



Proverbs: Pathways to Wisdom

By Dr. Dominick S. Hernandez

Session 1: Reading the Proverbs Wisely **(April 26, 2026 4:00 PM)**

Introduction

This study on the Book of Proverbs will examine individual proverbs and the Book of Proverbs as a whole, focusing on proper approach and listening to the proverbs, as well as applying the proverbs to our lives.

Intro Question...

- Without looking in the Bible or the study book, can you share any biblical proverbs they know, either chapter and verse quotations or paraphrases?

Opening Prayer

God of all wisdom, who guides us in all our pathways, thank you for bringing us together here. Thank you for the Book of Proverbs and the for the time we have together to study and to share. Please open our ears and eyes to hear your voice as we read and discuss, to seek your wisdom in the text and our conversation. We ask you to lead us as we seek the way of wisdom, and light the path we walk in its pursuit. Humble our hearts; open our ears; open our eyes. Amen.

Intro to the Book's Author – Dr. Dominick S. Hernandez

Dr. Dominick Hernandez is the assistant professor of Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Hernandez holds a PhD in Hebrew Bible and has specific expertise in biblical wisdom literature, Old Testament, and the Jewish holidays. He has taught at a number of distinguished institutions, including Moody Bible Institute, having given courses in Near Eastern Literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and wisdom literature.

Session 1 Video – “Reading the Proverbs Wisely”

If we approach the Book of Proverbs like I approach puzzles, we might be a little bit overwhelmed. We might think that there (are) hundreds of pieces that we sort of have to put together in order for it to make sense, when in actuality, the Book of Proverbs really does make a lot of sense if we understand it to be one work of a literary genius. You see, in the Book of Proverbs, there are also sort of these corner puzzle pieces that we can recognize – themes that start to show up over and over and over again, that we can put at the corners of our reading. And then we realize there (are) sort of these border pieces that we can put together. And then we match the colors, as it were, with proverbs that are similar in theme and similar in texture. And so, the Book of Proverbs, to a certain extent, is like a puzzle, but we have to approach it like a puzzle aficionado (would) – ready to put this together and enjoying the process. – Hernandez

- How is the Book of Proverbs like a puzzle?
- What might be some of the “corner pieces” and “border pieces” we find in Proverbs?
- From the video, what did you learn about the Book of Proverbs or how to approach it that you did not already know?

The Wise Hear with their “Eyes”

A Little Art Listening/Art Exercise

In order to read Proverbs wisely, the reader must first approach the book in the posture of one who is fully dedicated to hearing – that is, receiving and obeying instruction. It is not until one's disposition is in the correct state that the knowledge taught through the proverbs can be properly applied in one's personal pathway. – Hernandez

In Proverbs, the wise hear with their eyes. The eyes guide the readers on the pathways to increasingly attaining more wisdom, which is one of the wise reader's ultimate goal in life. If you close your eyes, you close your ears and refuse to listen to the wisdom that the writer intends to impart. Closing one's ears is actually what is repeatedly presented as counterintuitive throughout Proverbs. If you do not hear instruction, you cannot see where you are going. – Hernandez

- What does it mean to hear with our eyes?
- How does listening in a new way challenge us to receive instruction?
- How does the author's repeated call for the reader to hear help him get across his main points?
- The Book of Proverbs tells us that it is not those who already know who are wise, but those who listen and receive instruction constantly. How does this counterintuitive call reflect your own experience? How are listening and wisdom related?

The “Precioso Tesoro” of Teachability

Every few minutes during any family gathering, my grandmother would turn to one of her grandchildren and say, “La juventud es un precioso tesoro,” or “Youth is a precious treasure.” My grandmother was determined to encourage young people to recognize the blessing of still looking forward to most of their years...Proverbs uses repetition as a way of leaving a lasting impact upon the reader. The repetition we observe in Proverbs begins at the most fundamental rhetorical level in the simple recurrence of words and phrases throughout the book that serve as building blocks for communicating about key concepts (such as wisdom, knowledge, instruction).

- What are some of the *preciosos tesoros*, or precious treasures, of your life? Which ones do you wish you had valued more than you did? How do your *preciosos tesoros* influence your interaction with younger people, especially in your family?
- How does repetition play a role in your daily thought life and spiritual life? What do you repeat to yourself? What do you repeat to others? How might you consciously engage in repetition in order to grow in wisdom and help others do the same?

- Looking back at the discussion of “corner pieces” and “border pieces” in Proverbs, how are the pieces that are beginning to emerge similar to or different from what you expected? How can repeating these “corner pieces” help us we explore the Book of Proverbs?

The Irony of Reading Proverbs

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 1:1-5, Proverbs 12:15

- How are the words from chapter 12 an echo of the introduction?
- What is the implication from chapter 12 about how the Book of Proverbs is intended to be read?
- How do the proverbs teach us “to know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight”?
- In the introduction, the author of Proverbs says that the wise hear the proverbs and “increase in learning.” How does this characterize wisdom? As a trait or as a process?
- How can the church help prepare people to be listeners and learners who seek advice?

Receiving Instruction from Others: “Whoever has ears to hear...”

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 18:15, Proverbs 13:10, Proverbs 23:12

- In the book, Dr. Hernandez writes, “Listening is active in Proverbs. Proverbs calls upon the reader to actively seek out knowledge and advice.” What verbs are used in these passages? How are these calls to active listening different, compared with what we often think of when we think of the Book of Proverbs?
- Proverbs 18:15 speaks of the “intelligent heart” and the “ear of the wise.” What do you make of these body parts being associated with these specific traits? How does this language relate back to “listening” with our “eyes”?

- Thinking about Proverbs 13:10, what characterizes good advice? The proverbs tell us to take advice, but how can we know whose advice is worth taking?
- In Christian circles, we often speak of applying Scripture to our hearts. In Proverbs 23:12, how do we *apply our hearts* to instruction?

Limitations of Our Knowledge: The Seat Belt vs Our Own Strength

The Seat Belt Story (p. 27-28)

Most seat belts are made of 100% polyester. The material is tightly woven into an incredibly dense fabric, making it extremely strong and long-lasting. The seat belt webbing typically has a tough hem on the edge to prevent fraying.

In the past, nylon was the most popular material for seat belts. Unfortunately, the material wasn't ideal. It was much stretchier than desired, had a lower tensile strength than polyester, and was significantly more prone to wear and tear. Once the qualities of polyester were noticed, it quickly replaced nylon as the most popular material.

Seat belts are made of polyester because of the material's incredible tensile strength. Since the polyester yarn is less energized than most alternatives, it can be woven into densities of up to three hundred warp threads per 46mm belt.

While the average tensile strength varies depending on how the seat belt webbing is made, 1" polyester seat belt webbing can have as much as 2,000 lbs. in tensile strength — over 25% more than comparable 1" nylon seatbelt webbing. This makes it ideal for automobiles since even extreme forces won't stop the seat belt from safely holding passengers in place.

- How does this relate to trusting in the wisdom of the teachings in Proverbs?
- How is it possible to truly know something is wise?
- What is stronger? Our own strength or God's? How did you come to this conclusion?
- Is trusting in something stronger than ourselves an act of weakness or of strength?

Walk with the Wise!

This chapter emphasizes that how and where we walk in life is at least equaled in importance by who it is with whom we choose to walk. Walking in the way of the wise includes walking *with* the wise. As Proverbs 13:20 tells us, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Hernandez writes, “walking with the wise implies living alongside people who are further along in their journeys and can provide practical wisdom and instruction about common life experiences.”

Carl and Barbara story (p. 31-32)

- Dr. Hernandez says everyone needs a Carl and Barbara in our lives. Whom have you looked to as guides in the way of wisdom in your life?
- How has your life been different – in ways either positive or negative – because of choices you made about whom you walk with?
- How have you strived to be one others have chosen to walk with as one who is wise?
- If you are someone others choose to walk with, how can you make it a point to continue to follow the examples of others who are wise?

Closing

Based on today’s session, how will you apply these lessons this week...

- “Listening with your eyes”
- Focusing on the “precious treasures”
- Actively listening

Closing Prayer

God who speaks, who instructs, who hears our call and teaches us to listen, aid us as we seek to find your voice. Humble us to know your strength. Comfort us to know that it is your strength that holds us. May we be wise, listen to the wise, and never neglect the way of your wisdom. Amen.

Proverbs: Pathways to Wisdom

Session 2: “Presenting the Pathways”

Sunday, May 3 4:00 PM
