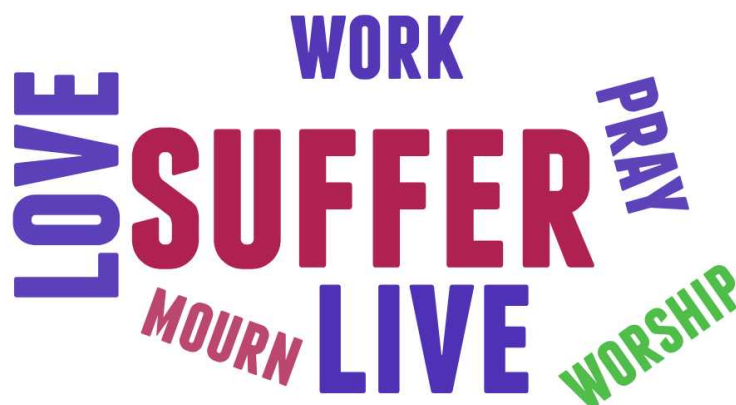


Q1. What do you know about the book of Proverbs? Do you have a favourite proverb?

Q2. What key words do you associate with the wisdom in the book of Proverbs?

Wisdom Books: <i>How to ... wisely?</i>	
Job?	SUFFER
Psalms?	WORSHIP
Proverbs?	
Song of Solomon?	
Ecclesiastes?	
Lamentations	



1. AUTHORS & CONTEXT

The main author and major influence on the book of Proverbs is clearly Solomon before 930 BC (1:1). However, King Hezekiah's men were still adding and packaging proverbs in c.700 BC (25:1). Perhaps Hezekiah was the final editor of material from many original human authors?

2. STRUCTURE

PROVERBS	CONTENT	AUTHOR(S)
1–9	An essay on wisdom vs folly	Solomon
10–22:16	Solomon's proverbs (1 Kings 3)	Solomon
22:17–24:34	30+ sayings of 'the wise'	'the wise'
25–29	Hezekiah's collection of proverbs	Solomon
30	Agur's sayings	Agur ¹
31:1-9	King Lemuel's oracle on a noble king	Lemuel's mother ²
31:10-31	A noble wife (an acrostic poem)	Lemuel's mother? ²

Modernity has sometimes questioned the wisdom in Proverbs due to its distinctly male perspective³ (1:10). But this is unreasonable given the origin of Proverbs 31, and also:

*Proverbs 1:8-9 Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching,
⁹ for they are a graceful garland for your head
and pendants for your neck.*

It should also be noted that some parts of Proverbs are explicitly female in origin (31:1).

¹ Some sort of Israelite wise man and/or a prophet

² A Gentile contribution?

³ It should also be noted that in a biblically patriarchal society, wisdom should be taught top-down by the heads of households etc.

Q3. How does Proverbs 31:10-31 enable both male and female to be wise?

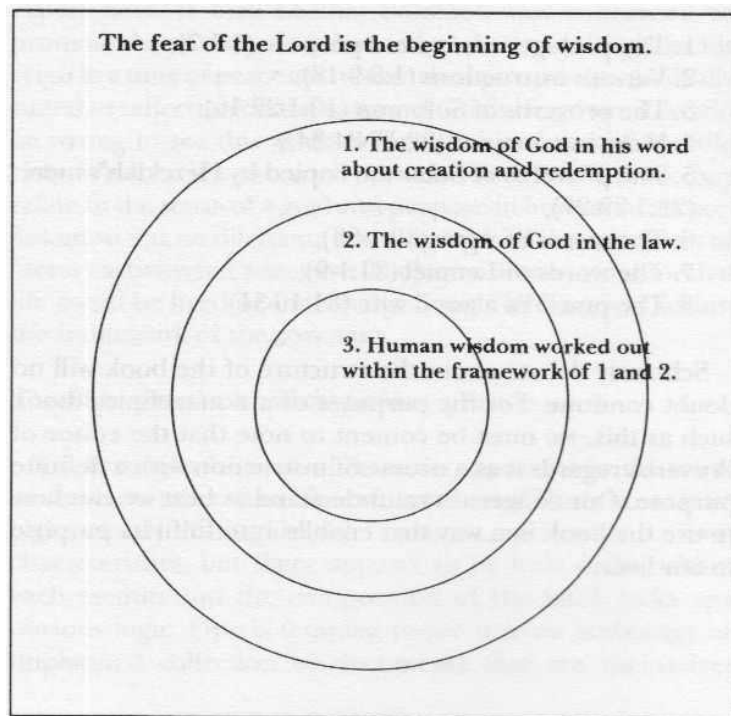
Q4. What colourful rôles are played by women in Proverbs?

Proverbs 1:20-33

Proverbs 9:13-18

3. THEME: 'LIVING WISELY'

Diagram: Graeme Goldsworthy⁴ says that wisdom literature in the Bible is not law. Some people think that it is simply God's law applied to daily life p30. But he also recognises that wisdom is not completely separate from law, and has this helpful diagram, which identifies two sources of wisdom: God and humans. It also shows human wisdom being constrained by divine wisdom, and relates all true wisdom to Proverbs 9:10.



4. KEY VERSE

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

5. KEY GROUPS OF PEOPLE

The basic division of people is into the wise and the foolish. The wise are learners who fear the LORD, while fools reject instruction and wisdom. The wise image God well, the fools badly.

Similarly, the righteous and the wicked are a pair of categories. The righteous follow God's laws and live justly, while the wicked engage in evil and injustice, imaging God well or badly respectively.

The diligent and the sluggard are another such pair. The diligent are hard-working and successful, whilst the sluggard avoids work and faces poverty. God 'at work' is being imaged, or not if the person is a bad type of God.

The simple and the scoffer are a little different, because neither images God at all well. The simple lack experience and can learn, but scoffers are hardened and resistant to correction.

... Finally, the adulteress, or sometimes specifically a prostitute, is contrasted with the noble wife. The adulteress leads men astray through immorality, while the noble woman exemplifies virtue, wisdom, and industriousness – bad and good types of God.⁵

6. GREAT EVENTS?

1. Visiting a prostitute! (7:7-23)

| 2. Marriage (31)

⁴ The Tree of Life, Reading Proverbs Today, Graeme Goldsworthy, AIO Press, 1993.

⁵ From Biblical Types and Images, David Legg, 2025, p145-6.

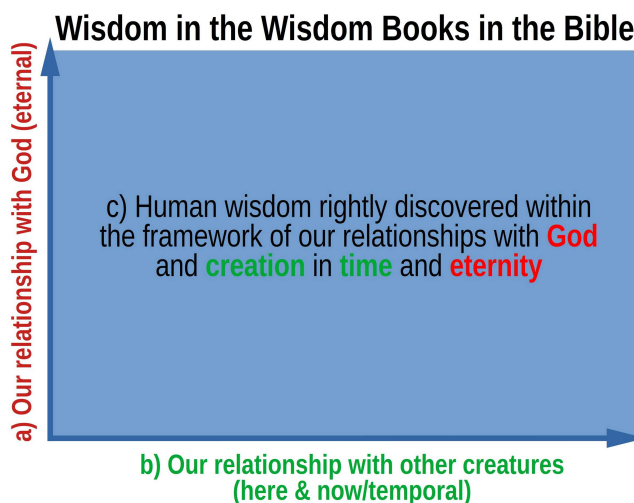
7. PROVERBS IN PRACTICE

Whilst more valuable than **gold** (8:10), Proverbs can be difficult to understand, because the short pithy statements can lack context, and often because Bible translations differ wildly:

NIV	ESV
<i>Proverbs 14:4 Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox come abundant harvests.</i>	<i>Proverbs 14:4 Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.</i>
<i>Proverbs 18:24 One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.</i>	<i>Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.</i>
<i>Proverbs 25:27 It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honourable to search out matters that are too deep.</i>	<i>Proverbs 25:27 It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.</i>

This diagram goes a little further than that of Goldsworthy, showing the Bible to be teaching us wisdom from several different perspectives:

- a) Divine & creaturely (human) perspectives;
- b) The eternal and temporal (here & now);
- c) Vertical and the horizontal relationships (with God, with creation).



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Q5. How does Proverbs 3:7 demonstrate wisdom from both human & divine perspectives?

*Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ESV*

Q6. Why do we often need to see both the eternal and the temporal aspects?
Notice also how Jesus picks up this wisdom in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 7:25).

*Proverbs 10:25 When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone,
but the righteous stand firm forever. NIV*

Q7. What vertical wisdom is behind this obviously horizontal observation? (Genesis 2:15)

*Proverbs 12:10 The righteous care for the needs of their animals,
but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel. NIV*

Q8. What sorts of wisdom are in this proverb? (see Genesis 2:15)

*Proverbs 12:11 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread,
but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense. ESV*

Q9. What sorts of wisdom are here?

*Proverbs 3:3-5 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them round your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

⁴ *So you will find favour and good success [or repute]
in the sight of God and man.*

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding. ESV*

Q10. How may we justify leaping from applying the wisdom in Proverbs to Jesus and churches, not just to husbands and wives?

Does Ephesians 5:21-33, especially verse 32 help?

*Proverbs 31:26-27 She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*

²⁷ *She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness. NIV*

8. HOMEWORK

Read, study, pray for wisdom (James 1:5), repent, and find wisdom in Proverbs.

Web: www.trinitychurch.tc

Contact: www.trinitychurch.tc/contact

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