



Proverbs: Pathways to Wisdom

By Dr. Dominick S. Hernandez

Session 3: Practical and Personal Pathways **(May 21, 2026 7:00 PM)**

Intro Question...

At the beginning of Chapter 3, Dr. Hernandez tells the story of a friend of his who, after watching his academic presentation, said he would be more impressed if Dr. Hernandez could explain the presentation to Caleb, his friend's six-year-old son. Taking that challenge, how would you answer the following questions...

- What are the Proverbs?
- What is the difference between Wisdom and Folly?
- How does God speak to us through Proverbs?

Opening Prayer

Loving God, God of our practicalities and our personal relationships, thank you for caring about how we live our daily lives. Help us to listen with humility, to see your Spirit at work in Proverbs, and to find the path in which you would have us walk. Amen.

Session 3 Video – “Practical and Personal Pathways”

In this session...we read a bunch of proverbs that are easily memorizable, that we sometimes pull out of the book and apply to certain situations in life. There are positives and negatives to this. The positive is that we clearly believe that the proverbs – the individual proverbs – still apply in our day and age. But when we do that, we are actually sometimes stripping the book of its literary genius. – Hernandez

- Think about a time in which you may have applied a proverb to a situation in your life. Which proverb was it and what is its practical application?
- How is the practice of extracting proverbs from their larger context sometimes problematic?

Speech: The Shakshuka Encounter

In the book, Dr. Hernandez shares the story of his very unwisely encounter with an Israeli food vendor over his food order. This is the conclusion to his story...

I was acting in a completely irrational manner, running my mouth over a few shekels and a couple of minutes. I gladly accepted the shakshuka in the pan, sat down, and let the goodness of Israeli fast food proceed into my mouth instead of permitting the extreme folly of my pride and arrogance to continue emanating out of my mouth. The lunacy demonstrated by my speech had almost brought about my demise.

The truth is that we all occasionally say things that we wish we could take back because of the anguish over speech can bring to us and to others. Given the fact that verbal communication is such a significant part of human life and interaction, we are faced with innumerable decisions on a daily basis relating to how we will use our speech. The “mouth”, “lips”, and the “tongue” are both symbols, or metonyms, for “speech” and frequently appear in the proverbs in order to portray how speech – or even a lack thereof – is indicative of the trajectory that one is following in life. – Hernandez

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 10:19

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 22:17-18

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 26:20

- Consider an occasion in which you said something you wished you could take back. Were you angry when you said it? What could you have done differently?
- Can you recall a time when you held back from using your words unwisely? How was this possible?
- Given the importance placed on our mouths and our speech in Proverbs, what might we conclude about the power and importance of words?
- What are some methods you use to choose your words more wisely?
- Consider the lessons/concepts Hernandez lays out in the text and how they might apply to your speech: “The Wise Speak (Less)”, “The Side Speak (Wisdom)”.

Anger: On “Fool” Display

Dr. Hernandez tells another story of a couple he and his family encountered at the zoo, whose argument ended up endangering the baby that had with them in a stroller. Here is the conclusion to that story...

Throughout Proverbs we consistently observe that those on the way of wisdom are humble people who are slow to anger. Contrarily, fools are depicted as unable to control themselves and as repeatedly giving full expression to their anger (14:17, 29:11). Fools wear their anger on their sleeves (12:16) and seemingly cannot abstain from perpetually quarreling (20:3). In their anger, fools are irrational to the point that they are not even reasonable enough to engage in a thoughtful conversation as Proverbs 29:9 points out, “If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.” Unreasonable, angry people are potentially dangerous to themselves and others, as our walk in the zoo put on “fool” display...

It is important to note that the author of Proverbs does not imply that we should always refrain from any type of anger. As mentioned above, and considered below, there are indeed certain wrongdoings that anger the Lord (6:16-19). The author of Proverbs seems to be speaking against the human tendency to become offended, angry, and, consequently, divisive and hurtful in relation to issues that tempt us to become self-seeking and egotistical (29:22). Being quick to anger over these reasons does not honor the Lord, who is portrayed as constantly yearning for restoration with humans who have deeply offended him and one another.

Scripture Focus – Exodus 34:6

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 16:18-19

- Why is it wise to be slow to anger? Why is wearing your anger “on your sleeve” dangerous?
- If you can’t reason with someone who is overcome with anger, how can you make a positive impact with him or her?
- If God is “constantly yearning” for restoration, what should our attitude be toward those who offend us?
- Both the wise and the Lord are described in the above passages as “slow to anger.” When is anger justified? How can we express or use our anger in ways that honor God?

The Dynamic Family (And Family Dynamics)

Family dynamics, especially discipline and parent/child relationships, can be a contentious subject. We should appreciate the diversity of experiences. The fellowship of the family is paramount in Proverbs, because we are just like malleable children and generally tend to adopt the personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies of those who are closest to us. The parental voice that we hear in Proverbs recognizes this fact and perpetually strive to convince the “son” (that is, the reader) to walk with the parents in the way of wisdom (Proverbs 1 – 9). By chapter 10, the child is expected to practically demonstrate his or her understanding of the importance of journeying in life with others whose conduct honors the Lord.

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 23:13-16

- The first passage discusses the importance of recognizing that we are easily influenced by those around us. How can we use that principle to our advantage as we seek to encourage our children in the way of wisdom?
- Dr. Hernandez says that proverbs concerning the “rod” relay principles and not necessarily a clear-cut system of disciplining one’s children. What relevant principles are conveyed by the references to the “rod” in your opinion?

- The second half of Proverbs 23:13-16 expresses the deep joy and satisfaction in parents' hearts when they see their child proceeding in the way of wisdom. How might parents improve their relationships with their children by communicating this feeling to them?

Earning an Honest Living

The proverbs can contain instruction that apply to certain areas of our lives both directly and indirectly. Regarding working, employment, and financial responsibility, they do both. Hernandez writes the following...

While Proverbs admittedly makes no mention of drug trafficking and the potential consequences that might emerge from this type of activity, it is absolutely certain that selling drugs is a modern expression of the depiction of folly within the book. Selling illicit drugs is frequently precipitated by an apathy toward legitimate work and a desire to attain quick wealth. Furthermore, drug dealing is an ultimate form of obtaining ill-gotten financial gain by ways of oppressing those who are vulnerable and in need of help. The proverbs have plenty to say about these topics.

Scripture Focus – Proverbs 28:19, Proverbs 19:15

- How has our view of work changed since the writing of Proverbs? What about our view of money?
- What are some “worthless pursuits” that might keep us from doing good work?
- What are the rewards of work, apart from money and food?

Concern for Justice

We also observe how active the Lord is portrayed to be in protecting all of the vulnerable in Proverbs. It is the Lord who protects the poor (22:22-23), it is the Lord who actively maintains the widow's boundaries (15:25), and it is the Lord who repays those who are generous to those in need (14:21b, 19:17). Proverbs calls obedient readers to recognize that those who care for the oppressed, the needy, and the weak demonstrate the character of the Lord to fellow human beings.

Fearers of the Lord treat the poor with justice as they walk on their pathway to wisdom (29:7). Furthermore, those who are in positions of power are compelled to speak out upon observing injustice being carried out among the vulnerable (31:8-9). Whether or not we are in positions of worldly authority and have tremendous wealth, it is our responsibility to share our resources with the poor, to treat the less fortunate with dignity, and to afford them all of the rights that others would have (22:9, 29:14).

- Since it is the Lord who cares for all these people, why shouldn't we just sit back and let the Lord care for them?
- Think of other members of society who are vulnerable. How does the principle of protecting the vulnerable call us to act toward those people? How are churches responding to that call? How can they improve?
- What can you do in your own life to protect the vulnerable?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we thank you that you are the Word spoken by the Father, that you are slow to anger, that you have made us sons and daughters of God, that you depict a kingdom where all the workers earn their full wage, and that your Spirit works in us for justice. We ask for your guidance in all these practical and personal pathways, for you have walked this way before us. Amen.

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Session 4: "Wisdom in Practice: Proverbs 31"
Thursday, May 28 7:00 PM
