, 6) it provides a summary of the whole life-style of the wise. The characteristics of a noble wife include:

- Reliable and trustworthy (Proverbs 31:11)
- Supportive and loyal (Proverbs 31:12)
- Efficient and energetic (Proverbs 31:13)
- Considerate and painstaking (Proverbs 31:14)
- Unselfish and disciplined (Proverbs 31:15)
- Business-like and cautious (Proverbs 31:16)
- Fit and strong (Proverbs 31:17)

- Efficient and successful (Proverbs 31:18)
- Skillful and diligent (Proverbs 31:19)
- Generous and charitable (Proverbs 31:20)
- Practical and prepared (Proverbs 31:21)
- Tasteful and dignified (Proverbs 31:22)
- Devoted and submissive (Proverbs 31:23)
- Observant and opportunist (Proverbs 31:24)
- Strong and secure (Proverbs 31:25)
- Discreet and wise (Proverbs 31:26)
- Aware and involved (Proverbs 31:27)
- Appreciated and commended (Proverbs 28-31) by her children, her husband, God, and fellow citizens..

Proverbs 31:10-31 is an acrostic poem (each line begins with a subsequent letter of the Hebrew alphabet). The theology and cosmic invitations in Proverbs 8 set up the anthropology of this woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Perhaps no other chapter in Proverbs or even the Bible has more to say about work and vocation (calling), especially with regard to women. With chapter 31 placed at the end of the book, it serves in many ways to remind the reader that all of the sayings are really about our calling to live life well before God.

References:

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O'Dowd, R. P. The Story of God Bible Commentary on Proverbs. Zondervan. 2017.