

Parish Teaching Day - session 1

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Date: 16 September 2017

Preacher: Dr. Phil Long

[0 : 0 0] Our Father, we thank you that the throne of your King has been established on steadfast love and faithfulness. And we pray, as we've just sung, that you would be our wisdom and our vision.

We ask now, as we come to open our minds and hearts to your word, that you would be with us and guide us and guard us. Strengthen us, particularly to seek and to know.

To treasure and to understand. For the sake of your glory we pray. Amen. It's been a long time for me. I've always wanted to introduce Phil Long.

Because I think Phil and I ought to start a company. But I can't decide whether... I can't decide whether it ought to be short and long or long and short.

Phil is going to teach until 10.40 where there's coffee. And then again. And then we'll have a lunch break. And then again. Phil is a Renaissance man.

[1 : 1 9] Or as you say here, a Renaissance man. And I'll let me tell you a couple of facts about him. And two of these are untrue. He is an award-winning author whose books have made a significant contribution in the area of the historicity of the Old Testament.

I mean, you just know him as the Old Testament teacher at Regent College, right? So that's one fact. Number two, he is a concert pianist. Number three, he is a consonant fly fisherman.

Number four, he has raised four children successfully. That's not the right word. Number five, he is somewhat of an expert water painter and pencil drawer.

Number six, his youngest son was best buds of our eldest son at University of British Columbia.

I'll leave it at that. Only one of those is wrong, actually. And you can find out later. It's a great pleasure to welcome Phil Long to come and teach us. In Australia, if I am introducing you, Phil, I'd just say he's a good bloke.

[2 : 4 8] Welcome. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Ah.

Well, my takeaway from that is he's suggesting I'm very, very old. The Renaissance was pretty far back. Anyway, it's a real pleasure to be here. If you don't understand my accent, I come from Tennessee originally.

So if you don't understand my accent, make some kind of signal and I will become more British. I was once in Uganda and my host said, could you sort of speak British?

Before he heard me speak, he was just thinking of what people could understand. But I hope you'll be able to understand me. And it's a delight to be here. It's a delight to see so many people who will come out of a beautiful Vancouver Saturday morning because you care about the word of God.

It's also a delight to be at St. John's. I have a high regard for the fact that the word of God for many, many years has been preached. And that's what it's about. Because people have interesting ideas.

[3 : 54] God has the best ideas. And we need to hear his word. Now, when I begin, we're going to talk about the book of Proverbs today. And I find myself saying this every time I speak on a biblical book.

I say, this is one of my favorites. And after a while, I begin to realize, actually, any of them that I've dug into a bit become one of my favorites. But I will say of the book of Proverbs that probably no other book has been as useful day to day to day in my life, in my family's life, in wrestling with those four children, in not becoming a concert.

Oh, did I give that away? I think people could have guessed that one. Anyway, it's a pleasure to be here. Now, the way I've decided to structure today, and it's hard to figure out how to deal with a book like the book of Proverbs.

So I thought I will just pose a series of questions, and then we'll work together to answer them. And I'm going to be using my computer quite a lot because I find that the easiest way to pull up verses and such.

So bear with the technology. I hope it will go smoothly. It's been good so far. So let's ask that first question, what is wisdom? What is wisdom?

[5 : 08] You won't find this in your outline. Okay, so I didn't give you an outline of these questions, so you'll want to write these down. Or maybe you won't want to write them down, but you can write them down if you like. So the first is, what is wisdom?

Who will hazard an answer? Give us an answer. What is wisdom? Intelligence. Intelligence. Intelligence. So would you say wisdom is IQ? A little bit.

A little bit, maybe. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, you'd have to have some to be a sentient being. So let's see. IQ. Any other suggestions?

How about maturity then? Okay, maturity. Experience. Insight. Experience. Experience. Insight. Oh, good. Awareness. All right, I'm leaving at this point because you people know so much.

Awareness. Awareness. Discernment. Discernment. It's a combination of knowledge. Okay, so knowledge is also included.

[6 : 20] It's applying those things. Yes. It's applying those things. Okay, very good. Here's the easy way to remember it. Knowledge is knowing that a tomato or tomato is a fruit.

Wisdom is not including tomatoes in your fruit salad. That's the difference between wisdom and knowledge. These are spot on.

These are in the right direction. I would say that perhaps... Well, let me ask you this question. Is knowledge possible without wisdom?

Absolutely. There are a number of very knowledgeable people who are also very unwise. There are a number of people who are not allowed to do that. Psalm 14. One and 53. One, which are virtually identical, say, the fool has said in his heart, there is no God.

Okay, so however smart, whatever the IQ of said individual, if they commit that metaphysical fallacy, the Bible calls them fools. Now, the book of Proverbs has a lot to say about fools, and we act more or less foolishly ourselves.

[7 : 34] And so part of what we learn is how not to act foolishly, how not to engage in folly in day-to-day life. So IQ, yes. I would say EQ.

I mean, that's another... That goes along with maturity. So knowledge without wisdom is possible is... No, not EQ?

You don't like EQ? What is it? Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I know what it is because people are always telling me you need to work on your EQ. It means emotional quotient, I guess.

Like, what does IQ stand for? Intelligence quotient? Yeah. So EQ has to do with how do you get on with people? How do you get on with difficult circumstances? Do you fall apart?

Can you steer your course along a difficult pathway at times? So knowledge without wisdom is possible. Is wisdom without knowledge possible?

[8 : 32] No. No. It depends on how much knowledge and what knowledge. What is the motto of the wisdom books in the Old Testament?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning, is the first step, the foundational step in wisdom.

So you could have a person of very modest IQ who could nevertheless be very wise because of how they view God in their lives.

Challenged in all kinds of ways but could still be very wise. In Proverbs 9.10 it says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Now, Psalm 119, which is not in the wisdom books so-called, in verse 99. This is Psalm 119, that wonderful book of 176 verses.

[9 : 32] If you ever want to ask Duncan something, my son Duncan, ask him why he once memorized Psalm 119. It was a monetary incentive.

I can't believe it. But anyway, he did once do that. When he was young, he once did that. But in verse 99 of 119, it says, I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

I sometimes watch a highly educated spokesperson on television and think, my 12-year-old granddaughter is wiser than that.

He doesn't know as much, but he's wiser. So, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What is fear of the Lord? What does that mean? To be in awe of God.

But we've kind of overused that word, right? I mean, it's an awesome word. We use it a lot, right? Oh, that's awesome. Wow, those shoes are awesome. Your haircut is awesome. Everything's awesome. Sorry?

[10 : 39] To revere God. I like what Trimmer Longman says in a book I just received this week. See, God is providentially helping me along. Good friend, Trimmer Longman.

In this book, he says, the fear of the Lord is not the kind of fear that makes you want to run away and hide. It's the kind of fear that makes you want to stand and listen, pay attention.

Or we might say kneel and pay attention. It's that kind of fear. It's putting God in his right place. Because, of course, God is... He has that weight.

So as we give him weight, we are engaging in the fear of the Lord. He matters. He's the fundamental concern to us. So that's what fear of the Lord is. Let's ask a second question.

And I'm going to keep erasing the board because I'll run out of space. So the second question is, where are the wisdom books? And I'll just assume the so-called wisdom books.

[11 : 47] It's kind of a trick question. Where are they? Okay. In the Old Testament.

Is there a New Testament wisdom book? Book of James? Yes. Are they only in the Bible? No. There's also a kind of wisdom literature in the ancient Near East, in the ancient world.

And this can help us now. 200 years ago, we had no clue of any of this. Now we do. And this can help us a great deal in understanding what kinds of things we're learning, what we're reading.

And we'll get to that in due course. Now look at the handout I gave you. You'll notice on the first page of the handout, we have a nice chart that shows the distinction between the English Bible, which we read, and the Hebrew Bible in terms of how the canon is organized.

How the body of those numbers of books is organized. So in the English Bible, you have the Pentateuch, the books of Moses, Pentateuch for five first books. Then the historical books, as they're called, because they trace Israel's history.

[12 : 55] Then you have poetry. And inside poetry, you have Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes are sort of the big three so-called wisdom books.

Song of Songs finds its place there as well, because it's hard to fit anywhere else. And it's associated with Solomon. And the Psalms are more than wisdom, but they have a lot of wisdom in them, and a lot of wisdom Psalms are to be found.

And then you have the prophets at the end. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, and then because we can't remember those 12, we just say the 12 minor. It should be able to. We can learn them.

Now notice the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible has three main parts. The law, the prophets, and the writings. The Torah, that's what law or instruction means.

The Nevi'im, the prophets. And notice that our historical books find their place amongst the prophets, the former prophets.

[13 : 58] Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings. Those are books that recount Israel's history. But they recount it from a prophetic perspective. Therefore, they're part of the prophetic books.

And then you have the big writing, the other prophets, the writing prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the book of the 12. And then the writings. And it's in the writings that we have first the Psalms, then Job, then Proverbs, then Ruth, then the Song of Songs.

And Ecclesiastes, and then some other books as well. So there's a distinction. And does this make any difference? Well, not really as we're reading the books.

But it's interesting to look at. So if you turn the page, this is sort of a structure that was worked out by Miles Van Peltz.

And I got my hands on it at some point. And I'm able to use it. You'll notice there's a copyright down at the bottom there. What I like about this is it's of value in kind of wrapping your mind around the shape of the Bible, Old and New Testament.

[15 : 07] Now, notice the way it begins. It's based on covenant. This is kind of where he's coming from. Because at the heart of the Bible is God's covenant promises to his people.

So it begins with the covenant prologue, which is what he regards Genesis to be. We could quibble with that because Abraham is called in Genesis 12.

And God begins with his covenant to Abraham. Well, there was a covenant with Adam before that. But nevertheless, it's the covenant prologue, the first book. And then you have the law in the Old Testament, the prophets and the writings, and then a covenant epilogue, which is a New Testament book, the book of Revelation.

So you see those nice bookends. And then at the bottom, under Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, he's – and all of this is simplifying, of course, but I think it's helpful in kind of conceptualizing things.

You have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the covenant. That's God's – that's the gospel. That's the kerygma. That's the story of Jesus, and it's that story to which we cling and in which we trust.

[16 : 19] That's what saves us. That's the gracious action of God towards us. As the law, the Torah, the instruction, were a gracious action of God to a redeemed people.

Then you have, in the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles. That's where you have the prophets in the Old Testament. So this is sort of history as believers are living out what they've become involved in in the covenant.

And then you have the covenant life. And that's where he places, in the New Testament, Paul's epistles, the Hebrews, James, the book of Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, the three letters of John, Jude.

And then you come to the covenant epilogue. Now, our writings – notice that they're paralleling those Pauline epistles. This is covenant life.

In these books, we learn how to live. So that's where they're found. That's what they're for, is training us in wise living.

[17 : 28] And we'll discover that wise living is righteous living. So where are the so-called wisdom books in the Old Testament? Well, they're in two places, depending on the canon.

Now, one other thing I should mention about this, and I'll test my computer to see if this is working. But if we go to – and I'll make this bigger.

All right. So Proverbs 31.10. This launches into the wife of noble character, as it's called.

It's actually a strong woman. A ship, chayel. Chayel is a word that connotes strength. So in Hebrew, a geboachayel is a warrior, a strong one, a strong warrior.

So this is a strong woman, a good woman, a woman of substance. All right. It describes some of her activities. By the way, it's an A to Z.

[18 : 26] Okay. So don't panic if you're a woman and you read this and think, I've never had a day like this. If I had a day like this, it would kill me. Okay. It's an A to Z.

It's all the possibilities. Not everyone is going to do all of this in one day. But what I wanted to show you is – and I have to search this in Hebrew, see if this works for us.

So I'm searching. I hope it works. Otherwise, it's going to be as embarrassing as – oh, sorry – as that Apple iPhone release. Okay. Okay.

What we notice here is this Eshet Chayel, this strong woman, is mentioned twice in Proverbs – oh. Okay. So it's mentioned a few times in Proverbs, primarily in Proverbs 31.

And then it's mentioned in the book of Ruth. Boaz says, you are for – you are a woman of noble character. You are a good woman.

[19 : 29] You're a strong woman. That was his commendation to Ruth. So what's interesting about the ordering in the Hebrew canon is that you'll notice – you're looking at this again – that right after Proverbs, you have an example.

So it concludes talking about the woman, a strong woman, a woman of noble character. And then we have a story that illustrates that. And there are a number of things like that that we could point out, but I shan't take time right now.

But there's some logic, even to the ordering of the canon. All right. So where are they found? They're found in the poetical books. So we can expect them to be largely in poetry.

That will influence how we read them. Third question. What is the character of wisdom books in the Old Testament? What is the character?

Well, think of two types. Those who analyze these things say there's prudential wisdom and there's speculative wisdom. So Derek Kidner in his lovely book, which I have read so many times that I've worn out the cover and had to spiral bind it.

[20 : 47] I love this book. I love Derek Kidner. God rest his soul. Wonderful man. Beautiful writer. Very pithy. Very to the point. Very on point.

This is an introduction to the wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. I'm sure it has a more modern cover by now. But he says this about our journey through the Old Testament.

He writes, there comes a point in the Old Testament when the pilgrim is free to stop and look around. He has had a well-marked path to follow, and still it stretches on ahead.

But now he must relate it to the world at large, to the scene spread out on every side, from what lies right at his feet, shrewdly pointed out in Proverbs, to what is barely visible at the horizon, the dark riddle of how the world is governed, the book of Job, and how it should be valued, the book of Ecclesiastes.

So these three books are addressing serious human concerns. It's the kinds of things we care about, we wonder about.

[21 : 59] So speculation, I didn't particularly like that term initially because you think of currency speculation and those kinds of things, like people are just kind of guessing. Well, in a sense, that's appropriate because dictionary definition of speculative, or to speculate, is to contemplate or to ponder a subject in its different aspects and relations to meditate, especially to theorize from conjectures without sufficient evidence.

Another of my favorite books is the book of Job, by the way. It's a beautiful book. It's an important book. I guess if you've never suffered or never planned to, maybe you can bypass it and you don't care for those who are.

Maybe you don't need to think about the book of Job. But if you're human, you need the book of Job. I think it's an extremely important book. And in the prologue, we discover the key to understanding the book.

The accuser comes with the B'nai Elohim, the angelic assembly, and Yahweh says, so what have you been up to?

To the accuser. And the accuser says, I've been roaming to and fro over the earth. And God at that point says, have you considered my servant Job?

[23 : 17] I think the reason God may have said that is that I think the accuser was, as accuser, thinking, I've been looking at the world you made and all the people you put on it, I'm not impressed. And he says, but have you considered Job?

He's a man who's blameless and upright, fears God, turns from evil. And to that, the accuser says, really? Not in Hebrew.

Really? He says, you're either a fool or you're a liar. Let me show you. Job is simply self-serving. He's in it for himself. Let me at him, and I'll show you.

Now, at that point, people think, well, why didn't God simply say, hey, you know what, this meeting's over. Meeting adjourned. Go to your tents or your heavenly clouds, wherever you live, heavenly assembled. He didn't because this was a public challenge.

And if you simply shut it down when it's a public challenge, then question marks remain. And so God, probably with great anguish, said, all right, test him.

[24 : 22] Test him. And so the accuser tests Job's, the integrity of Job's relationship with God. But also being tested was the integrity of God's word about Job's integrity.

Get it? So what's going on in the book of Job is not meaningless suffering. It's suffering of which, the meaning of which Job had no clue.

None. None. None. And he didn't look for a clue initially. He said, naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I'll depart.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. And he was okay with that at first. But, you know, when you suffer a lot, you have this vacillation. And eventually he began to ask this why of dereliction.

You know, why is life given to those who have suffered? He wasn't asking, why is this happening to me, per se? It was a why of dereliction. Well, his friends come and think. He asked the question, why?

[25 : 28] We're good theologians. Giving answers to theological questions is what we do. Furthermore, if we can give a good answer, we don't need to be so unsettled by this gentleman, whom we highly regarded, who is now suffering.

He was one of us, even better than one of us. Look at what's happening to him. There must be some deep, dark secret. Because if there's not, we should be afraid.

We don't control the universe. We thought we did. We thought if we behaved, we would always be well-blessed, prosperous, and wealthy. So Job goes through all of that suffering.

He gets angry with God. He shakes his fist in God's face, essentially, eventually, because he's drawn into this debate with his friends. But he never turns his back on God. He never does.

He says, I want to talk to you. Show up. You haven't been showing up. That was part of the trial, by the way. So then, finally, God shows up. And what does God say?

[26 : 28] He says, who is this who is speaking of me words without knowledge? He later commends Job because he's speaking to him. And that's good.

The friends only ever talk about God. Job speaks to God. But he says, you're speaking words without knowledge. In other words, you're speculating.

You're theorizing from conjectures without sufficient evidence. Now, I know I'm supposed to be on Proverbs, so I'm going to get off of Job. But I think Job is our permission not always to understand everything that's happening in our lives or the lives of people we love, and yet to believe that in God's economy our tears are not wasted.

They may seem to be. We may take our suffering to the grave. At the end of the book of Job, God didn't give him the answers. He didn't answer the why question. He answered the where are you God question because he showed up.

And that was enough for Job. Okay, so, yeah, we need the book of Job. It is speculative wisdom in that sense. He didn't have all the answers, but we learn from it that we too should expect not to have all the answers and yet to continue to trust.

[27 : 46] The book of Ecclesiastes, I'm not going to carry on as much about Ecclesiastes. Another of my favorite books, though, by the way. But he's also conjecturing without sufficient evidence because of the experiment he's running.

He's talking about where is meaning to be found under the sun. Get it? You know that? So that's the problem. You're not going to find ultimate meaning under the sun, particularly if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So that's speculative wisdom. Prudence. How would you define prudence? Acting wisely.

Very good. One of the George Bushes of the past was famous for saying, wouldn't be prudent. Wouldn't be prudent. Oh, that our politicians would be prudent. The ability, prudence is the ability to regulate and discipline oneself, it's a dictionary definition, through the exercise of reason.

I'm not sure about the reason side of things, but yeah, I mean, reason should be a part of it. Or, second definition, skill or sagacity in the management of practical affairs. That's what the book of Proverbs is.

[29 : 00] It's an immensely practical book where God is actually instructing us, giving us insights into life and how to live it. Other terms that are used are proverbial wisdom, but I think that's a little too narrow because at the very opening of the book, you see down here in verse 6 there, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise, and their riddles.

Okay, so it's not just proverbs, though that type of saying gives us the name of the book. It's other wise sayings. Riddles are kind of obscure sayings.

So today we're focusing on prudential wisdom. I hope I've given enough of a blur for speculative wisdom that you'll embrace those two books as well, even if you don't like the name still.

All right, so the next question I want to ask is, what is a proverb? I love answering.

I ask questions that everyone knows the answer to, so no one will answer it. What would you say a proverb is? A pithy saying. A pithy saying. Good. I love the word pithy. It's pithy.

[30 : 17] I mean, great. A pithy saying. A short saying. In fact, the first definition I've written down from Lasore in his introduction says that a proverb is a short, pithy saying which states rules for personal happiness and welfare or condenses the wisdom of experience and makes acute observations about life.

Okay, so that definition was not pithy, and thus it won't be remembered. But how about this from Lord John Russell? He said, a proverb is the wisdom of many and the wit of one.

Much better. Okay? The wisdom of many and the wit of one. So broad experience, compressed, condensed, captured so that it's memorable.

The Spanish author, Cervantes, 16th century, so he was living about the time I was born, the Renaissance period. Cervantes said, he calls proverbs short sentences from long experience.

And that gets our names in, by the way, David, so that's good. And when we found our company, I think the expression is the long and the short of it.

[31 : 34] I think that's a long... Sorry. Oh, well. Okay, so a proverb is sometimes described as a narrative reduced to its essence.

So think, for example, think, for example, of this proverb, one that we all know, probably because people have visited us with it from time to time.

Pride goeth... Yeah, I can't. I say King James. Pride goeth before a fall, a haughty spirit before destruction. I think NIV says, Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Change things up, publish a new Bible, lay some money. I'm not cynical. Okay. Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Okay, that's a proverb.

It's very brief, but it's a... If you think of Nebuchadnezzar, that proud Babylonian king who surveyed all that he had done, and God said, okay, this pride is overweening.

[32 : 39] I am the one who abases the proud. You need to learn who you actually are. And so Nebuchadnezzar was a base. It's a very interesting story. All right.

So now I want us to do something together in little groups. Okay? Some of you hate this. Some of you love this. I'm not asking you to move your chairs. All I want you to do, we're going to take 10 minutes and I want you to take a sheet of paper and for the first five or so, I want you to write down all the sayings, not necessarily biblical proverbs, but all the sayings that are in your arsenal of native wisdom.

What did your mother say to you? What did your father say to you? What did your teacher say to you? Just write down sayings. We want to... I want to get some of these and collect some of these. So take five minutes.

Write down as many as you can think of. It's not all that easy. And then I want you... I'll give you a signal. Then I want you to compare your list with the person's list who's sitting next to you.

And I'm hopeful that people will come from different places, different backgrounds, different cultures so that we can see if there are any... You know, see how widespread certain ones are or how different they are.

[33 : 53] Okay? So we're going to take 10 minutes, five by yourself, five learning social skills and developing your EQ. All right.

So let's hear a few of the best ones that you found, particularly ones that are not very common. Would be fun if there's some that are not very common. And particularly if there was one that you had to explain to your partner there.

So... I'm going to... I've got one over here. Okay, over here. Call it out nice and loud. No matter how old a broom might be, it's always full of wrinkles.

Oh! No matter how old a broom might be, it's always full of wrinkles. Okay. Okay. And what pit of wisdom is that?

He always said that. Okay, that's interesting. I had a lovely friend, an elderly lady, who said, of her, she said, I'd rather be a grape than a prune.

[35 : 07] It was her reason not to get too skinny. Yes? One is a Jamaican proverb. It's, play with puppy, him lick your mouth.

Okay. If you're going to get down on the floor, play with the puppy, and the puppy responds, whatever the puppy does is your fault. Yeah, okay. Play with puppy, him lick your mouth.

Okay, that's great. Yeah. I love that one. And you know what it means, right? Yeah. We'll come to one about a dog later. And we'll pull it up.

Let's remember that one. Yes, over here. A favorite of my 93-year-old mother. Growing old is not for sissies. Growing old is not for sissies. Yeah. Yeah.

Holly, my wife's mother, has told me that a few times, which I think is a threat that I won't go home. Yeah. She just turned 94, four, actually.

[36 : 06] Yes. Hi. One of the... Oh, political power stems from a gun or...

No, starts. Starts from a gun. Oh, okay. Yeah. Gun. Now, this reminds me of something to which we will return.

Okay. In the book of Proverbs, there are Proverbs that are prescriptive. They're commending a certain way of behaving. And then there are others that are simply descriptive, talking about the way things actually are.

So, prescriptive versus descriptive or descriptive. And that sounds like... I don't know how Chairman Mal would have meant it, but it's certainly a description, isn't it?

All right. Any others? Yes, in the very back. It's in French? Okay. Let's give it a shot. Okay.

[37 : 10] Okay. Little by little, the bird makes its nest. Very good. So, what is that? What do we say about elephants? Slow and steady wins the race.

Slow and steady wins the race. We have the tortoise and the hare as a narrative behind that. But what about elephants that relates to birds and nests? You can eat an elephant one bite at a time.

Yeah, you must eat an elephant one bite at a time. Okay. Kind of little by little. So, these... Yeah. It's common wisdom. One more. A stitch in time saves nine.

Okay. A stitch in time saves nine. Yeah. Right? Yeah. Boy, have I ever wished I had heard that one earlier? I have things that have fallen apart. I said one more, but their hands are enthusiastic hands over here.

So, a few more. My grandmother used to say when we were getting two things. After the laughing comes... Can you say it in German?

[38 : 08] Yeah. After the laughing comes... There you go. There you go. Very good. All right. Yeah. Yeah. Do you want to hear a word from... Okay.

Oh, that's a great one. If you want to last longer, be neither useless nor useful. Wow. How one does that, I'm not sure.

Yeah. Ron. One from the southern hemisphere, cloudy days can be deceiving. Cloudy days can be deceiving. What does that mean? Put on your sunscreen even if it's cloudy.

Oh, right. Okay. Okay. Good. Good. Yeah. And one in the front? Chinese proverb my father used at my age. Weak ink is better than strong memory.

Ah. That's very good. Yeah. Weak ink is better than strong memory. Oh, this is a treasure trove. Who needs a book of Proverbs? In the back.

[39 : 25] Yeah. You have, this is a Chinese proverb. Sometimes you have to ride a cow to find your horse. Oh. Wow.

Yeah. Yeah. Is kissing a lot of frogs just when they're brits? Oh. I think some of these may be more for the women than the women.

All right. That's actually, oh, one more. One more. This is one more. Only one. The road to hell is covered with excuses. It's covered with excuses. There's another, there's a similar one that is paved with good intentions.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions covered with excuses. Okay. This one was translated from Danish. Ah. Oh, from Danish. Okay. Yeah. All right. So you see similarities even though we're in different language groups.

All right. Well, what can we observe about these? What gives them power? What makes them interesting? What makes them adhere in our memories and imaginations? What are some features of Proverbs?

[40 : 39] Humor. Okay. Humor is, humor can be part of it. Okay. Is that spelled with a U here? Yeah. What else?

Brevity. Brevity. Metaphor. Metaphor. Okay. So metaphor.

Does everyone know what a metaphor is for? A metaphor. The relative. Okay. It's like a simile but without like or as. Okay. Some salient feature in this thing represents some aspect of the other thing you're trying to describe.

Like a frog. Like a frog. Yeah. Like a frog. Okay. So metaphor, simile, imagery, images, graphic images, concrete images.

What else? Some truth. Some truth. Some truth. Some truth. Okay. Why do you say some truth? Oh, it is a truth of some sort.

[41 : 47] Yes. Okay. But not some as in a partial truth but a truth of some sort. Yes. It's not always true. It's not always true. It's not always true?

Sometimes untrue? No, they don't call truth. Generally. Well, because you can have one. You can have one. I can't even think of one but you can have one that means one thing and it's not true.

Yeah. We're going to get into all of that. That's good. Okay. So truth? Truth? A truth of some sort? Yeah. Anything else that you just observe about the ones we shared?

Applicable. Sorry? Applicable. Applicable. Oh, yeah. Thanks for simplifying it for me. That's good. Double meaning. Okay.

And because we're a sophisticated crowd, you know, du blanc ton. Depth. Depth.

[42 : 49] Okay. So profundity of some sort. Born in a specific culture? Born of a specific culture and yet some of them are because born of human experience and human experience is to some extent limited in cultures but to other extent it's cross cultures so you see both.

That's good. I've run out of space but yeah, one more. It seems like they're meant to elicit some kind of response. Okay. Meant to elicit a response. Okay. So we could say applicable and I'm going to add instructional.

Yeah. All right. It's a speech act that is meant to elicit a response. I mean, our parents didn't visit us with proverbs simply because they thought we should enrich our vocabulary base.

They were trying to get us out of bed. You know, that kind of thing. All right. Well, so proverbs are powerful because of their brevity, because of their picturesque character.

Let me give you a few biblical proverbs because we want to see some of these from time to time. This one is this one, Proverbs 11, 22, like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

[44 : 20] That's picturesque. Of course, nowadays, when those rings are so, you know, all the rage, I suppose it would be a very happy pig.

Okay. What do we say? We don't typically say that one. If we say it once or twice, we stop because someone makes it stop. But what do we say? Pretty is as pretty does.

Okay. So we're trying to say that actions are important. It's not just the external. You know, so if you have a beautiful woman lacking discretion, that beauty is in a sense wasted because that's not what's so important.

What's important is whether this is a woman of noble character. Okay. so that's what really counts. So if you have this discrepancy, beautiful outside, not so beautiful on the inside, then it's like adorning a pig, a pig snout with something precious.

There's nothing wrong with beauty, but it's not everything. Proverbs want to be memorable. We say in English, a word to the wise is sufficient.

[45 : 37] Right? Let's look at this one. Here is a proverb.

A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool. That's Proverbs 17.10. A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool.

Oh, I've enjoyed looking at them on my face. I should have thought here. Thank you for that. Oh, wait a minute. That suddenly went small on us too.

Yeah. Such a kindly crowd. They'll let me get away with that for so long. If in future, normally I can see the screen when I'm doing this kind of thing and here I'm just looking at this.

So sorry about that. Some are, as I mentioned earlier, some are descriptive and others are prescriptive.

[46 : 45] So let's take another example of that. 10.15. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor.

Period. Is that instructional? Is that inviting us? What is that about? What are we to deduce from that? The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor.

It seems kind of banal, right? Kind of obvious, platitudinous in some way. What are we to learn from that? Well, hard to say.

It is a description in a sense that people surround themselves with their fortresses, with their palaces. The wealthy can afford to seek to secure their existence and the poor don't have that luxury.

So it is the ruin of the grinding poor. But look at the next verse. The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death.

[47 : 55] Now, is that meant to modify the one that went before in some way or to relate to it? Is there anything in terms of content that links 15 and 16 together?

Wages and earnings. So you've got wealth and poverty in 15 and you've got wages and earnings. And then you have rich and poor, you have righteous and wicked.

And I think it's inviting us to say wealth in and of itself does not determine whether a person is righteous or not, nor does that fortified city guarantee life.

Okay, the wages of the righteous is life. Now, there's one other that might be brought in to relate to this. Go to 1811.

So, Proverbs 18:11. Notice this. It begins just like 15 began. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city. In 15 it said that poverty is the ruin of the poor.

[49 : 06] But here in 18:11 it says the wealth of the rich is their fortified city. They imagine it a wall too high to scale. It's a vain imagination. It's an illusion.

They think they're secure but of course they're not. Okay. So, Proverbs capitalize on brevity, concreteness and particularly biblical Proverbs are very picturesque.

Lots of imagery, lots of natural imagery. In our western sort of English store of proverbial sayings we tend to often go for brevity or something crisp.

They like brevity as well and occasionally we have some of our more favorite, some of our most favorite Proverbs will have imagery in them like the early bird catches the worm.

That would probably need to be explained to some people. Or a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. You had that one? Okay. And once you know the proverb you could show up early at work and say man you're in early.

[50 : 19] Well you know the early bird. Okay. Well whatever that means. So if you're not from here you don't get what that means. So in addition to saying so in the book of Proverbs we have discourse prudential discourse.

So you may have noticed if you've read the book recently and I'm hoping you'll be reading and studying right along with the sermon series. Proverbs 1 to 9 is more expansive discourse.

And we're going to talk more about the structure of the book in due course. So we'll get into that and talk about the purpose of that. Who may have written Proverbs 1 to 9 and those kinds of things. But I'm going to stop for a moment and ask if there is a question before we stop for our break.

Any question? Yes. Sorry I'm talking so much. I am sitting here with one proverb. Like that's good for me. I can spend my week on it.

Yes. And it feels like we've done so much narrative study that we're trying to bring down to a life of truth that is impacting our lives. Okay.

[51 : 24] And I feel like I'm about to get talked a chunk of Proverbs. All right. Okay. Great question.

I also oppose it. So later. Okay. We'll get to that. That's a great question. How should we read the book of Proverbs? Should we read one proverb a day? And it takes us, I don't know, a couple of years.

Or is there an excuse for reading it faster than that? Or should both? So we'll talk about that. Great question, Susie. Thank you.