

"Ordinary Advice for Extraordinary Times"

3. Ethics by soundbites

Trinity Church Adelaide - May 2020

Prov 26:1 Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, honor is not fitting for a fool.

2 Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest.

3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the backs of fools!

4 *Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him.*

5 *Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.*

6 Sending a message by the hands of a fool is like cutting off one's feet or drinking poison.

7 Like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

8 Like tying a stone in a sling is the giving of honor to a fool.

9 *Like a thornbush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.*

10 Like an archer who wounds at random is one who hires a fool or any passer-by.

11 As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.

12 Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.

13 A sluggard says, "There's a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!"

14 As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.

15 *A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*

16 A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven people who answer discreetly.

17 Like one who grabs a stray dog by the ears is someone who rushes into a quarrel not their own.

18 *Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death*

19 *is one who deceives their neighbor and says, "I was only joking!"*

20 Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.

21 As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.

22 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.

23 Like a coating of silver dross on earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.

24 Enemies disguise themselves with their lips, but in their hearts they harbor deceit.

25 Though their speech is charming, do not believe them, for seven abominations fill their hearts.

26 Their malice may be concealed by deception, but their wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them.

28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

The Structure of the Book of Proverbs		
Chapters	Section	Talk Topics
1:1-7	Introduction	1. Do you want to be wise?
1:8-9:18	Instruction	2. Choose wisdom not folly
10:1-31:9	Sayings	3. Ethics by soundbites
		4. The ant and the sluggard
		5. What can we learn from worldly wisdom?
31:10-31	Conclusion	6. The (impossibly) perfect wife

1. 5 Problems with those "pithy sayings"

i. some seem to contradict each other

ii. many don't come true in practice

Prov 22:6 Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

iii. some have been horribly mis-interpreted and mis-applied

Prov 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

iv. similar suggestions have vastly different rationale and motives

Prov 23:13 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die.

Prov 29:17 Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire.

Prov 29:15 A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.

v. there are just so many ...

2. Geoff's 5 Top Tips for interpreting Proverbs

i. **remember the big idea: Proverbs describes probabilities not promises**

(circle one): Proverbs are **mostly** true vs Proverbs are **always** true

ii. **wherever possible, consider the context**

Prov 30:15 The leech has two daughters. 'Give! Give!' they cry. There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, 'Enough!': 16 the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, 'Enough!'

iii. **don't quote a proverb before reading every proverb on the topic**

- Tim Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment*

iv. **embrace the God-given freedom we ALL have**

- "wisdom is learned in community"

- "motives matter"

v. **aim for perfection, not the minimum passing grade**

- "love God, love your neighbour as yourself" (Lk 10)

=> self-sacrifice not self-gratification

=> Jesus is neither legalistic nor libertarian

=> God's mercy is always prior and primary

3. What next?

For discussion/reflection: trace a theme through Proverbs

www.trinitycity.church/resources/church-online/sermon-outlines/

=> download "*Interpreting Proverbs*" (McCabe)

=> enter the Proverbs competition