



Proverbs: Pathways to Wisdom

By Dr. Dominick S. Hernandez

Session 2: Presenting the Pathways **(May 13, 2026 7:30 PM)**

Intro Question...

- If you had to identify a “quality” or “personal characteristic” that would be found on the straight path (the way of Wisdom) or the crooked path (the way of Folly), what would they be?

Tonight we are going to examine the Pathways that are found in the Book of Proverbs that will serve as the framework or the “edge pieces” for the entire book.

Opening Prayer

God of the straightened path, we seek to fear and acknowledge you in all our ways. Find us in our crookedness. Reach out to us as we wander. Call us to the path of wisdom and please make it straight for us because we stray easily – in our words, in our actions, in our focus, and in how we use our time. We devote this time we have together to you and pledge ourselves to following your way with all our hearts. Amen.

Session 2 Video – “Presenting the Pathways”

How is it possible to acknowledge the Lord in all of our ways? Well, that’s precisely what the Book of Proverbs is teaching. It’s teaching (that) when God gives a command, you say yes to that, and you are obedient to that command. You are acknowledging God in every aspect of your life. Every single thing that God asks you to do or not to do, you acknowledge that you recognize that, and you walk in that. Notice the “walk” – walking the way – imagery that we have here. – Hernandez

- What do you think of Dr. Hernandez’s statement? How is it possible to acknowledge God in every aspect of life?
- What are some areas of life in which we fail to acknowledge God, or in which we may not even think of acknowledging God?
- Why is walking imagery so important in the Book of Proverbs?

A Favor...Anyone?

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 1:8-19

- As Dr. Hernandez notes, almost no one volunteers for something they believe to be evil or foolish. In this passage, we see a warning against following others in some fairly obviously evil deeds. In what other things might we be invited to join that might not seem so evil to us at first?
- What does this passage say about the results of greed and self-interested actions?
- The father’s instruction and the mother’s teaching are described as “a graceful garland for your head/and pendants for your neck.” By contrast, what might foolish teachings look like, were we to wear them?

Fearing the Lord is Better than Fearing Snakes

The fear of the Lord is a respect for God that encourages us to respond to God's word in obedience. Those who fear the Lord believe his word and faithfully live in accordance with the Lord's instruction. As his children, we fear the Lord because we trust that he desires the best for us and has given us practical instruction like Proverbs in order to walk on a God-honoring pathway toward genuine wisdom. In the case of us potentially straying from the path, the proverbs correct us and remind us of the eventual consequences of the pathways of wisdom and of wrongdoing. Through the instructions of Proverbs, we know that the Lord desires to both set us and guide us on the right pathway. Feeling the Lord is taking this truth set out in his word seriously. – Hernandez

To its early readers, some of Israel's proverbial collection might have paralleled common traditional wisdom that could have been attributed to the local deity that was worshipped in any given geographical area. That is, until the "fear of the Lord" is introduced. In Proverbs, the call is to recognize that the starting point of acquiring knowledge and wisdom is directly related to obeying the Lord's instruction. In contrast to other traditions that revere a "god" and believe in some sort of universally applicable wisdom, the specific language of Proverbs relates the instruction in the book to the personal name of the covenant God of Israel – the Lord. Readers are commanded to heed the instruction and walk in the way of the one true God, making Proverbs distinct from any other wisdom that might have been circulating in the ancient Near East at that time. - Hernandez

- Fear seems to be a difficult word in these passages. How have you had to adjust your understanding of "fear of the Lord"? How may you have misunderstood the concept of the fear of the Lord?
- Dr. Hernandez notes that fear of – respect for – the Lord inspires obedience. Fear of punishment (as in 1 John 4:18) can also inspire obedience. Why is one kind of obedience preferable to God over the other?
- How does the idea of fearing the "L-O-R-D" influence your understanding of these and other biblical passages that focus on the importance of the name of God? What names or titles for God are significant for you in your understanding of and relationship to God?

“The Way of Wisdom...”

We have been talking about wisdom as a goal, the destination of our paths. But Proverbs goes a step further and personifies wisdom, giving voice to her call, her invitation to those who have ears to hear, but have so far refused to listen. This is not a voice without authority. “True Wisdom is depicted as coming through the mouth of the Lord. Thus, when Wisdom shouts out and pleads for attention, she is not being arrogant and bombastic; Wisdom is speaking in the name of the Lord,” Hernandez writes.

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 1:20-23, Proverbs 2:6-8

- Wisdom is depicted as crying aloud in the street, the markets, and “at the head of the noisy streets.” Where might she be crying out today? In what settings might we look for Wisdom to be calling to us? How is it possible to know whether or not we are heeding her call?
- What might be the relationship between Wisdom calling out in the streets and the Lord “guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints”?

“...Versus the Way of Wrongdoing”

Dr. Hernandez discusses the way of wrongdoing from three different perspectives: “Closed to Correction – Independent from Instruction,” “Dumb Decisions”, and “The Messy Aftermath of Dumb Decisions.” These three concepts cover themes from Proverbs regarding *why* we may follow the way of wrongdoing, *how* we follow the path, and *what* consequences follow us when we do.

Each of the following passages reflect one of these pictures...

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 1:24-28, Proverbs 9:13-18, Proverbs 5:22-23

- In the first passage (Proverbs 1:24-28), Lady Wisdom’s frustration has finally caused her to turn away. Those who have been closed to correction are given a stern warning. What causes us to be closed to correction? What attitudes of the heart keep us from receiving reproof?

- Lady Folly (Proverbs 9:13-18) sounds like a parody of a perversion of Lady Wisdom, offering a way that seems easy and tempting, as opposed to Wisdom’s correction and reproof. What actions does she call people toward? How does she address, for example, the simple? Contrast this with Lady Wisdom. How do these sets of actions lead in different directions?
- In the third passage (Proverbs 5:22-23), the wicked person is ensnared by her or his own iniquities. Recall those who “lie in wait for their own blood” in Proverbs 1:18-19. How does this recurring image of crafting one’s own comeuppance reflect the consequences we see of foolish actions in our own lives? How does a “lack of discipline” lead to death?

Closing

Based on today’s session, which of the pathways do you...

- Find Most Challenging
- Relate to the Most
- Identify your personal characteristics following daily

Closing Prayer

God of the path, our way, our path, is and must be yours. Our folly is a result of our own choices, but we can always turn to you for your grace and love, no matter how far down the crooked path we may have strayed. Forgive us, Lord, for the ways we are not receptive to your correction and help us to be straightened toward the way of Wisdom. Amen.

Proverbs: Pathways to Wisdom
Session 3: “Practical and Personal Pathways”
Thursday, May 20 7:00 PM
