



Word on Wednesday Bible Study

Pastor Aaron Bruce

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UNDERSTANDING PROVERBS

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Biblical Theology Definition: “Biblical theology” speaks to how God’s redemptive plan unfolds throughout the history of time.

Here are a few themes of biblical theology we could trace from Genesis to Revelation:

- God dwelling with his people (garden, pillar of cloud/fire, tabernacle, temple)
- Kingdom of God
- Covenants (Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, new covenant)

Biblical Theology of Proverbs: How does the Book of Proverbs fit in the biblical storyline?

The truths in the book of Proverbs are meant to govern how God’s people live. God’s people, as those called to be a “kingdom of priests,” and a “holy nation,” were meant to live distinct from the nations around them, which includes the way of wisdom as unveiled in Proverbs. This is the same for us as the New Testament church; we live out the wisdom of Proverbs as a response to Christ’s finished work and God’s call on our lives to be the “royal priesthood”, and “holy nation” that proclaims the excellencies of Christ to the lost. (1 Peter 2:9)

Here are Three Helpful Observations:

1. The commentator Derek Kidner says that the wisdom books [including Proverbs] are the point in the Old Testament “when the pilgrim is free to stop and take a long look around, observing and asking questions about all he sees” (*The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes*, page 11).
2. Kathleen Nielson says the wisdom writers act like commentators on the [biblical] story. They’ve not written to advance the story [per se], to speak like prophets into the story, or to cry out from the midst of the story; instead, they’ve stepped aside for a few moments to make observations about the story.¹

¹ Kathleen Nielson, [Proverbs for You](#), ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2020), 18.

3. In the “already” of the kingdom seen in the church—the outposts of the kingdom—we are in an internship for eternity, ordered now by the wisdom of God.²

BACKGROUND OF PROVERBS

- The book is attributed to Solomon, the Son of David, King of Israel (Prov 1:1)
- Solomon asks God for wisdom. (1Kings 3:1-28)
- Solomon’s request for wisdom is to have “an understanding mind to govern your people.” Wisdom is how kings ruled their people. (1 Kings 3:9)
- Solomon speaks as a father to a son, as a King/monarch to the youth of Israel, urging them to pursue wisdom.
(Prov 1:8; 2:1; 3:1,11, 21; 4:1,3)
- Wisdom was not exclusive to the nation of Israel.

UNDERSTANDING HOW WISDOM RELATES TO MORALITY (RIGHT AND WRONG)

1. Wisdom is broader than morality but includes morality.
 - Wisdom literature as a category, including the book of Proverbs, is broader than the morality category (right and wrong) we see in the law. Certainly, morality (right and wrong) have a function in wisdom literature. We see this in Proverbs to a great deal, in places like chapters 5-7 with the warnings against adultery, and the wisdom offered about our words, and our attitudes. The wisdom in Proverbs is saying if you sin, you are violating the created order the way God designed things to be. Furthermore, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” which means that wisdom is concerned with doing everything in life in reverence and awe of God.
2. Wisdom speaks to how the created order works.
 - As we’ve noted, morality (right and wrong) is one specific application of wisdom. In Proverbs, there are several observations about creation (or how the world works) and how we ought to live in light of those

² Jonathan Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in Proverbs*](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 9.

observations. Thus, there may be actions that don't constitute sin but are unwise because they go against the very design of God's created order. This helps to make sense of the practical wisdom we see in Proverbs that can be morally right or wrong depending on the context. To rightly apply these practical virtues, Proverbs calls on us to learn discretion (1:4) – how to make right decisions based on knowledge and understanding. It calls on us to understand words of insight (1:2) – how to read between the lines and make the necessary distinctions.

3. Wisdom as a broader category means there may be things that are unwise, but not sinful.
 - We cannot overstate the importance of wisdom. While there are things that may not be wise, those things may not necessarily be sinful. For example, it's not wise to make big decisions without guidance (11:14), and eventually, one might find themselves in sin because they didn't exercise discretion. However, it's important to note that neglecting wisdom and wise practices might ultimately lead one to sin. Yet at the point of the initial decision, they are matters of wisdom and prudence.
4. Wisdom is God's way of doing things, which means God wants us to be wise and righteous.
 - God has designed the world to work in a particular way and that order as illustrated in the book of Proverbs ought to lead us to want to live as God designed us to live. Hear the words of Paul to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2:6, "yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away." Hear again Paul's words to the church of Colossae in Colossians 4:5 – "walk in wisdom among outsiders, making the best use of the time."

PROVERBS 8:1-36 (ESV)

EXPOSITION

Title: A Woman Worth Marrying

Text: Proverbs 8:1-36

THESIS/MAIN IDEA:

First Point: _____ **(verses 1-5)**

Wisdom, personified as a woman, calls out to anyone who will hear, exhorting them to listen to her. This is juxtaposed with the woman of chapter 7, the woman of folly, who calls out in the attempt to deceive, manipulate, and trip up.

Key words:

- Simple - to be deceived or seduced. A person who is naïve, gullible, silly, or led astray.
- Fool – stupid or stubborn. A person who is beyond the ways of simple. What the simple do out of naivety, the foolish do willfully.

Second Point: _____ **(verses 10-13)**

Wisdom calls on us to follow its teaching. There's a lot of teaching everywhere we are. We're either being shaped by God's wisdom or secular wisdom. But following wisdom is more profitable than possessing silver or gold. When you have wisdom, you understand how to use what God has given rather than letting it use you.

Key word:

- Instruction - speaks of discipline, training, or warning.

Notice the language of “fear of the Lord” finds itself here in verse 13. The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, will lead us to hate what God hates, in the world we live, and in our own hearts.

Third Point: _____ **(verses 14-31)**

If you had to doubt why you should listen to wisdom, consider verses 14-31. Wisdom is the playbook that those in the highest positions of our society effectively lead by. Wisdom is also how God created everything there is (verses 22-32). To walk in wisdom is to align oneself with how God designed the world to be.

Consider the credentials of wisdom in:

- The construction of creation (Gen 1)
- The construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 31)
- The construction of the temple (1 Kings 7)

This means that swimming against the tide of God’s created order is not only frustrating, but it’s foolish and will ultimately end in destruction.

Fourth Point: _____ **(verses 32-36)**

When one lives according to wisdom, they find themselves enjoying the perks of that life. This is not to say everything is great and this person enjoys an abundance of material prosperity. However, it does mean that one is thriving despite their circumstances, and they are living as God intends for them to live and that alone is the greatest of joys.

Key words:

- Blessed – characterized by a state of happiness – joy.