

Parish Teaching Day - session 2

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Preacher: Dr. Phil Long

[0 : 00] One of my colleagues at Regent College, Richard Thompson, some of you know Richard Thompson maybe, he said, you know, I want to call him Barnabas, he sent me an email just before my first class, started a couple of weeks ago, and he said, just tell the students they're in for a long semester, not a good semester. Thank you, Richard. All right, well, we recommenced with another question, and we've more or less experienced this, and so I don't need to spend a lot of time, but there's a couple of things I wanted to do under this question.

Are proverbs or sayings, are they easy to understand? Yes or no? Yes and no. Okay, that's the right answer. Trick question, right answer. Yes and no.

Some are, some aren't, and some partially aren't. So, for example, James Crenshaw in his introduction to wisdom literature has some African proverbs.

He displays some, and some of these we know pretty quickly. For example, one of them is, where there is more than enough, more than enough is wasted. Do we have an English Western one? We have waste not, want not. And that, yeah, it's not saying exactly the same thing, but similar idea. Here's another one. The journey of folly has to be traveled a second time.

[1 : 22] Okay, the journey of folly has to be traveled a second time. This is the way the very picturesque, can anyone guess before I put it up there what the proverb says?

You hesitate to say. Oh, sorry. Take this off again.

Okay. Dog owners, you know what we're talking about. As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.

Okay, so the journey of folly has to be traveled a second time. Here's another. Today's satiety is tomorrow's hunger.

Today's satiety is tomorrow's hunger. All right, what does the proverb commend when it says, consider the ant? Has no commander, and yet it stores up its food in summer.

[2 : 41] Okay, when there's plenty of food around. But the ant, even though it has no commander and a brain of battle, instinctually it knows to store away for a rainy day, we would sometimes say.

Here's another African proverb. Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable. Pretty straightforward. What's the North American equivalent of that, maybe?

Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable. Yeah, okay. You know, that's really interesting that you say that, because that's the way the book of Proverbs often works. It will hear a catchword, and that will lead it to the next saying that might be a little bit unrelated to the one before.

Okay, so it does have that chaining effect of word association. Strength in numbers. There's strength in numbers. What did Ben Franklin say? United we stand.

United we stand. Divided we fall. Okay, so that's kind of a saying that goes around. There's an Arabic proverb that says, two dogs killed a lion.

[3 : 50] Okay, strength in numbers again. Two dogs killed a lion. The biblical proverb really is found in the wisdom book of Ecclesiastes in 4.12.

Can anyone think what's in Ecclesiastes? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. Again, it's earlier.

Two are better than what? A cord of three spans. A three-fold cord is not quickly broken. There's strength in numbers. All right, so many times the Proverbs, because they're based on human experience and because they are logical summations, the distillation of experience, we intuitively kind of get them, but not always.

So here's a couple more that I'm still searching for answers for every time I run into someone who's from Africa or has spent time there and say, what does this mean? This first one's not impossible perhaps.

It says, the earth is a beehive. We all enter by the same door, but live in different cells. What's that saying?

[4 : 57] Not absolutely sure, but it probably is saying something about the commonality and diversity of human experience, right?

We're all the same in fundamental ways, but we're all distinct in circumstantial ways perhaps. Here's my favorite, frankly. Big nose has not blown his nose.

Big feet has not softened the road. What is that about? I think it's about potential that has not been realized, right?

Maybe something like that. Big nose has not blown his nose. Wow, that could be quite a performance, but hasn't done it. Big feet has not softened the road. You've got those big flappers on the end of your leg and you're not doing anything with them.

So maybe it has to do with that, but I really have no idea. I would need to do historical cultural research or anthropological research to try to get someone to explain what that would mean in the culture from which it came.

[6 : 12] Sometimes we say, if you aim at nothing, you're bound to hit it. Or something like that. Reach for the stars. Yeah, reach for the stars. Yeah. Reach for the stars and you'll hit the moon.

Yeah, that's good. Let's see how picturesque that is. Or nothing ventured, nothing gained. There's another kind of brief one. Maybe it has to do with that. One in the Bible that's a little confusing is in a narrative book where it says, and so it was said of Saul, is Saul also among the prophets?

Not sure what, well, I'm writing a commentary on the books of Samuel, so yes, I know. I have an opinion. No, I have an opinion. It was asked twice. I think the first time people were surprised to see Saul doing something out of character.

He was prophesying with a band of prophets and they thought, is Saul also among the prophets? Last thing we would have ever thought of Saul doing. Second time, he's on the war path trying to kill David and the power of God overwhelms him and throws him on his face before Samuel and he prophesies unwillingly but forcibly all day.

And then people say, ah, is Saul also among the prophets? So I think it means something like, be careful not to judge by appearances or appearances can be deceiving.

[7 : 35] But we have to figure that one out because it's not very plain. What about this one? Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

That's Proverbs 27, 5. Better is open rebuke than hidden love. What does that mean? Where would you use that? Yes?

If you're rebuking somebody, it might show that you love them. You hide love. Right. If you hide love, you're not really affecting the game at all.

Right? And some parents never speak a word of rebuke for fear of losing the friendship of their children, not recognizing that their primary responsibility is to be a parent, not a friend.

Okay? I mean, you can be a friendly parent. A parent. I don't think you mean about it. As often with Proverbs, what comes next?

[8 : 36] So better is open rebuke than hidden love. The very next verse, verse 6 of Proverbs 25, is wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Okay? So it's saying, you know, if you have a friend who speaks the truth to you in love, welcome that. It took courage. If it's a rebuke, it took courage, and that person loves you enough to go through that difficult passage with you.

There's a later proverb, Proverbs 28, 23, whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favor rather than one who has a flattering tongue. So again, assuming that the rebuke is justified.

So sometimes Proverbs are easy to understand. Often they're not, which is what makes them intriguing, what is what calls us to meditate on them, to do some study, look for other similar Proverbs, and so forth, in the book.

You know, find some others. And you can do that with the concordance. Old style concordance, look up a word, and you'll find passages using that word, or you can do it electronically, nowadays, when we have very powerful tools.

[9 : 47] By the way, I love, we all have a mixed feeling about technology, I'm sure, because technology is doing a lot of damage. But the way I view technology is it's a tool to be used, as a tool should be used, and put away.

And as a tool, you can have a very powerful tool. You can accomplish a great deal with power tools. You do not entrust 12-year-olds with certain power tools, right?

Because they could really, they could cut their hand off and give a table saw to a 12-year-old. Well, some 12-year-olds are probably, let's make it an 8-year-old. So be careful. All right.

Are Proverbs easy to understand? Next question. What is the purpose of the book of Proverbs? I'll abbreviate purpose of book.

What is the purpose of the book of Proverbs? Proverbs? All right. At this juncture, I want us to look, I'm going to change the text up here.

[11 : 03] And I'm going to go light on this because I believe your sermon tomorrow morning is going to be on this passage. So I don't want to embarrass myself with David stepping in right after and actually doing it right.

So, let's, but let's look at the, I'm going to have to make it slightly smaller to get one to seven on there.

There you go. I want us to look at that because this is a statement of purpose. It begins with, it's the first title of the book, the main title of the book, the Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

And then we have a statement of purpose. So let's make observations about the statement of purpose. I'll read it aloud and then I want you to make some observations. I could do this as a group project, but I think in the interest of moving along, we'll do this as a big group.

All right? So I'll read it aloud once and then let's talk about what is the purpose of the book of Proverbs. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, for gaining wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair, for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young.

[12 : 23] Let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Okay, so what's the purpose? Wisdom and understanding for what? To do what?

Okay, you say righteous living. Okay, that's good. So living, so the book is intensely practical. It's concerned with our lives, with living, with our day-to-day, correct?

But you say righteous living. Where did you get that in the text? Exactly. We're receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair.

So the book is practical. It's interested in our day-to-day navigation of life. It's also ethical.

[13 : 35] It's interested in justice, in fairness, what is right. And to whom is it directed? Everyone.

Yeah, so you have this sort of merism where you've got one end and the other end. The simple and the wise. The whole spectrum. Now simple, simple will be used in a couple of different ways.

We're not really, I don't think we're talking about simple tongues here. Although if we look at this note in the NIV 2011, it says that the Hebrew word rendered simple in Proverbs denotes a person who is gullible, without moral direction, and inclined to evil.

Okay, so that is true later. It needn't necessarily be true of every occurrence of simple because there is a distinction between a person who is simple as in inexperienced.

Inexperienced. Notice the parallelism with young. So the simple knowledge and discretion to the young. So these are just inexperienced folk. They need to be trained.

[14 : 51] They need to learn how to live. Later, the simple one will become the simple tongue in chapter seven and so forth.

So the same word will be used there. Then it goes on. Also the young and old. Yeah. Not this simple. Right.

Yeah, exactly. Let the wise listen and add to their learning. We're assuming that they have logged some years gaining that wisdom, right? But so you've got the young and by implication the old as well.

So this is a book for everyone. We're never done. Never done seeking to learn wisdom. So it's practical. It's ethical.

Now an older view that I don't think carries too much weight in more of the people because wisdom texts and instructions are found in the ancient world.

[15 : 51] For example, there are Egyptian books of instruction. We'll talk about one later. Because it's out there and because Solomon was a wisdom teacher visited by other wisdom teachers.

We'll look at that in due course as well. Many have said, well, the book of Proverbs is sort of an alien presence in the Bible because it's kind of a secular book. Sort of secular.

Is that right? Is it secular? I mean, the armistice over the fact that you don't have mention of Israel's history. You don't have mention of the covenant per se so often. Although, at one point, the wayward woman is accused of abandoning the partner of her youth, her husband, in other words, when she was married off young.

Sorry. I didn't say covenant, did it? Abandoning the covenant. It's in that verse. I'll have to look it up. Sorry. But is the book a secular book?

Surely not. Surely not. Because that verse 7 says, you don't even make the first real step toward real wisdom without the fear of the Lord.

[17 : 12] And the Lord is, you know, Yahweh. So when you have the capital letters, L-O-R-D, that's referring to the covenant name of God. Probably pronounced Yahweh.

Mispronounced as Jehovah. That's fine. It's fine to point that out when you get visited on the doorstep. Stop mispronouncing his name. So the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom that fools despise wisdom and instruction.

So practical, ethical, theological. Tremper, in his book that just came out this year and we just got this week, talks about those three features.

He does that very well. I commend that book to you, by the way. Lots of good stuff. I only read, I've only read part of it. I only got it two days ago. So, but a very good book from a very good man.

What's the title?

The title of the book is The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom. And I think that's a quotation of Job 28, 28. So what's interesting in these wisdom books is you get this fear of the Lord business not just in the book of Proverbs.

[18 : 22] Don't quote me as saying, I just refer to this fear of the Lord business. That sounds a little business. You get this important phrase in not only the book of Proverbs but in the book of Job in Psalm 11 and so forth.

So it does, it is pervasive. I mean, that's what the Bible is about. God reveals himself that we might fear him and having learned to fear him, we fear nothing else.

Once you have learned the fear of the Lord, what else is there to fear? If God has the weight that he in fact has, then none of life's circumstances, as dire as they are, I don't diminish that, and some go to an early grave, but knowing the Lord, fearing the Lord, there's no serious reason to fear even that.

I think we fear the prospect of finding ourselves in that place, but as Corrie Ten Boom's father, see this is for people who've been around for a while, I ask younger students, who was Corrie Ten Boom?

David, do you know who Corrie Ten Boom is? Ah, but he has a historian as a father. That's good. But Corrie Ten Boom's father said, you know, God will provide the grace.

[19 : 42] He said, when do I give you the ticket when you're getting on the train? She said, right before I board the train. And he wisely said, God will give you the grace for what you're called to when the time comes.

So, fearing the Lord casts out lesser fears. Even death loses its sting. So, what's the purpose of the book?

Well, to teach us the practicalities of daily life, to teach us how to live and do what is right and just in our relationships in particular, and to teach us to fear the Lord.

So, the book is deeply relational. It's about a relationship with God first and foremost, and then a relationship with our fellow human beings, be they in our family, be they our neighbor, be they across the street or across the world.

Okay, another question. This is a key question. Are Proverbs promises? I heard a good answer there.

[20 : 51] Are Proverbs promises? Depends how you're using that word promise. Yes. That's why it's a trick. I like it. I like it. Have trick questions.

Yeah. Okay. Are they promises? Well, I'll set it up a little bit. Some of you may have this. I think a friend of mine used to have a little box on the kitchen table and on the outside it said precious

promises.

Any of you seen those? And inside were a bunch of Proverbs. Are they promises? Well, let me put one up here and we'll ask in relation to a specific verse.

If I could make that up, the search bigger I would, but I can't, so I don't. Um, famous one.

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

So your child has just called from jail saying, can you post bail for me?

[22 : 01] Wow. Or he's coming up on his parole hearing. I'm being a little exaggerating here, but maybe your child's not turning out so well at the moment. If this is a promise, start children off on the way they should go and even when they are old, they'll not turn from it.

You see where they are, you reverse the equation, and you're in a heap of anxiety over how you were as a parent. Now, we do make failures as parents, and we sometimes have to apologize to our children, etc., etc.

I mean, none of us have parented perfectly. But is it right to reverse that equation? Are they promises? Well, I heard no earlier, and I think no is the right thing to say, first of all.

They're not promises per se. What are they? They are predictors. They're predictors. Both.

Instructions.

They're hopeful sayings. Generalizations. Generalizations. Consequences. Okay, they instruct us about consequences, that's right. I used to say that proverbs were general truths.

[23 : 18] I kind of backed off of that a little bit. I used to say they're generally true. And the reason I backed off is I had a student in class, Bill Yarborough, was his name, who had been a missionary, I think, in perhaps in Mexico, I can't remember exactly.

And we were talking about what proverbs has to say about industry, about diligence, and looking at some proverbs like this, Proverbs 10, 4.

Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth. All right? Another would be, Proverbs 14, 23. All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

21, 5. The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty. 28, 19.

Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty. Now, Bill Yarborough's comment to these, because I say these are general truths, and it doesn't always happen, but generally it happens.

[24 : 36] Diligent hands bring wealth, generally. He said, not where I've been working. He said, there's all kinds of people who are extremely conscientious, extremely diligent, and financially, they're just barely scraping by.

So that set me to thinking, well, what's going on here? If they're not even generally true, why do we use them? I think the point is to redefine exactly how they're true.

I think proverbs are true in relation to that slice of life that they are addressing. So, start children off on the way they should go, and even when they're old, they'll not turn from it.

This is essentially saying early childhood training is significant long term. And I think that's true.

Early childhood training is significant. It's commending being diligent in our childhood training. Does it guarantee that they would never turn their back on that early childhood training?

[25 : 47] And the only way they would do that is if you'd blown it somehow? No, because it's true in relation to the topic addressed and assuming all other things are equal.

But life is like a pie. You've got, you know, if you have a pie, with its various slices, this 22-6 is addressing early childhood training, and it's true of that slice of the pie.

But the child's life is made up with a number of other slices. That's the totality of that child's life. So at the beginning of the book, when the father says, when sinners entice thee, consenteth thou not.

The reason I give you that, King James, is, I think Bruce Heinemarschel wouldn't mind me sharing this, but you know, all of you would know Bruce, I think, or most of you. He said his father would come in at night, and that would be sort of the mantra that he would say to Bruce.

Bruce, when sinners entice thee, and Bruce was to respond antiphonally, consenteth thou not.

That's great training.

[27 : 12] You know, how futile to spread the net in the sight of all the birds. Exactly. It's in that same context right at the beginning of Proverbs. When sinners entice thee, consenteth thou not.

How futile to spread the net in the sight of all the birds. The father said, look, I'm opening your eyes right now. I'm showing you the net.

Probably a cast net. And you're not going to catch many birds if they're looking at you when you cast the net. So he said, I'm pointing your gaze, I'm instructing you, when sinners entice thee, fly away.

Don't get caught in their net. I think that's probably what's going on there. So Proverbs are true of the issue that they are addressing.

They're not just sometimes true or most of the time true. I think Bruce Waltke says they are absolutely true in an eschatological sense.

[28 : 12] In an ultimate sense, God's truth is true. I may have muddied the water by bringing that in. The main point is the proverb is true, all other things being equal.

But all other things are never equal. Therefore, you can't guarantee, they're not a promise in that sense. I did this, and it didn't happen, you failed me, God.

I was diligent, I was not lazy, I was diligent with my hands, and I'm not wealthy, you failed me, God. I would think Jesus probably behaved better than the rest of us, and he didn't have much.

Okay, next question then. Can contradictory proverbs both be correct? correct? You can kind of guess the answer to that one, but what would you say?

yes, they can. You knew, I had to say yes, otherwise there would be no point. One of the more famous sets of apparently contradictory proverbs is this, do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him.

[29 : 51] Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes. What? So what am I to do? So what's going on here?

What are we learning about proverbs when we encounter something like that? Sorry? Using discernment for what?

To do what? To decide what you do. Yeah, so you need to have discernment to know which proverb is appropriate to a particular situation.

So in wisdom, as in humor, timing is everything. Timing is everything. Wisdom is knowing what proverb to quote, to live by, to meditate on in a particular situation.

question. If your child is standing on the curb, what we typically train children, a little short training, stop, look, and listen before you cross the street.

[31 : 02] And then we put it to a tune and it gets ridiculous. stop, look, and listen before you cross the street. We don't come up with, hey, Timmy, he who hesitates is lost.

Or, hey, Sally, nothing ventured, nothing gained. Go for it. So it's timing. Wisdom is knowing which one to say when. Now look at this one.

Do not love sleep or you will grow poor. Stay awake and you will have food to spare.

Wow, really? Stay awake? How long? All night? There's going elsewhere in outside the so-called wisdom books.

Can anyone think of a psalm I might be getting ready to throw up there? It's a fairly famous one. Precisely. It is vain.

[32 : 09] In vain you rise up early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat, for he, that is the Lord, grants sleep to those he loves. Okay?

I think that's beautiful. You know, we can trust God. So the question is, the question is, which needs to be applied? Okay, so if you have someone who is simply lazy and not willing to put the time in, even if it involves some evening hours, then you might say, do not love sleep or you will grow poor. Stay awake and you will have food to spare. You might use that one in that case. You know, don't just go slumbering off. On the other hand, more fundamentally theological, it's vain to rise up early and stay up late toiling or eating the bread of anxious toil, I think the King James said.

Getting all overwrought and anxious about it because God grants sleep to those he loves. Some of us have trouble sleeping from time to time. That's not what I was talking about.

Okay, so timing is everything. And to just reinforce that in one more way, notice what the Proverbs says about good sayings in the hands of fools.

[33 : 36] Fools don't know how to tell them. Like useless legs, this, by the way, this is Proverbs 26, 7, 8, and 9. Like useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

Like tying a stone in a sling is the giving of honor to a fool. Like a thorn bush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

can all this good wisdom be harmful? Yeah. If you don't have the wisdom to know what to say when, that's a prayerful consideration, then you can actually do damage with these short

aphorisms, with these short sayings.

Hammer someone with the wrong saying at the wrong time. And it's like lashing them with the thorn bush. Or indiscriminately, you know, the drunkard is not in control, there's motions.

So what are we, what happens with a proverb? It's either harmful or useless. And what do we make of verse 8?

[34 : 49] Kind of sandwiches between. Tying a stone in a sling is the giving of honor to a fool. It can hit you in the face sometimes.

Yeah. Okay. Yeah. I mean, if you think about, they didn't have slingshots like that, you know, they had, they had these, these kinds of slingshots. But it's saying, you know, if you, if you tie a stone in one of these, you clearly don't know what that's supposed to be doing.

You don't have any idea how that works. And in fact, you might hurt yourself. You get it whipping really good and then it catches around your neck and then it can hurt.

So like tying a stone in a sling is the giving of honor to a fool. A fool shouldn't be given weight. They won't know what to do with it.

They will abuse it. It shouldn't be given honor. Okay. Any questions to that point? All right.

[35 : 51] We're going to move to a question that I think is important. It will take us a little while to handle this one. And that is, does the book of Proverbs show structure or organization or is it simply a haphazard collection?

Does it show structure or organization? Well, if you have just even a very big sense of the broad structure and I think that might be in David's description of the series coming up.

I think he gave you a little structure at the bottom of that perhaps. But it does have a broad structure. Chapters one to nine are more extended paragraph length exhortations often from father to son.

And we're going to talk about the sort of male orientation in the book of Proverbs. What do we make of that? What do we do with that? Does the book mean to exclude women? We'll get to that one in a few courses.

But Proverbs one to nine were discursive wisdom, paragraphs, exhortations. Exhortations specifically to embrace wisdom, not folly.

[37 : 14] Proverbs 10 to 15. Actually, the big collection is 10 to 1 to 22 16.

That's sort of that grab bag of Proverbs where you you're reading along and you hear, you know, it's kind of like popcorn Proverbs.

Like this is about this and that one's about that and this is about the other thing and how does that all hang together? Why? Is there any organization at all? That's a question we want to ask.

But in 10 to 15, so the first half of that big collection from 10.1 to 22.16, you have the contrasting of the righteous and the wicked.

And this is like Ray Van Leeuwen compares this to basic wisdom. So 10 to 15, this is wisdom 101. And then after that, 16 and following, you get into the higher level courses, the more difficult cases.

[38 : 24] He says, the literary sequence of sections thus seems to embody a form of developmental pedagogy. Young persons need first to learn the basic rules of life, time enough later to learn its painful, mysterious absurdities.

I'm not sure I would want to go with that word, absurdity, because I think in God's economy, life is not absurd, it only appears absurd to us at times.

Back to the Job discussion. And Van Leeuwen goes on, as in language, so in life, we first learn basic rules and patterns, the exceptions come later.

He gives this example, on returning from the country, my city-reared toddler excitedly told his mom, we see the cow. He had mastered the ed ending, or the past tense, but not the irregular verb.

So we see this as children are learning that they'll often regularize things that haven't been regularized by adult speakers. Okay, so what we want to do with that basic 1 to 9, 10 to 22, 16, and then the rest of the book, we want to look at the outline on your handout.

[39 : 37] And I'll make a few comments about it as we go through. So skip the page, you know, skip the page on chapter 2. The fine print, sorry about that, but I wanted to get up on one page, the one entitled, The Book of Proverbs in Overview.

I left out an S on Proverbs, sorry about that. And this is based on Bruce Waltke's discussion, so it's my distillation of an outline from his larger discussion.

in his NICOT commentaries, I know Bruce has taught here before, many of you will know Bruce Waltke, this is volume one of his Proverbs commentary.

There's also a volume two, right? 35 years in the making, he was writing on that for 35 years. And I'll tell you a little bit later why it took 35 instead of 25.

It's part of the measure of the man, we'll get to that. So, Book of Proverbs in Overview. Notice that I have, well, first of all, let me say what is internal to the text.

[40 : 47] The text has seven titles that sort of divided up itself, the whole book. So, the first title is in bold. You can hardly see that, but see where it says title, chapter one, verse one.

That's quoting the biblical text where it says, the Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. The next title comes right under the collection two heading, where it says again, the Proverbs of Solomon.

That raises an interesting question. Is that first title a title for the entire book, but Solomon's not responsible for the first nine chapters.

His work only begins in 10.1. That's one view. Might be right. I'm going to suggest another view. The third collection has the title in 22:17, pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise. And we know that's a separate collection for reasons that I'll discuss in a second. And in the fourth, in 24, 23, these also are sayings of the wise. 25:1.

[42 : 00] These are more Proverbs of Solomon copied by the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah. That's quite interesting because Hezekiah was a king in Judah about 250 years after Solomon.

So it kind of expands our understanding of how certain biblical books, grew over time in the same way that a cathedral is constructed perhaps over a few centuries or at least a decade, centuries usually, has a beautiful unity, but nevertheless it was constructed over time.

And so here we have more, a clear biblical statement that this new material, which was of Solomonic origin, was collected, perhaps arranged, and transcribed by the men of Hezekiah. So the book of Proverbs got bigger 250 years after the time of Solomon, I would suggest. And then there are in 30, verse 1, the sayings of Agur, son of Jacquet, and Oracle.

Who in the world is that guy? You don't know. And the sayings of King Lemuel and Oracle, his mother taught him. So actually these are his mother's sayings. She's instructing him.

[43 : 14] Okay, so let's go back and look a little more closely at this. And I'm going to make a point in due course about this particular overall structure.

So we begin collection 1. It's a little confusing because collection 1 is entitled also Solomon 1. So the first Solomonic material which you'll notice goes in Waltke's opinion and I agree with him from 1.1 to 24:34 and then you have that new material transcribed by the men of Hezekiah. That becomes then Solomon 2. But Solomon 1 is divided into collection 1 which is that 1 to 9, those more exhortation, paragraph-length exhortations, father to son.

And then you have collection 2 which is Solomon's main collection of Proverbs. Now this is quite interesting. Collection 2, I'm going to pull this up here.

[44 : 28] Proverbs 10:1. I think in David's description of the little paragraph description, he mentions that there are 375 Proverbs of Solomon.

375. Now we know from the book of Kings it mentions that he collected or wrote 3,000 Proverbs. So why 375? Anyone have an idea other than a regent student?

3 piece. Sorry? 3 piece. Well no, he had many more.

Well, you mean in the 3,000 he was repeating ideas. Yeah, well undoubtedly there were some repetitions and you'll find some of that even. But I don't think that would account for an almost tenfold increase.

He wouldn't have collected them if there were that much alike. Yeah, Ron? Days. Sorry? Can we do something to do with number of days? It does have to do with numbers. I'll give you that part.

[45 : 36] Okay. So the name Solomon what have we got up here? Yeah, we just got it that way. I'll go ahead and do it the English way and make it easier to understand.

So, but actually I have to change something because it doesn't have that. Hebrew letters have numeric values.

Okay? So if you're doing the first ten single digit numbers, that's the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet. After that, the eleventh one is the number twenty, the twelfth is the number forty, and all of that.

So each letter in the twenty-two letter Hebrew alphabet has a numeric value. So, um, shin, for example, I have to go pretty quick, that's three hundred.

So this equals, I'll do it this way, three hundred, and by the way, the vowels don't count, just the consonants, that's all that matters in Hebrew. Um, this letter, the el, or the lamed, is thirty, so three hundred plus thirty, the m, or the main, is forty, and the h sound, the hey, is five, equals three seventy-five.

[47 : 12] Now, this is not weird Bible code stuff, you know, there is the weird Bible code, don't recommend that book, um, doesn't make a lot of sense, can do it with almost anything, if you have computers working for you, so, but, but we do know, or at least it seems, that wisdom writers cared about these things, so Solomon might think, okay, I can't, I need to cut this down, how am I going to select Proverbs, um, how many should I include?

Well, numeric value of the name Solomon. It works, and a number of other places work. This is discussed in a book by, uh, Roland Murphy, uh, called The Tree of Life, from a Catholic scholar, um, writing an introduction to the wisdom books.

Okay, so that's kind of an interesting feature, that when we get to that so-called main Solomonic collection, and this is our grab bag, just these different popcorn Proverbs, seemingly, um, we have three hundred and seventy-five of them.

That may be the reason. So we get through those, and in, in those, we have, uh, well, I mean, once we get through those, then we have a section called Thirty Sayings, and that's pretty interesting, um, because the Thirty Sayings had to do, that verse that talks about, have I not taught you thirty sayings?

Well, that's in the modern translations now, but for a while it wasn't. And the reason it wasn't is that people didn't understand how, what that meant, and it was extra-biblical discovery that taught us what it meant.

[48 : 53] So I'm going to reserve that, too, for a moment, because it's in another section here. Um, and then you have the, the, the Hezekiahian Solomonic material in twenty-five to twenty-nine, and then the two final ones, Agur and Lemuel.

So each of these has some special feature. Uh, look back at, and it's the last time I'll go through this particular part. Uh, look back at the prologue. And I'm referring to the one to nine basically as the prologue.

Notice that it begins with a title, uh, preamble, and a first principle. So that gets us going. And then you have the prologue itself, which does sort of work out as shown there with parallel sections.

This is, sometimes we talk about chiasms, where the central section is key. You know, like A, B, C, D, C prime, D prime, A prime, D is right in the middle.

Um, this is, this has two middles. So it may be that the first and last, the framing, is significant. I don't get bogged down in structural analysis in the Hebrew text.

[50 : 06] But, um, it is quite interesting to see that you begin with invitations, the rival invitations of the wise father and the gang. When sinners entice thee, consentest thou not?

That's the father's appeal to his son. And then at the end of that, this whole section in chapter nine, uh, you have the rival invitations of woman wisdom and woman folly to the simple, to the gullible.

Uh, inside that, the B elements, you have woman wisdom's rebuke of the gullible in 1, 20 to 33, and B prime, woman wisdom's invitation to the gullible.

See how those kind of mirror? Inside that, you have a, what is called a janus. That means something that looks both directions. Okay, two-faced, looking both directions.

Um, the father's command to heed teaching as a safeguard against evil men and the unchaste wife. And then again, father's warnings against woman wisdom's rival in the C prime.

[51 : 12] And then in the middle, you have the father's command to heed teaching and his warnings against the unchaste wife. So see how many warnings there are about wayward women, difficult women here?

We'll have to talk about that. That's another question. Good. I'm glad you're reacting a little bit. Um, yeah. So we'll, we'll, we'll get to it.

Um, and then the, the, the, the main collection, which comes up next, you have in 10 to 15, uh, or near the end of 15, you have, um, basically a contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

Remember that the first nine chapters choose wisdom, not folly. Now it describes the righteous and the wicked. And it does this with a lot of what we call antithetic parallelism.

The righteous are like this, but the wicked are like this. So it's antithetic in that it's expressing one truth, but it's expressing it positively and negatively. And so I'm going to do a little fun experiment here just because I think it's fun and it shows you the power of some of these tools.

[52 : 19] So I'm going to take the wisdom books and maybe I'll, maybe I'll just do the book of Proverbs. You can't see what I'm doing for a moment. Let's use the book of Proverbs.

And I'm going to just put the English word, but into the book of Proverbs. And I want to see where it appears. So I've pulled up a bunch. Now look what computers can do.

Now this, this stuff used to take a lot longer. If I want to do a hits graph of how many butts, what the frequency of that conjunction, that adversative conjunction is, I can do this.

And look at that. Okay. So you can't see the small print there, but where it, where it skyrockets is right at chapter 10.

It goes up right at chapter 10 and it goes, looks on this chart, it goes almost to, into 16 or 17 a little bit, but it's essentially 10 to the end of 15.

[53 : 21] So I do that just because graphically you can see what is being claimed to be true intuitively. I'll show you one other. That's not the only chart you can do.

I'm going to do a table. I have to modify this one. I want to show chapter detail. And I'm going to make it much bigger.

All right. So this is frequency per thousand words. So notice of the conjunction but. So chapter one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, it's showing the frequency per thousand words.

Look what happens when you get to 10. You go from 3.64 to 57.78, 40, you know, I made it a little bit too big, I guess. But you get the idea.

So from 10 to 15 really, and there it shows it more, you have over 40 butts per thousand words. All that's saying, it's not a big deal.

[54 : 23] All it's saying is it's a powerful tool that you can do that kind of stuff instantly. And all it's demonstrating here is that we have a preponderance of antithetic parallelism. So we're going to look at one of those, some of that antithetic parallelism in just a bit.

Now, and then beginning in 16, you have a more advanced course in wisdom. Talking about the gulf between human and divine righteousness, the deed consequence relationship, where there are many factors, remember, synonymous and synthetic parallelism then is more common here.

All right, so those are all a little bit technical. But another point, I'll make this final point on the outline. And then we'll move on. Another point about the structure of the book, and I'm going to keep building the case that the book is structured.

Another point is that in this wisdom book, on average, the divine name, that is the Lord, Yahweh, occurs about one in every eight verses.

Okay, so about every eighth verse. Now, it's not in that sequence, but that's the frequency overall when you measure it. About one in eight. At the very center of the book is the section that begins in Proverbs 16.

[55 : 50] Now, look for the name Lord in this section.

verse 8. In every one of one to nine, except for verse 8, where it says, okay. So this is the center of the book.

This is at the heart of the main collection, and indeed, approximately the quantitative center of the book. So it's worth just reading. Listen to it.

To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. What does that mean exactly? Not too sure.

You kind of know, but we'll have it reinforced in just a moment. All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

[57 : 01] The Lord works out everything to its proper end, even the wicked for a day of disaster. The Lord detests all the proud of heart.

Be sure of this. They will not go unpunished. Through love and faithfulness, sin is atoned for. Through the fear of the Lord, evil is avoided.

When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them. Better a little with righteousness, than much gain with injustice.

In their hearts, human plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. That kind of helps us with that first verse. In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the reply of the tongue comes

from the Lord.

Here it says, but the Lord establishes their steps. It's sort of like what we say when we say, man proposes, God disposes.

[58 : 07] Now that one, even in English, you have to unpack because we think of disposal as disposing garbage. But it's saying that God is the one who actually effects things. We make our plans, but nothing's going to happen if God is not in it.

So that's essentially what that's saying. Now what about Proverbs being absolute promises? Number seven, verse seven.

And this is, this, the NIV has pluralized a lot of this, and it comes out to be awkward in English, but they're trying to avoid saying, when a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, because this applies to women, not just men.

Harking back to the time when man was used generically for humans. But when a man's, when the Lord takes pleasure in a man's ways, he causes even his enemies to be at peace with him or to make peace with him.

If that's an absolute promise, then we have a bind because, or if it's a promise in that, in a temporal sense, because who, whose ways, what man was God most pleased with?

[59 : 17] Of all people who've ever lived. Well, Job, Job was a prefigurement of Jesus in a way, but Jesus certainly one we bring in the New Testament. And were his enemies at peace with him?

No. So, however, one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess. So, in an eschatological sense, it's still true.

All right. So, this is right at the heart of the book, a concentration of these sayings involving the Lord. And I think that's meant to signal something.

I think that was with a purpose. All right. So, any questions on this outline? I know it's a little daunting just to look at it, but just to give you kind of a sense that it appears that it's a collection of diverse sayings, but it appears that there's been some organization.

Yes? Could you say more about that and how it's possible that Solomon just pour out a whole bunch of stuff in there? Of course, we can't know.

[60 : 32] Yeah. Well, maybe we can. Okay. Maybe we can. I just want to look at something. I'm going to bring in a question early.

I was going to ask the question later, can studying the literature of the ancient world help us understand biblical wisdom? And I was going to say yes. And so, I'm going to bring that in and then we'll lead into an answer to your question.

So, let me show you this passage. This is worth jotting down because it talks about Solomon as a wisdom teacher. 1 Kings 4, beginning in verse 29, really to the end of the chapter.

So, it's 29 to 34. Listen to what it says about Solomon as wisdom teacher. God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the east and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezraite, wiser than He-Man, who appears on children's underwear.

[61 : 48] Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahal. And his fame spread to all surrounding nations. He spoke 3,000 proverbs and his songs numbered 1,005.

He spoke about plant life from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. From all nations, people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world who had heard of his wisdom.

All right. So, is wisdom a purely biblical phenomenon? No, absolutely not. You have mention of all the wise men of the east, greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.

All of these places had wise teachers. They had a form of wisdom. And so, their wisdom forms how they wrote their wisdom.

We may find that reflected because he was a, they came to hear him, but he doubtless heard some of their wisdom as well. And when, when in the outline, it gets down and says, for example, in 22, 17, pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise.

[63 : 00] Actually, I need to, probably need to pull that up. Or 24, 23. Let me pull that one up for just a moment. I want to tack it on to the end here.

No, that's not it. Okay, yeah.

Down at the bottom there, where it says, pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise. Apply your heart to what I teach. So, what I would draw from that, and what others have drawn from that, is that Solomon was being visited by other wisdom teachers.

They were exchanging wisdom, and he would adopt what he could sanctify, if you will. And so, listen to this, listen to their wisdom.

Apply your heart to what I teach. I'm going to impart some of that to you. And the reason I say that makes sense is that what he then goes on to do is to present a book of 30 sayings, a 30 sayings book.

[64 : 14] Okay, so Solomon was a wisdom teacher. He was in a context where the thought world involved wisdom and wisdom writing.

Until 200 years ago, more or less, the literature of the East, that is of Mesopotamia, and the literature of Egypt was unknown, uncracked.

The codes had not been cracked. No one could read them. Okay. So, a lot of biblical commentaries were written prior to the unlocking of a vast literature that provides context for the world into which God gave his word.

He gave his word in a language that people could understand. He gave his word in literary forms that they could also comprehend. So, it shouldn't surprise us that he did it this way. So, with that background, let me mention an article to you by a man named Kenneth Kitchen, which is entitled Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East, The Factual History of a Literary Form. Now, I'm not going to bother to write that up there. You can ask me for it if you want it, but it's a pretty technical article. Well, I'll put that up there and you can see that. It's a pretty technical article.

[65 : 35] And what Kitchen does in this article is he says, people have opinions about who wrote what in the book of Proverbs. The standard opinion was that, yeah, Solomon may have written some of the Proverbs in 10 and following.

Maybe some came down to a later writer, the standard view. But the first nine chapters, that discursive wisdom, because it seemed so much more polished, those exhortations, that probably wasn't from Solomon.

That was from a much later writer. Okay, well, to that, I always say a proverb that, if I can find it here, now that I've shifted everything around, the proverb says, where is it?

Well, I should have it memorized. It's the proverb that says, one person seems right until the second person presents his or her case.

Okay, so that's the standard wisdom. What Kitchen has done is they'll look at the evidence, and he says, looking at all the evidence, comparing this wisdom book of Proverbs with other books of instruction or of wisdom, both in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, he discovers that in at least, there's two basic formal types, but in 15 of these examples, and we don't have an untold number of them, they have this particular form.

[66 : 58] They have a main title and a preamble or just a main title, a prologue, often a second main title, and then the body of the text.

So, title, prologue, second title, body of the text. He finds those in 15 exemplars, and he finds them from about the time of Solomon.

He says that, you know, the forms do change over time, but around the turn of the second millennium to the first millennium, that was the time of Solomon, B.C. So, it all makes sense. And he has argued that, in keeping with ancient Near Eastern practice, we should actually be assuming Solomon to have been the writer both of the prologue and of the collection that follows. He says this. This is kind of a summary conclusion. I'm leaving out a lot of detail, but he says, Therefore, basing ourselves firmly on the direct, external, independent, comparative evidence now available, we find that the most probable literary date of Solomon 1, that's chapter 1 to 24, is entirely compatible with the named author in the title of the work, i.e. King Solomon, circa 950 B.C.

[68 : 21] The results owes nothing to theology or tradition, but rests on the total available comparative data. And then he says, a little bit later, From the total evidence of all the data discussed, it should be clear that the views of conventional Old Testament scholarship on the supposed history of the book of Proverbs received no support whatsoever from the wider range of factual information now available, be it literary, linguistic, conceptual, or other.

In fact, rather, the contrary obtains. So, it's an interesting article if you want to read something technical and do so.

But I think he makes a very good point. When you're arguing in a vacuum, you can argue pretty much any theory. Once evidence is available, it's inexcusable to keep arguing in a vacuum. And looking at it, he makes a pretty strong case, a case for Solomonic authorship of the bulk of the book. I mean, if you think about it, he would be responsible for chapter 1 to 24, and then more Solomonic material is transcribed by the men of Hezekiah, 24 to 29, and then you have two other named authors, Agur and Lemuel, of Lemuel's mother.

So, Walke agrees with this, and he says, he thinks that those little collections, three and four, were probably added by Solomon himself.

[69 : 45] So, I'll leave that there, but in terms of how we can be helped by the ancient news, oh yes, we can. Remember, what I like to say, though, is that the comparative material should be comparative, not imperative.

Don't reduce the Bible to nothing other than the comparative literature. That would be like studying world religions and saying, you know, I see that a number of world religions are human attempts to sort of striving to, toward the divine, you know, frankly, a lot of human religions are human creations out of the longing of the human heart.

It's a little bit different from the inbreaking of true religion, the incarnation, the coming of God, the true God. So, but these other religions pray, they have their sacred text, they have their codes of ethics, and such.

So, you wouldn't want to say because we have those similarities, prayer, code of ethics, sacred text, that we're, that Christian religion is not distinctive.

Get my point? So, it's like you might have wax apples and real apples that look very much alike but are very different in terms of how they give us life.

[71 : 08] So, got a little bit more time here before we get to take lunch. So, let me move to another question. Since I shifted something, I have to...

Okay, yeah, this is a good one to maybe end on before we take our lunch break. And that is, why did the writer of Solomon, the writer of Proverbs, we're assuming Solomon here, why didn't he organize himself?

I mean, why didn't he get these things topically arranged? Why does the book of Proverbs not organize its short sayings topically? Lots of published books do just that.

Why did the writer not go to the trouble to arrange things according to topics? Wouldn't that make life a little bit easier? Well, I think, you know, a metaphor, an image may help.

Robert Alden in his commentary on the book of Proverbs speaks of the book this way. And I'm going to agree and disagree with part of what he says. But he says, the book of Proverbs is like medicine.

[72 : 28] You cannot live on medicine alone, but few of us go through life without some medicine now and then. At least we take a vitamin. Likewise, a spiritual diet of Proverbs alone would be most unbalanced, but how sick a person might be that didn't occasionally ingest some of these potions and antidotes for the sake of his mental, spiritual, and even financial well-being.

The book of Proverbs is the kind of biblical fare you should indulge in often, but not in large doses. The stuff of Proverbs has already been distilled so that its advice comes to us in highly concentrated form.

These sage tidbits have been boiled down, trimmed, honed, polished, and sharpened to where a little goes a long way. Now, he's making a good point.

I mean, sayings typically occur one at a time on a certain occasion. That's when you actually apply them. But springboarding from his, and this goes back to Susie's question earlier about saying, you know, I feel like this is so dense.

I would just like to focus on one. Yeah, well, that's right. That's a good thing to do. Focus on one. Meditate on it. Focus on others that are light. Do a bit of topical arrangement yourself. But is there a place for reading a chapter, a straight-out chapter?

[73 : 58] I want to suggest that his vitamin metaphor, analogy, makes sense. When we take, unless you're one of these real vitamin consumers who takes a whole constellation of vitamins, I just take a multivitamin, one pill, but it's got a bunch of different things in it.

Why would I do that? Why wouldn't I take some vitamin B on Monday and some vitamin C on Tuesday and whatever the other vitamins are other days of the week?

Why a multivitamin that has a bit of each every day? Sorry? Slow release.

Slow release. Yeah? Preventive. Preventive. I mean, you don't know in what ways your body's going to be stressed that day. You don't know what contagion you may encounter.

You need some zinc. Okay? Or you need whatever it is that prevents you from catching a cold. You need a little bit of this and a little bit of that every day. And I think that one of the reasons you don't have everything topically arranged is that would be like overdosing on vitamin B in chapter one and overdosing on vitamin C in chapter two but never getting any vitamin B in chapter two.

[75 : 17] And every day we need a smattering of wisdom. We need wisdom coming at us from all angles. Because what will be the temptation today? Will it be dishonesty and avarice?

Will it be losing our temper? Will it be being loose with our tongue? Will it be being loose with one another in other ways? What will the temptation be?

You don't know what each day will hold so you need a little bit of each. So I think there's a kind of genius in the fact that you have a shift from this proverb to that proverb to this proverb to that proverb repeatedly and then in the next chapter you get some of the same material again and some of the same material again.

At least that's the way I like to look at it. Any comments, questions on that? Yes? I just know that if it was topically arranged I would be tempted to skip the ones that I didn't think would be relevant.

Excellent comment. Excellent comment. Yeah. I don't like that one on gossip. I'm going to take that one out. You don't know what I mean. Yeah, Derek Kidner makes it a bit excellent.

[76 : 26] Derek Kidner makes a similar point. He said, by doing it this way it avoids the temptation toward a kind of gradation of wisdom. Like some of these are more important than others.

Well, we know that the fear of the Lord is the most important. That's the foundation. That's a foundational step. We can start there. But other than that we need to avoid a gradation and certainly avoid avoidance.

Yeah, great comment. Other, any other questions, comments? I think it's disorganized on purpose. Because, I think it's totally disorganized on purpose.

Because, then you just constantly have it to think. And then when you're thinking then you have to go to God to get the answer. Okay. If the answer is right there obvious, then you would be thinking. The answer is not, only God has the answer. Okay, so it's inviting meditation. It's inviting us to really, if it was obvious, you would have to go to God to get the answer.

[77 : 27] Right. I think it's set up like that on purpose. Yeah, yeah. Right? Because if it was all perfectly organized and clear, then it would be like, whoa, I got this. Yeah.

Right? Yeah. Because it's unorganized, even though people are studying it, nobody actually has the answer. Right. Maybe they have a 99.9% answer, but only God has the answer for all those.

Yeah. That's why there are so many people discussing it. That's why we're all here. Exactly. And I think that's part of the, you know, certain riddles. Remember it talks about for understanding or searching out riddles, obscure sayings.

Some of that obscurity is intentional. It's meant to draw us in and make us work hard and to puzzle over it. So I think that's a good comment as well. And then, yeah, so it, if we had them all together, we would also not only skip whole blocks, like I don't want to read the block about that particular problem because that's my problem and that's, that's gone to meddling now that, you know, talk to me about that.

Not only would we, we'd be able to skip over that, but if we had all of the things about how to, the danger of misusing your tongue, for example, if we had those all in one chapter, we would tend to read them quickly, latch on to the one we like best, and perhaps not tease out the nuances of the others.

[78 : 55] So after lunch, when we come back, we're going to ask a question about whether grab bag is all there is. And I'll just suggest that recent work has shown that while there appears to be this random grab bag arrangement or non-arrangement of Proverbs, maybe that's not always the case.

Maybe there's a subtle organizing structure that we're only beginning to tease out, but it does cause us to work hard. And that's where I'll tell you the thing about Bruce Waltke.

Bruce Waltke had finished the manuscript to his big two-volume Proverbs commentary. If I remember what he told me, he had finished it after 25 years of work, take a long time to do. He went to the Society of Biblical Literature where he heard a couple of papers relating to the question we're going to address after lunch, and he thought, you know what, there may be

something in that in terms of little structures in this grab bag collection.

I need to go back and rework it. So he went back and reworked it for 10 more years and then submitted it. Now the point is, that's a man of integrity, that's a true scholar, that's someone whose book, whose contribution will stand the test of time because otherwise people might have read it and said, oh, he's not up on the latest.

[80 : 23] True discoveries, if they're true. Okay, yes? Reminds me, I'm not going to point it right, but the passage is a new God that's exactly right.

another great proverb. Yeah, excellent. It's the glory of God to conceal a matter, and it's the glory of God to conceal a matter, the glory of kings to search them out. Yes, one last one, we'll take it.

Yeah, yeah, so Confucius' manual has just, it's not organized topically.

Yeah, and again, I think it may be the same logic. You don't need all of the wise sayings about one topic all at once, you need wise sayings about a bunch of topics because your life is a pie, okay, it's a slice of different experiences.

Okay, with that reference to pie, maybe we'll take a lunch break.