

TRUTH AND LIFE

Doctrinal and Ethical Notes on the Bible

Dr. G. Wright Doyle

Part I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Volume 4

THE OTHER WRITINGS

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DOCTRINAL AND ETHICAL NOTES ON THE BIBLE

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

VOLUME 4

THE OTHER WRITINGS

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Note: *Truth and Life* is a work in progress. Sections will be posted over time and may be incomplete. Check back for new and updated documents. This is *Truth and Life: The Old Testament - The Other Writings, Version 1* (September 2019).

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**The notes for some of these books of the Bible may be incomplete. Check for updated versions at www.reachingchineseworldwide.org. This is *Truth and Life: The Old Testament – The Other Writings, Version 1* (February 2019).*

INTRODUCTION to *TRUTH AND LIFE*

Origin and Nature of this Book

Truth and Life: Doctrinal and Ethical Notes on the Bible grew out of a study that I did with several men over a period of three-and-a-half years. Following the order found in *Search the Scriptures*,¹ a Bible reading guide I used at the beginning of my Christian life, we asked two questions of each passage:

What does it say about the usual topics discussed in books on systematic theology (such as the doctrines of revelation, God, Christ, man, sin, salvation, God's people, and "the last things")?

What does it say about how we should live? That is, what does it say about what is usually called "Christian ethics"?

As time went on, I discovered that this way of looking at the Bible was quite helpful for me, since it required me to look closely at the biblical text and to search it carefully for teachings not only on doctrine – that is, general "truth" – but also on the application of doctrine to daily life. Thus, the title: "Truth and Life." Of course, all that the Bible says is true, and all of it bears upon life. Indeed, Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."² We cannot separate doctrine from our proper response to it.

That is why this book includes notes both about general truths revealed by God in the Bible and about ways in which we could apply these truths at home, school, work, and church, and in society. As much as possible, the advice in each "Life" section comes directly from the corresponding passage of the Scriptures.

Distinctive Features

To my knowledge, this book is unique, at least at present.

There are plenty of study Bibles, Bible commentaries of all sorts, and books on systematic theology and on Christian ethics. I am not aware that anything exists that

¹ Alan M. Stibbs, general editor, *Search the Scriptures: A Three-Year Bible Study Course* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984).

² John 6:63.

provides brief comments on what each passage of the Bible says both about the usual topics [*topoi*, or *loci*] of theology and about ethics.

As a glance at any page of this book will show, the “Truth” sections follow a topical order based on the standard theological categories, as mentioned above. The “Life” sections follow the order of the passage itself and are not arranged topically.

In treating the theology of each passage, I usually spend a large amount of time drawing out what we can learn from it about the doctrine of revelation – that is, mostly about the Scriptures themselves (“special revelation”). How God has revealed himself to us in his written Word is foundational to everything else we believe about him and his works in the world and in our lives. Sometimes we also find teaching on what is often called “general revelation” – revealed through our moral constitution, the created order, and the events of history.

You will also see that I devote significant attention to the doctrine of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – which I usually discuss under the headings of “His greatness” and “His goodness.” My goal is to draw our attention away from ourselves and this world so that we may focus again on our great, glorious, and gracious God. Such a reorientation of thinking has been very beneficial to my own soul and life.

After looking at God and his works, we examine what the passage might teach about angels, Satan and demons, mankind, sin, salvation, God’s people, and the last things.

Other Characteristics

Since the Bible is a big book and since the authors of the Scriptures, under God’s inspiration, frequently write about the same topics many times, you will encounter a great deal of repetition here. It simply could not be avoided. Please be patient with me – and with how God has chosen to present what he thinks we need to know! I have found in my own life that I need constant exposure to the same truths day after day, year after year, for them to “sink in” and then be “worked out” into my life.

I have attempted to express myself as concisely as possible. Most sections are presented in outline form for easy reading. I have not aimed for literary elegance or fullness of expression; otherwise, the book would be twice as long. My goal is to give

you as much information as possible in the briefest format. I have written other non-scholarly commentaries and thematic biblical studies in the usual expository style.³

Truth and Life is not a study Bible or a commentary in the usual sense. It is not at all meant to replace these fundamental aids to understanding the Scriptures, but to be used in conjunction with them. You will not find extensive explanations of historical or cultural backgrounds, word studies, or a verse-by-verse or even paragraph-by-paragraph running commentary.

This book is not exhaustive, but suggestive; much more could have been said. Nor is it an academic publication, though I have drawn upon the writings of learned scholars.

In addition, the wording and format of these notes are not always consistent. I wrote them over a period of several years and did not always adhere to the same format. My editorial assistants and I have tried to make the text consistent as much as possible, but irregularities remain.

In particular, some passages receive very detailed treatment, while others are discussed much more briefly. Further, some include references to a number of parallel or related passages of Scripture, while others merely cite the relevant verse(s) in the section under consideration. Again, this disparity reflects the long time I have spent writing the notes, as well as the amount of energy I had on any particular day! As I said above, the notes are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive.

Note: When only verse numbers are given, they refer to the chapter (or psalm) being discussed. Thus, in the notes on Romans 1:1–17, “1, 5” means “1:3, 5.” If chapter and verse are given, but no book, the reference is to the book being discussed.

My Background

Though I am not now a professional biblical scholar or an academic theologian, I have had some opportunities to engage in advanced study of the Bible and theology.

At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I majored in Latin but also took three years of classical Greek. After graduation I attended the Virginia Theological Seminary

³ G. Wright Doyle, *Worship and Wisdom: Daily Readings from Psalms and Proverbs with Commentary* (Durham, NC: Torchflame Books, 2015); *Christ the King: Meditations on Matthew* (Durham: Light Messages, 2011); *Jesus: The Complete Man* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2008); and *The Lord’s Healing Words: Six Months of Daily Readings from the Bible on Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Health (with Commentary)* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008).

in Alexandria. Though it was (and is) a theologically liberal Episcopal school, the seminary faculty included some outstanding evangelicals, and I was able to learn some things even from those who did not believe that the Bible is God's Word written.

From seminary I moved to the pastorate, serving three small Episcopal churches in Eastern North Carolina for two years. This entailed careful study and exposition of the Scriptures along with daily pastoral visitation and care for the people of these congregations.

In 1971 I began doctoral studies in Classics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with the aim of equipping myself to teach in a seminary. For two years I read Greek and Latin literature under the instruction of some of the finest Classicists in the world. My doctoral exams dealt with the Greek New Testament, Hellenistic philosophy, and early Christian rhetoric – that is, preaching. My dissertation focused on Augustine's theory of the exegesis and exposition of Scripture as outlined in *de Doctrina Christiana*, as well as on how Augustine "applied" his theory to his sermons on the Gospel of John. The year that I spent with this master-student of the Bible has profoundly affected the way I read and teach the Bible. Always, Augustine aimed to communicate the truths of Scripture in a fashion that would change people's lives.

My wife Dori and I went to Asia as missionaries in 1975. After two years of Chinese language study and one year away on furlough, we returned to Taiwan, where I began teaching Greek and New Testament at China Evangelical Seminary, Taipei. Over the next seven years, I labored to help Chinese Christians understand and apply the Bible to their culture. My familiarity with the Bible benefitted immensely from the five years I spent supervising the translation of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich's *Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* into Chinese (and then, later, from five more years spent revising the work).

Since our permanent return to the United States in 1988, I have taught intensive courses on "New Testament and Systematic Theology" for various seminaries in Taiwan and North America, preached regularly, composed the volumes mentioned in the note on page ii, and continued my daily study of the Bible. I have also learned a great deal from Carl F. H. Henry. I made an abridgment of his six-volume *God, Revelation, and*

Authority for publication in Chinese, and I authored an introduction to his *magnum opus*.⁴ From him I learned just how fundamental is the doctrine of revelation.

Sources

In addition to my own daily reading of the Bible over the past 50 years, other sources have contributed to *Truth and Life*. These are too many to list individually, but here are the main ones:

Systematic Theology

Augustine of Hippo. *Enchiridion; City of God; Confessions; and On Christian Doctrine (Teaching)*. Various editions.

John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.

Jonathan Edwards. *Religious Affections; The End for Which God Created the World; Charity and its Fruits*; various sermons; and other works. Various editions.

Carl F. H. Henry. *God, Revelation, and Authority*. 6 vols. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976–83.

Douglas F. Kelly. *Systematic Theology*. Vols. 1 and 2. Tain, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2008, 2014.

Matthew Levering. *The Theology of Augustine. An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology: Historical, Biblical, Systematic, Apologetic, Practical*. 3 vols. in 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Biblical Theology

Several works of biblical theology have helped to shape my general outlook and interpretative stance:

Richard Bauckham. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

⁴ G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons. An Introduction and Guide to Carl Henry's God, Revelation, and Authority* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. *Interpreting Prophecy: An Essay in Biblical Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976.

George Eldon Ladd. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Leon Morris. *The Cross in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.

Leon Morris. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Herman Ridderbos. *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975.

Study Bibles

To supplement those mostly older studies, in the composition of this book I have relied heavily upon recently published study Bibles. These contain the results of the best evangelical scholarship. After writing my notes, I mined these study Bibles for further information about background, parallel passages in the Scriptures, and generally accepted interpretations. In this way, I hope that I have avoided major errors of interpretation. I freely and gladly acknowledge my debt to the scholars who have contributed to these essential guides for the understanding of the Bible.

The most useful to me have been these:

ESVSB: *ESV [English Standard Version] Study Bible*. Wayne Grudem, general editor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008.

HCSBSB: *HCSB [Holman Christian Standard Bible] Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010.

MSB: *MacArthur Study Bible*. John MacArthur, author and general editor. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 1997.

NIVSB: *NIV [New International Version] Study Bible*. Kenneth Barker, general editor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985.

ZNIVSB: *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*. D. A. Carson, general editor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

Commentaries

Over the years, I have read a number of commentaries on various parts of the Bible. It would be tedious to list all the volumes that have helped me understand the Scriptures, but I freely acknowledge my indebtedness to godly scholars who have carefully elucidated the Bible.

Finally, I thank Anna Barnes and Casey Houseworth for their painstaking and skillful editing of my initial draft. They have eliminated many mistakes, made excellent suggestions for improvement, and reduced the inconsistencies to a minimum.

The Purpose of *Truth and Life*

Despite all its limitations, this series of doctrinal and ethical notes on the Bible aims to help the ordinary reader discern in the Holy Scriptures what God has said about himself – his nature, will, and ways – and about how we should live in response to his Word.

I pray that God will use these notes to encourage you to read the Bible both *theologically* and *ethically*, with the goal of loving God and your neighbor by the power of the Holy Spirit.

To him be all the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

G. Wright Doyle

Bastrop, Texas

PROVERBS

Proverbs 1

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ◆ It contains wisdom to know God and to live morally, 2.
- ◆ It contains practical instruction for how to live prudently and effectively in the world, 2.
- ◆ Proverbs includes teaching [instruction], 3.

Its source

- ◆ It came from God through his chosen messengers, including Solomon, who wrote much of the book of Proverbs, 1. *See Proverbs 8-9:18; 10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27.*
- ◆ Solomon's vast and unique (among mere men) wisdom came from God. *See 1 Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-34; 5:7, 12; 10:1-9, 23-24; 11:41; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12; 9:1-8; and Proverbs 2:6, "the LORD gives wisdom."*
- ◆ Though Proverbs resembles similar collections of wise sayings in the ancient Near East, like some books from Egypt, it reflects a Godward focus that makes its perspective unique.
 - This focus comes from the special revelation given to Israel through Moses and the prophets, including Solomon's father David.
 - Indeed, Solomon's wisdom was "greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt." *See 1 Kings 4:30 (NIV).*

Its recipients

- ◆ In general, but with some exceptions, Old Testament revelation was given to and for God's people.
- ◆ In particular, Proverbs speaks to the people of Israel, those who acknowledge God and his revelation to Moses and other chosen messengers. (This is the assumption of the entire book.)
- ◆ More particularly, Proverbs speaks to two types of people: youths and the wise, 4-5; much of the book is aimed at young men of marriageable age, who are called, "my son," 8.
- ◆ God invites all people, however, to receive and respond to his revelation, 20-21.

Its structure

- ◆ The proverbs in this book are (usually) short and pithy statements in the typical form of Hebrew poetry, which employs parallelism. Proverbs 6, for example, provides maxims grouped according to various themes.
- ◆ Some chapters, including chapters 1–9, 23, and 30–31, consist of longer discourses.
- ◆ Much of Proverbs does not appear to have a clear organization, but several key themes occur repeatedly:

Note: These have been most conveniently grouped and discussed in Derek Kidner's commentary on Proverbs, pages 29–52. See also the short concordance to Proverbs in the KJV, pages 185–92.

- God and man
- Wisdom
- The fool
- The sluggard
- The friend
- Words
- The family
- Life and death

Its purpose

- ◆ It aims primarily to impart the saving knowledge of God and the transformation of character that accords with God's will, 7–23, 33. *See Matthew 7 and Romans 1:5.*
- ◆ Revelation, both general and special, also convicts persistently unrepentant sinners of their inexcusable guilt before God, 24–32. *See Matthew 7:26–27; John 15:22; Romans 1:18–32; 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6; and 2 Thessalonians 1:8.*

Its receipt: To benefit from revelation, one must do these things:

- ◆ Fear God, that is, have an attitude of reverence, trust, love, and submission to God, 7.
- ◆ Listen carefully to instruction from godly elders and teachers, as if it were the voice of divine Wisdom, 8, 33.
- ◆ Ignore the deceptive words of sinners, 10.
- ◆ Receive God's rebuke and repent [turn], 23.

God

His greatness: As Creator and King of the world, he deserves “fear” – that is, awe, reverence, love, trust, and obedience, 7.

His goodness: Through parents, teachers, and especially Jesus Christ, he has revealed to us true wisdom so that we may know him and live happily in this life and forever.

See all of Proverbs.

Christ

His prefiguration: Though Christ is not named in Proverbs, he is clearly seen in the personified figure of Lady Wisdom, 20–33. *See Proverbs 8:1–36; 9:1–6.*

- ♦ Christ – as the Incarnate Logos [Word] of God – is Solomon’s true wisdom and is therefore greater than Solomon. *See Matthew 12:42; John 1:1–5; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 1:7–10; and Colossians 2:3.*
- ♦ Lady Wisdom personifies Christ as the one who pours out his Spirit on those who repent and trust in him, 23. *See Acts 1:8; 2:33.*
- ♦ Those who listen to him and his wisdom enjoy security in times of distress, 33. *See Matthew 7:24–27.*

The Holy Spirit

His prefiguration: He is seen here as the spirit who is poured out upon humble believers, 23. *See Acts 1:8; 2:33.*

Mankind

Our character: In Proverbs, all people are classified as one of three types:

- ♦ The simple, that is, the naïve, 4, 22, 32
- ♦ The wise, 5–6
- ♦ The sinners, that is, the fools or scorners [mockers] who adamantly refuse to respond to God’s revelation with repentance, faith, and obedience, 7, 10, 22–32.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ♦ Forsaking the instruction of one’s godly parents, 8
- ♦ Enticing others to do wrong, 10
- ♦ Seeking to harm others without cause, 11–12
- ♦ Greediness for ill-gotten gain, 13, 19

- ♦ Joining with others in sinful plots and actions, 14
- ♦ Being eager to do wrong, 16
- ♦ Loving ignorance and naiveté, 22
- ♦ Mocking God's revelation and its moral teachings, 22
- ♦ Hating the knowledge of God and his ways, 22, 29
- ♦ Refusing to heed God's call to repent and follow his will, 24, 30
- ♦ Disdaining God's instruction, 25
- ♦ Ignoring rebuke, 25, 30
- ♦ Turning away from God and his truth, 32
- ♦ Being complacent in one's ignorance and folly, 32

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read the book of Proverbs often so that we may gain more and more wisdom.
- ♦ Make God the chief object of our fear, awe, worship, love, trust, and submission.
- ♦ Listen to godly parents and teachers.
- ♦ Refuse to associate with unrepentant sinners or to join with them in doing evil.
- ♦ Turn to God when we are rebuked by his Spirit.
- ♦ Listen attentively to what God says to us through the Bible and the rebukes of life.

Proverbs 2

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ◆ It includes words and commands from God, which can be mediated to us through parents and teachers who know, believe, and obey God's special revelation, 1.
- ◆ Objectively, it contains words of wisdom, understanding, discernment, and knowledge, 2-6.

Its source

- ◆ Biblical revelation – here called “wisdom” – comes from God as a free gift, 6.
- ◆ It comes from the “mouth” of the Lord, that is, it issues from God's mind and is expressed in his words, 6.

Its purpose

- ◆ Subjectively, it aims to impart wisdom, understanding, discernment, and knowledge, 2-3, 5-7.
- ◆ Especially, revelation in Proverbs intends to produce the “fear of the LORD” – that is, “the knowledge of God” that comes to the person who receives it with faith and obedience, 5.

Its receipt

- ◆ We must receive words of truth from godly teachers, 1, and from the written Word of God in Scripture. *See 2 Timothy 3:15-16.*
- ◆ We must treasure these words within us, that is, we must memorize them, meditate upon them, and hold them as our highest treasure, 1.
- ◆ We must give both our ears and our hearts to learning the truth, 2.
- ◆ We must pray earnestly to God for discernment and understanding of his truth and its application, 3. *See James 1:5.*
- ◆ We must diligently seek and work to “dig out” the truth, as if it were a precious metal, 4. This implies hard mental work, requiring time, effort, and commitment.
- ◆ As much as possible, we must “walk” – that is, live – according to what we have learned so far, doing what is right in the eyes of God. In other words, obedience to known truth leads to greater understanding, 7-9.

- ◆ We must allow wisdom to penetrate our hearts – that is, our minds and motives – at the deepest level, driving out all other words and ideas, 10. *See John 15:7; Romans 12:1-2; and Ephesians 4:23.*
- ◆ We must develop a “taste” for God’s truth so that it seems pleasant to us, 10.

Its benefits

- ◆ Understanding what it means to fear God, 5
- ◆ Knowing God both intellectually and personally, 5
- ◆ Increasing in wisdom and all other mental faculties needed for godly and productive living, 6-7
- ◆ God’s protection, 7-8
- ◆ Greater understanding of what is right, just, faithful, and good, 9
- ◆ Protection from the wiles of evil men, 12-15, and seductive women, 16-19
- ◆ A consistent life of doing what is good and right, 20
- ◆ Security in God’s “land” – that is, the place God has given us in which to live and serve him, 21. In the New Testament, this includes mainly the “place” of security of abiding in Christ and thus in the favor of God. *See John 15:1-7 and Romans 5:1-2; 8:1.*

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is transcendent and therefore awesome, deserving of our fear, 5.
- ◆ He is all-wise – that is, he possesses perfect and unique knowledge, understanding, discernment, judgment, and all other intellectual qualities; thus, he can give wisdom to humans, 6, 10-11.
- ◆ He is all-powerful; thus, he can protect and prosper his people, 7-8, 21, and punish the wicked, 22.
- ◆ He is Father (“God”), Son (“Wisdom”), and Holy Spirit, 5-6.

His goodness

- ◆ He is the faithful covenant God of Israel, Yahweh, 5-6, translated as “the LORD” in most English Bibles, which follow the Greek LXX tradition of translating it as Kurios, meaning “Lord.”
- ◆ He gives wisdom to his people, 6-7. *See James 1:5-6.*
- ◆ He is a shield to those who follow him, 7. *See Psalms 18:2; 84:11.*
- ◆ He is morally upright, just, holy, righteous, and good and requires the same from men, 7-9, 20-21.

- ♦ He protects and prospers his people, 7-8, 21, and punishes the wicked, 22.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is the wisdom given by God to his people, 6. *See Matthew 12:42; John 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 31; Ephesians 1:7-10; and Colossians 2:3.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ♦ Evil of any kind, 12
- ♦ Speaking perverse – that is, crooked, deceptive, and misleading – words, 12
- ♦ Leaving the paths of righteousness, that is, walking away from a lifestyle of doing what is right and instead walking in darkness, ungodliness, and moral evil, 13; *see John 3:19-20; Romans 13:11-12; Ephesians 5:8-14; and 1 John 1:6.*
- ♦ Rejoicing in doing wrong and enjoying the actions and company of those who do wrong, 14; this would include finding pleasure in hearing, reading about, or watching dramas that depict sin; *see Romans 1:32.*
- ♦ Lack of integrity, 15
- ♦ Deception of any kind, 15; *see Exodus 20:16; Romans 1:29; and Ephesians 5:6.*
- ♦ Sexual immorality of any kind, including unfaithfulness to one's spouse, 16-17, 22; *see Romans 1:26-29; 13:13; Galatians 5:19; and Ephesians 5:1-7.*
- ♦ Flattery, 16; *see Proverbs 26:28.*
- ♦ Seducing others into sexual sin, 16; *see Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27.*
- ♦ Violating one's covenant with God, 17; this could refer to the covenant of marriage or the stipulations of the covenants God has made with his people in the Old and New Testaments. *See Genesis 2:24 and Malachi 2:14.*

Their consequences

- ♦ Intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical death forever, 18; *see Genesis 2:17 and Romans 6:23.*
- ♦ Being cut off from the earth, now by social ostracism or judicial action and finally by being excluded from eternal life in the new heaven and new earth, 22; *see Revelation 22:14-15.*

Salvation

Its nature and benefits

- ♦ A personal knowledge of God, 5

- ◆ Wisdom for godly, righteous, and prudent living, 6-9
- ◆ God's spiritual and sometimes physical protection when we walk uprightly, 7

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Seek wisdom more than anything else and with all our energy and desire, 1-4.
- ◆ Thank God for his promise to give us wisdom and trust him to provide it when we need it.
- ◆ Thank God for sending Jesus to be our true Wisdom.
- ◆ Avoid the friendship and deceptive ways of those who do not fear or follow God, 12-22.

Proverbs 3

Truth

Revelation

Its content: It includes words and commands from God, mediated to us by his chosen messengers and then through our parents and godly teachers, 1.

Its purpose

- ◆ It aims to teach us how to live in such a way that we can enjoy life in its fullness now and eternal life hereafter, 1-2.
- ◆ Revelation is meant to lead us to know, trust, fear, and follow God, 4-7.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is eternal and has everlasting life in himself, which he can give to whom he pleases, 2. *See John 5:24, 26.*
- ◆ He is omniscient and sees everything, 4.
- ◆ He can manage the details of life, 6.
- ◆ As Creator and covenant God, he deserves awe, reverence, fear, love, and submission, 7.
- ◆ He has the power to give health and strength, 8.
- ◆ As Creator, he owns everything, including all we have, and deserves some of it back as an offering to indicate that we acknowledge his lordship, 9.
- ◆ He is all-wise, that is, he possesses perfect and unique knowledge, understanding, discernment, judgment, and all other intellectual qualities, by which he was able to create the universe out of nothing, 19-20. *See Genesis 1:1-2:6; John 1:3; and Colossians 1:16.*

His goodness

- ◆ He gave his laws to his people so that they might know how to live, 1-2.
- ◆ He is full of mercy [Hebrew *chesed*, steadfast love] and truth [faithfulness], 3. *See Exodus 34:6.*
- ◆ He shows favor to those who trust in and seek to replicate his truth and love, 4.
- ◆ He is Yahweh [the LORD], the faithful covenant God of his people, 5.
- ◆ He is fully reliable and trustworthy, 5.

- ◆ He smoothes or makes straight the paths of those who trust in him, 6.
- ◆ He gives health and strength to those who fear and follow him, 7-8.
- ◆ He prospers those who honor him with their possessions, 9-10.
- ◆ As the fountain of all wisdom, he possesses and can bestow all good things, including pleasantness, peace, life, and true happiness, 16-18.
- ◆ He protects his faithful people from harm, especially moral harm, 26.
- ◆ He gives grace and favor to those who are humble, 34. *See James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5.*
- ◆ As the one who possesses infinite glory and honor, he gives honor and eternal glory to those who are “wise” – that is, those who fear, trust, and follow him, 35. *See Romans 2:7 and 1 Peter 1:7.*
- ◆ He is good and hates evil, 7.
- ◆ As a loving Father, he chastens and disciplines those whom he calls his sons, 11-12. *See Deuteronomy 8:5 and Hebrews 12:3-11.*
- ◆ He hates perversity of all kinds, 32.
- ◆ He confides his otherwise hidden will to those who walk uprightly, 32.
- ◆ He curses the persistently wicked, 33.
- ◆ He blesses those who, by grace, practice justice, 33.
- ◆ He utterly despises those who mock and scorn him and his ways, 34.
- ◆ He inflicts eternal dishonor and disgrace upon those who persist in foolishness, 35.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As mercy [*chesed*; translated in the New Testament as “grace”] and truth, 1; *see John 1:14.*
- ◆ As a tree of life, 18; *see John 1:5; 11:25; 15:1-7; and Revelation 22:2.*
- ◆ As the wisdom by which God created the world, that is, the eternal Word through whom all things were made, 19; *see John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 1:2-3.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Relying on our own understanding to solve problems and to make decisions, 5; *see Proverbs 28:26.*
- ◆ Thinking we are wise, 7; *see Romans 12:16.*
- ◆ Despising God’s discipline and chastening, 11; *see Hebrews 12:3-11.*

- ◆ Neglecting to do good to others when we can, 27–28; *see Galatians 6:10*.
- ◆ Making plans to harm our neighbors, 29
- ◆ Getting into conflicts with those who have done us no harm, 30
- ◆ Envy of bad people who prosper or deciding to follow in their ways, 31
- ◆ Perversity or crookedness of any kind, 32
- ◆ Scorning or mocking God, his ways, or his people, 34

Salvation

See “God: His goodness,” above.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read and meditate upon God’s Word daily, 1–3.
- ◆ Think about God’s grace and truth in Christ and reflect these in our attitudes and actions toward him and others, 3.
- ◆ Trust God in all our thoughts and decisions rather than relying on our own ideas, 5–7.
- ◆ Give of our possessions, including money, to support pastors and evangelists and to meet the needs of other believers; do this before spending the money on anything else, 9.
- ◆ Receive God’s discipline meekly and humbly, seeking to learn what he wants to teach us, 11–12.
- ◆ Trust that God loves us, even when he sends hard things to us, 12.
- ◆ Make the acquisition of Wisdom – that is, Christ and his Kingdom – the highest priority in life, 13–15, 21.
- ◆ Do not be afraid of sudden trouble, for God will take care of us, 25.
- ◆ Humble ourselves before God, 34. *See James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5.*

Proverbs 4

Truth

Revelation

Its content: It includes words and commands from God, mediated to us by his chosen messengers and then through our parents and godly teachers, 1-5, 10-11, 20.

Its benefits

- ◆ Preservation from harm, especially moral danger, 6
- ◆ Promotion and honor in this life and the next, 8-9
- ◆ Long life, 10
- ◆ Relatively smooth conduct through life, 12
- ◆ Finding “life” in all its fullness, 13
- ◆ Gradual but perceptible growth in moral goodness, 18
- ◆ The consummation of sanctification at the day of Christ’s return, 18; *see Philipians 1:6*.
- ◆ Relatively good health, 22; *see my book, The Lord’s Healing Words*.

God

His greatness: He has the power to protect and prosper those who follow his ways.

His goodness: He does, in fact, reward those who trust, love, and follow him and his will.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is seen here and throughout Proverbs as Wisdom, for he is the Incarnate Logos [Word] of God, the true wisdom of the Father; *see Matthew 12:42; John 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 1:7-10; and Colossians 2:3*.

- ◆ As Wisdom, he is our life, 13. *See John 14:6 and Colossians 3:4*.
- ◆ In particular, his words are life, 23. *See John 6:33*.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Ways of life not in keeping with God’s Word, 14
- ◆ Constantly thinking of ways to do wrong, 16
- ◆ Wickedness of all sorts, 17

- ◆ Violence, 17
- ◆ Deceptive or perverse speech, 24

Their consequences

- ◆ Loss of sleep, 16
- ◆ Being consumed by what consumes one's attention, 17
- ◆ Intellectual and moral darkness, 19
- ◆ Being unaware of what causes one to stumble and fall, 19

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Teach our children the laws of God at a very early age, 1-3.
- ◆ Make the acquisition of wisdom the main goal of life, 5, 7.
Note: "Wisdom" includes all of God's revealed will, culminating in and centering upon Jesus Christ, who is Wisdom embodied; this means that "getting" or knowing Christ is the main thing in life. See John 17:3 and Philippians 3:8-10.
- ◆ Listen to the teaching of our godly parents and elders, 1-13, 20-21.
- ◆ Avoid close association with people who do not regard God and his will, and avoid adopting their habits, 14-15.
- ◆ Listen to the words of the Bible and godly teachers; this includes listening to sermons and Christian music, 20.
- ◆ Direct our eyes to the words of God and godly teachers; this means reading the Bible and Christian books, 21.
- ◆ Watch over our hearts – that is, our thoughts, desires, and motives – since this will determine everything else in life, 23.
- ◆ Keep our eyes on the duties and missions that God has given each of us, 25. *See Romans 12:1-8 and 2 Timothy 4:17.*
- ◆ Pay careful attention to the paths we choose and take, and set godly goals for ourselves, 26-27.
- ◆ Avoid all evil, 27.

Proverbs 5

Truth

Revelation

General revelation: It comes through observation of the world and through life experiences, like the terrible psychological, social, and physical pain that results from sexual sin, 9–14.

Special revelation: It includes words and commands from God, mediated to us by his chosen messengers and then through our parents and godly teachers, 1, 7, 13.

God

His greatness: He is omnipresent and omniscient, seeing and knowing everything, 21.

His goodness

- ◆ He provides us with godly teachers who instruct us in the right way to live, 1, 7, 13.
- ◆ He gives us the fellowship of other believers in the “assembly” (now the church), 14.
- ◆ He provides marriage, and the delights of loving sexual relations within marriage, as a symbol of the relationship of Christ and his church, 15–19. *See Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22–33; Hebrews 13:4; and Revelation 19:7, 9.*
- ◆ He punishes sexual sin for the good of mankind and the glory of his name, 9–11. *See Revelation 22:15.*
- ◆ He judges, “ponders,” weighs, and evaluates all our actions, 21.

Mankind

Our created nature

- ◆ God created humans in his own image as male and female and intended them to enjoy intimacy, including physical intimacy, within the context of marriage between one man and one woman, 15–20. *See Genesis 1:26–28; 2:18–25.*
- ◆ Sexual relations within monogamous marriage are meant for pleasure as well as procreation (contrary to the traditional Roman Catholic teaching), 15–20.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Seductive speech or actions, 3, 20
Note: Seduction could include immodest dress. See Proverbs 7:10.
- ◆ All sexual activity, including embraces, outside the bounds of marriage between one man and one woman, 16–17, 20

The consequences of sexual sin

- ◆ Death, both physical and spiritual, forever, 5
- ◆ Instability of life and relationships, 6
- ◆ Loss of honor and reputation, 9
- ◆ Loss of wealth and property, 10
- ◆ Diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases, 11
- ◆ Intense sorrow and remorse, 11–14
- ◆ Loss of fellowship with God-fearing people, 14
- ◆ Loss of blessing within marriage, 16–19
- ◆ Bondage to sexual sin, which becomes an addiction, 22
- ◆ A life of folly and wandering away from wisdom, truth, and real prosperity, 23

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Pay attention to godly teaching, especially the words of the Bible, 1, 7, 13.
- ◆ Avoid association with people of the other sex who might lead us into sexual sin, 8.
- ◆ Abstain from all sexual activity, including self-stimulation, outside of marriage.
- ◆ Develop loving and mutually satisfying sexual relationships within marriage, 15–19. *See 1 Corinthians 7:1–6.*
- ◆ Repent of all illicit sexual activity and trust in God to forgive us through the saving work of Jesus Christ. *See 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 John 1:9–2:2.*

Proverbs 6

Truth

Revelation

General revelation

- ◆ It comes to us through listening to our parents' teaching, 1.
- ◆ It comes to us through observation of the created order, including the animal world and the actions of men, 6–11.

Special revelation: It includes words and commands from God, mediated to us by his chosen messengers and then through our parents and godly teachers, 20–23.

God

His greatness: He is omnipresent and omniscient, seeing and knowing everything, 16, 18.

His goodness: He hates all that is evil and harmful, 16–19.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the “light” of godly teaching and wisdom based on God’s revealed law, 23; *see John 8:12*.
- ◆ As the one who reproves [chastens, rebukes, or disciplines] us so that we may have life eternal, 23; *see Revelation 3:19*.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Inappropriate gestures that reveal a deceptive mind and motives, 12–13
- ◆ Perverse thoughts, 14
- ◆ Evil plans, 14, 18
- ◆ Sowing the seeds of conflict among others, especially among family members, friends, and members of the congregation, 14, 19
- ◆ A prideful attitude toward others, evinced by a haughty countenance, 17
- ◆ Lying, 17, 19
- ◆ Murder, 17
- ◆ Eagerness to do bad things, 18
- ◆ Slander, 19

- ◆ Seductive flattery, 24
- ◆ Lust, 25; *see Matthew 5:27-29.*
- ◆ Adultery – that is, sexual relations with someone else’s spouse, 29; this would also include sexual relations with anyone’s future spouse.
- ◆ Inappropriate touching of someone of the other sex, 29
- ◆ Stealing, 30

Their consequences

- ◆ Sudden destruction and ruin, 15
- ◆ Social conflict, 19
- ◆ Poverty, 26
- ◆ Death, 26
- ◆ Payment of indemnity or compensation, 31
- ◆ Spiritual death, that is, hell, 32; *see Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; and Ephesians 5:1-6.*
- ◆ Beatings and wounds, 33
- ◆ Shame and dishonor, 33
- ◆ The hatred of those whom we offend, 33-35

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Avoid making promises that we cannot keep and do our best to extricate ourselves from commitments we cannot fulfill, 1-6.
- ◆ Always work diligently, without having to be told and without giving in to laziness and unnecessary rest, 8-11.
- ◆ Listen to the teaching of godly parents and teachers, 20-22.
- ◆ Make wisdom – and Christ, to which godly wisdom points – our chief pre-occupation and concern, 20-22.

Proverbs 7

Truth

Revelation

Special revelation: It includes words and commands from God, mediated to us by his chosen messengers and then through our parents and godly teachers, 1-4.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ The folly of frequenting places of moral danger, 1-9
- ◆ Seductive flattery, 5, 14-21
- ◆ Evil plans, 10
- ◆ Prostitution, 10 (though here the woman may be a married woman who is only acting like a harlot)
- ◆ Sexually alluring dress, 10
- ◆ Loud, brash speech, 11
- ◆ Rebelliousness, including wifely rebellion against her husband, 11
- ◆ Neglecting domestic responsibilities, 11
 - Note: Wives who work outside the home run the risk of sexual temptation or harassment.*
- ◆ Kissing those to whom we are not married, 13
 - Note: This is a controversial subject, but the Bible seems to indicate that erotic kissing should be done within marriage only.*
- ◆ Religious hypocrisy, that is, appearing religious to mislead others into sin, 14
- ◆ Calling fornication “love,” when it is only sinful lust, 18
- ◆ Allowing our hearts – that is, our affections and passions – to be led astray by seductive people, 25

Their consequences

- ◆ Death, 26
- ◆ Spiritual death, that is, hell, 26; *see Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; and Ephesians 5:1-6.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Memorize the Word of God and meditate upon it constantly, 1-3. *See Psalm 1:2 and John 15:7.*
- ◆ Listen to the teaching of godly parents and teachers, 1-4, 24.
- ◆ Make wisdom – and Christ, to which godly wisdom points – our chief pre-occupation and concern, 2-4.
- ◆ In fact, make intimacy with Wisdom – that is, Christ – our primary object of delight and affection, 4.
- ◆ Avoid people and places that are sexually tempting, 25.

Proverbs 8

Truth

Revelation

Its scope: It is universal, speaking to all people in all places at all times. It is not a hidden knowledge for the few, 1-3. *See Proverbs 1:20-21.*

Its content

- ◆ Things that are prudent, 5
- ◆ Things that are excellent, 6; *see Proverbs 22:20 and Philipians 4:8.*
- ◆ Things that are righteous, 8

Its veracity: Its words are right, true, and in no way crooked or perverse, 6-8.

Its clarity

- ◆ The Bible is clear to all who would seek to understand it, 9.
- ◆ This does not mean that all parts are equally clear, or that some parts are not hard to understand, but that the ordinary believer who reads the Scriptures with a humble and teachable heart will grasp its meaning enough to know what to believe and how to behave in a godly way.

Note: This contradicts the teaching of the Roman Catholics that only the Pope and his appointed agents can rightly interpret the Bible.

Its literary forms

- ◆ It uses various literary techniques to communicate God's truth, including contrast. In Proverbs, Wisdom is contrasted to an adulterous woman, 2:16-18; 5:1-21; 7:6-23, and to a woman of folly, 9:13-17.
- ◆ The Hebrew language also plays a part: The Hebrew word for "wisdom" is feminine, allowing for the personifications of wisdom, adultery, and folly. Here, Wisdom speaks in first person.

Note: The Greek word for "wisdom" is also feminine.

Its benefits

- ◆ Understanding what is prudent and sensible, 5

- ◆ Counsel – that is, good advice – and wisdom, 14, 33
- ◆ The intellectual ability to exercise authority, 16
- ◆ A sense of being loved by God, the Giver of wisdom, 17; *see John 14:21*.
- ◆ Wealth, that is, relative prosperity compared with that of those who neglect or despise God’s revelation, 18, 21; *see Psalm 19:10*.
- ◆ Honor, at least from God, but usually also from men, 18
- ◆ “Enduring riches,” that is, eternal life and blessedness, 18; *see Matthew 6:19–21; 19:21*.
- ◆ Blessedness, that is, true and lasting happiness, 32
- ◆ Life, that is, long life now and eternal life with God hereafter, 35
- ◆ God’s favor, 35

Its consequences

- ◆ Loss of all the benefits enumerated above
- ◆ Harm to one’s soul, 36
- ◆ Death, that is, a premature, painful, and dishonorable end to this life, and eternal death after that

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is transcendent and holy, thus deserving our fear – that is, our reverence, awe, worship, trust, love, and obedience, 13.
- ◆ He possesses all the resources to bestow the benefits listed above.
- ◆ He is eternal, existing before this world, 22.
- ◆ He is intrinsically and essentially wise, 22–23.
- ◆ He created the universe and everything in it, 23–29.

His goodness

- ◆ He desires to make himself, his will, and his ways known to us, 1–6.
- ◆ He is true and right in all he thinks, says, and does, 5–8.
- ◆ He hates evil, 13.

Christ

His prefiguration by Lady Wisdom

- ◆ She preaches publicly to all who will listen, 1–5.

- ◆ She issues an invitation to people to come to her and learn in order to live, 4–10. *See John 7:37.*
 - ◆ She speaks only the truth, 6–8. *See John 8:31–32, 40; 18:37.*
 - ◆ She claims that her words contained nothing unrighteous, 8. *See John 7:18.*
 - ◆ She promises understanding to all who receive her words with hearts willing to obey, 9. *See John 7:17.*
 - ◆ She loves those who love her and who show their love by receiving and obeying her words, 17. *See John 14:21.*
 - ◆ She asserts that her teaching and the blessings conferred upon those who receive it are more valuable than anything, including silver and gold, 18–19. *See Matthew 13:44–46.*
 - ◆ She promises enduring wealth to those who love and listen to her, 21. *See Matthew 6:19–21; 19:21.*
 - ◆ She existed before the foundation of the world, 22–29. *See John 1:1–3; 8:58.*
 - ◆ She is the eternal, divine wisdom by whom God created the universe, 23–30. *See John 1:1–3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 1:2–3.*
 - ◆ She is the object of God’s unique favor and delight, 30. *See Isaiah 42:1 and Matthew 3:17; 17:5.*
 - ◆ Whoever finds her finds life, 35. *See John 3:16; 5:24; 14:6.*
 - ◆ Whoever finds her – that is, trusts in her – obtains favor from God, 36. *See Romans 5:1.*
- Note: Many theologians, both in ancient and in modern times, have believed that Wisdom is a true personification of Christ. They interpret words like “possessed” and “brought forth” in terms of the eternal generation of the Son of God.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Perverse and crooked – that is, misleading – speech, 8, 13
- ◆ Pride and arrogance, 13
- ◆ Disdaining God’s revelation, 33
- ◆ Hating God, 36

Salvation

See “Revelation: Its benefits,” above.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Thank God for condescending to make his will and his ways known to us through Wisdom, especially the words of the Bible, and especially in Christ.
- ◆ Attend carefully to the words of God in Scripture.
- ◆ Make the acquisition of wisdom the highest priority in life, more than making money or any other thing that we desire, 11.
- ◆ Fear God, 13. *See 1 Peter 1:17.*
- ◆ Hate evil, 13. *See Romans 12:9.*
- ◆ Look to Jesus – his words, his ways, and his saving work for us – as the source, content, and pattern of all wisdom. *See 1 Corinthians 1:31 and Colossians 2:2–11.*
- ◆ Seek to conduct ourselves with prudence and justice, 20.
- ◆ Praise God for making such a beautiful, orderly, complex, and almost infinitely varied world, 24–30.
- ◆ Take delight in God, in Jesus Christ, in the created order, and in all people, for they are created in his image, but especially in other believers in God, 30–31. *See Psalm 16:3.*
- ◆ Spend dedicated time each day “listening” to Christ by reading and hearing his Word as contained in Scripture; make this the priority of the early morning, 34.
- ◆ Seek “life” – that is, all that is good and pleasant and desirable – in Christ alone, through believing and following his Word alone.

Proverbs 9

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ This chapter of Proverbs contains ideas seen, quoted, or built upon elsewhere in Proverbs and the rest of the Bible:
 - An invitation to a banquet of blessing, 2-5; *see Isaiah 55:1-2; John 6:27, 35; 7:37-39; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-27.*
 - “Forsake foolishness and live,” 6; *see Proverbs 1:22; 9:11.*
 - The scorner [scoffer, mocker], 7-8; *see Proverbs 1:22; 13:1; 14:6; 15:12; 19:25; 21:11, 24; 22:10; 24:9.*
 - “Rebuke a wise man and he will love you,” 8; *see Proverbs 10:8; 17:1. See also Proverbs 1:5; 12:1; 13:1; 14:6; 15:31; 18:15; 19:25; 21:11.*
 - “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” 10; *see Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; and Ecclesiastes 12:13.*
 - “The Holy One,” 10; *see Proverbs 30:3.*
 - “Your days will be multiplied,” 11; *see Proverbs 3:2, 16.*
 - The foolish woman as “clamorous” [boisterous, undisciplined], 13; *see Proverbs 7:11.*
 - The Woman of Folly, who is the counterpart to the adulterous woman, 13; *see Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27.*
 - “Stolen water is sweet,” 17; *see Proverbs 20:17.*

Its literary forms: Biblical revelation employs various literary techniques to communicate God’s message.

- ◆ Comparison: Wisdom and Folly each have a house, 1, 14.
- ◆ Contrast: Wisdom builds her house, while Folly idly sits in hers, doing nothing worthwhile, 1, 14.
- ◆ Contrast: The banquet prepared by Wisdom contrasts to the perfumed bed of the adulterous woman, 2. *See Proverbs 7:17.*

- ◆ Personification: Wisdom and Folly are both personified by women who issue invitations, 3–17.

God

His greatness: He is utterly transcendent and deserves our fear, honor, reverence, trust, love, and obedience, 10.

His goodness

- ◆ He invites us to know him through receiving his revelation, here personified by Lady Wisdom, who prefigures Jesus Christ, 1–12.
- ◆ He reaches out constantly to simple [naïve] and foolish people, urging them to repent and live, 2–6.
- ◆ He gives life to those who receive his wisdom, 6, 11.
- ◆ He is Yahweh, “the LORD,” the faithful covenant God of his people, 10.
- ◆ He is the Holy One of Israel, completely pure, spotless, and free from all that is “dark” and wrong, 10. *See Proverbs 30:3. See also Psalms 22:3; 71:22; 77:13; 78:41; 89:18; Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 65:3; 10:17, 20; 12:6; and often; and 1 John 1:5.*
- ◆ He allows himself to be known, 10.
- ◆ He rewards each person according to his or her works and ways, 12.
- ◆ He punishes persistent sinners with death, 18.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is seen as Lady Wisdom, who urgently invites sinners to repent and find life, 1–12, and who invites them to a rich banquet of choicest fare, 5. *See John 6:27, 35, 47–51.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Scoffing at, scorning, and mocking those who give words of wise advice, 7–8
- ◆ A life of idleness and self-indulgence, 13–14
- ◆ Seducing others into sin, 13–18
- ◆ Offering, seeking, or indulging in forbidden pleasures, especially sexual pleasure outside of marriage, 17; *see Proverbs 2:16–19; 5:1–12; 6:20–35; 7:6–27.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Accept the invitation of Jesus Christ to turn to him for life-giving wisdom.
- ◆ Accept rebuke from people who point out our faults and sins.
- ◆ Teach those who seem open to instruction.
- ◆ Fear God and seek to know him.
- ◆ Worship God as the utterly holy one.
- ◆ Avoid all the seductions of this age, especially the ones that come from ungodly people, but also the ones that come from the media, including movies, music, television, and the Internet.

Proverbs 10

Truth

Revelation

Its source: It came from God through his chosen messengers, including King Solomon, 1. *See Proverbs 1:1; 25:1.*

Its benefits

- ◆ Making our parents glad, 1
- ◆ Deliverance from death, both from premature physical death and from later spiritual death, 2
- ◆ Preservation in times of economic scarcity, 3
- ◆ Material prosperity, 4
- ◆ People and God speaking well of us, 6
- ◆ People remembering us positively, 7
- ◆ Security from dishonor and harm, 9
- ◆ Being able to speak words that give “life” to others, 11; *see John 7:37-39.*
- ◆ Having words of wisdom to speak, 13, 31
- ◆ “Life,” that is, a happy life now and everlasting life with God after we die, 16; *see Romans 6:23.*
- ◆ God’s favor and blessing, which may take the form of material prosperity, 22
- ◆ Our righteous – that is, godly – desires being granted, 24; *see Matthew 6:9-13; 7:7-12.*
- ◆ Everlasting security with God, 25, 30; *see Matthew 7:24-27.*
- ◆ A long life, 27; *see Proverbs 9:11.*
- ◆ The certain expectation of everlasting joy, 28
- ◆ Daily strength, 29; *see Colossians 1:11.*

God

His greatness

- ◆ He has authority over life and death, 2.
- ◆ He has the resources and power to reward good and to punish evil, to recompense people for their labor and to bring want to the lazy, 3-5, 16.
- ◆ He is righteous and rewards righteous conduct, 2, 3.

- ◆ He frustrates the evil desires of the unrepentant wicked, 3.
- ◆ He rewards diligent labor, 4.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the one who speaks precious words that give life, 11, 20; *see John 6:63.*
- ◆ As the one who loves us and covers our sins with his shed blood, 12; *see Philipians 2:20; 1 John 2:2; and Revelation 1:5. See also John 8:1-11.*
- ◆ As the one who speaks words of wisdom, 13, 31; *see Matthew 11:19; 13:54; Mark 6:2; and Luke 2:40; 21:15.*
- ◆ As the one who “feeds” many with the truth of his conversation and discourse, 21; *see the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7. See also John 6:35-40, 45-51.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Not doing our duty when we can, 5
- ◆ Talking too much, 8, 10, 19
- ◆ Any crooked or perverse conduct, 9
- ◆ Refusing correction and constructive criticism, 17
- ◆ Nursing resentment and hatred in our hearts while pretending to be friendly, 18; *see Matthew 5:21-22 and Ephesians 4:26.*
- ◆ Lying, 18; *see Ephesians 4:25.*
- ◆ Slander, libel, and perjury, 18; *see Exodus 20:16.*
- ◆ Taking pleasure from doing wrong, 23 (like young Augustine, when he stole a pear just for the “fun” of it)
- ◆ Perverse or crooked – that is, devious and deceptive – speech, 32

Their consequences

- ◆ Our desires being unmet, 3
- ◆ Bringing grief and shame to our parents, 5
- ◆ People (and eventually God) treating us violently, 6
- ◆ A rotten reputation now and hereafter, 7
- ◆ Our crooked ways becoming known to others, 9
- ◆ A “rod” of discipline coming upon us, 13
- ◆ Destruction of all sorts, 14, 29

- ◆ We wander farther and farther from the way of truth and life, 17; *see Isaiah 53:6.*
- ◆ Death, both physical and spiritual, and perhaps “premature,” 21, 27
- ◆ Our fears coming upon us, 24
- ◆ Death of all our dreams, 28
- ◆ Loss of a share in the new heaven and new earth, 30; *see Revelation 22:14–15.*
- ◆ Punishment for all our perverse speech, 31

Salvation

See “Revelation: Its benefits,” above.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Seek to be just and righteous in all our conduct, 2–3.
- ◆ Work diligently while we can, 4–5.
- ◆ Speak well of those who practice righteousness and justice, and preserve their memory, 6–7.
- ◆ Receive the “commands” of God, whether written in the Bible or spoken to us by godly people who give us advice, counsel, and even rebuke, 8, 17. *See James 3:17.*
- ◆ “Store up knowledge,” that is, do everything we can to acquire, remember, and assimilate knowledge of all sorts, especially about God and his ways and will, 14.
- ◆ Ask God to control our speech so that we don’t talk too much, 19. *See James 1:19–20; 3:1–12.*
- ◆ Set our hopes on the rewards that will come to us when Christ returns, 28, 30. *See Matthew 5:3–12; 6:19–21; and 1 Peter 1:13.*

Proverbs 11

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ This chapter of Proverbs contains ideas seen, quoted, or built upon elsewhere in Proverbs and the rest of the Bible:
 - “When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom,” 2; *see Proverbs 16:18; 18:12; 29:23; Matthew 23:12; James 4:6; and 1 Peter 5:5.*
 - “The integrity of the upright will guide them,” 3; *see Proverbs 13:6.*
 - “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,” 4; *see Luke 6:24; James 5:1-6; and Romans 2:5.*
 - “Righteousness delivers from death,” 4, 6, 8; *see Genesis 7:1-8:18; 19:1-29.*
 - “The merciful man does good for his own soul,” 17; *see Matthew 5:7; 25:34-36.*
 - “He who sows righteousness will have a sure reward,” 18; *see Galatians 6:7-9.*
 - “There is one who scatters, yet increases more,” 24; *see Luke 6:30, 38 and 1 Timothy 6:18-19.*
 - The rewards of seeking good, 27; *see Matthew 6:33.*
 - “He who trusts in his riches will fall,” 28; *see 1 Timothy 6:17.*
 - “The righteous will flourish like foliage,” 28; *see Psalms 1:3; 52:7-8; and Jeremiah 17:8.*
 - Recompense to the righteous and to the ungodly and sinners, 31; *see Jeremiah 17:10.*
 - “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,” 30; *see John 15:1-5; Galatians 5:22; and Revelation 22:2.*

Its benefits

- ◆ God’s delight, 1

- ◆ The certainty of reward, both here and hereafter, 1, 31; *see Colossians 3:24.*
- ◆ Increase of wisdom, 2
- ◆ Guidance along the way, 3-4, 6
- ◆ Deliverance from premature death, eternal death, and God's wrath, 4
- ◆ Deliverance from "trouble" [harm], especially eternal punishment, 8-9
- ◆ Other people's admiration and affection, 10
- ◆ Being a blessing to our city, 11
- ◆ "Life," both abundant life now and eternal life later, 19, 30
- ◆ Deliverance for our posterity, 21
- ◆ Increasing wealth, 24-25
- ◆ God's favor, 27
- ◆ Flourishing in all areas of life, 28

God

His greatness

- ◆ He has the resources to reward good, 18, 24-25.
- ◆ He has the power to punish evil, 21.
- ◆ He is Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, 20.

His goodness

- ◆ He loves honesty and hates dishonesty, 1.
- ◆ He bears a holy wrath against unrepentant sinners, 4, 23.
- ◆ He delivers the righteous from trouble, 8. *See Psalm 34:17 and often in the Psalms.*
- ◆ He is righteous and rewards those who seek and do righteousness, as well as their descendants, 18, 21. *See Matthew 6:33.*
- ◆ He hates perversity and crookedness, 20.
- ◆ He delights in those whose ways are without reproach and who are blameless (not sinless, but without duplicity or open and notorious sins), 20.
- ◆ He punishes unrepentant sinners, 21.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is seen in the statement, "The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead," 8.

- ◆ He was made to be "sin" by God in our place so that in him we might become "the righteousness of God." *See 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

- ◆ We are “righteous” by faith and receive deliverance from God’s wrath because he took the “trouble” we deserve in our stead. *See Romans 3:22–25; 5:1, 6–10.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Dishonesty in business, 1
- ◆ Pride, 2
- ◆ Unfaithfulness, including marital infidelity, 6
- ◆ Lust, that is, misplaced or inordinate desires, 6
- ◆ Hypocrisy, 9
- ◆ Slander, 9
- ◆ Destructive speech, 11
- ◆ Despising our neighbors in our hearts, 12
- ◆ Gossip, 13
- ◆ Ruthlessness, including in business affairs, 16
- ◆ Cruelty, 17
- ◆ Deceptive work, 18
- ◆ Perversity or crookedness in thought, speech, and action, 18
- ◆ Seeking and pursuing things that are not right or good, 20, 27
- ◆ Lack of discretion, 22
- ◆ Stinginess, 24
- ◆ Hoarding goods in times of want, 26
- ◆ Trusting in wealth, 28
- ◆ Causing trouble to our own families and households, 29
- ◆ Ungodliness, that is, lack of fear of God, 31

Their consequences

- ◆ God’s disgust and even hatred, 1, 20
- ◆ Shame, 2
- ◆ Self-destruction, 3, 17
- ◆ No safety in the day of God’s wrath, 4, 23
- ◆ Falling down or failing because of our wickedness, 5, 28
- ◆ Increased bondage to our selfish desires, 6
- ◆ No hope for a future after this life, 7
- ◆ Trouble in general, 8

- ◆ The dislike of everyone around us, 10, 26
- ◆ Death, both physical and spiritual, 19
- ◆ Eventual punishment, both here and hereafter, 21, 31
- ◆ Loss of any inheritance on earth, 29
- ◆ Having to serve others, 29

Salvation

See "Revelation: Its benefits," above.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Adhere to strict honesty in all business dealings, 1.
- ◆ Ask God to give us humility, 2.
- ◆ Seek to live with integrity and to make decisions on the basis of what is right and honest, 3.
- ◆ Seek righteousness more than riches, 4.
- ◆ Build habits of righteousness to escape bondage to bad habits, 6.
- ◆ Seek to grow in the knowledge of God and his will and ways, 9.
- ◆ Bless the place in which we live, 11.
- ◆ Keep criticism of our neighbors to ourselves, 12.
- ◆ Keep secrets entrusted to us by others, and avoid gossip, 13.
- ◆ Seek advice from several godly people before making important decisions, 14.
- ◆ Refrain from vouching for others unless we know them well, 15.
- ◆ Be merciful to others, 17.
- ◆ Ask God to give us the grace to live in a way that is above reproach, 20.
- ◆ Be generous to others, 24.
- ◆ Seek what is good above all, 27.
- ◆ Thank God for sending Jesus to die in our place.

Proverbs 12

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ For example, this chapter of Proverbs speaks of rotteness in the bones, 4; *see Proverbs 14:30 and Habakkuk 3:16.*

Its benefits

- ◆ God's favor, 2; *see 1 Peter 2:19-20.*
- ◆ An assured future, for "the root of the righteous cannot be moved," 3, 7; *see Proverbs 10:25 and Matthew 7:24-25.*
- ◆ Deliverance from harm by wise and prudent speech, 6
- ◆ Others' respect and commendation, 8
- ◆ A fruitful life, 12
- ◆ Deliverance from trouble, 13
- ◆ Joy, 20
- ◆ Safety from serious harm, 21; *see Romans 8:28.*
- ◆ God's delight, 22
- ◆ "Life," both now and hereafter, 28

God

His greatness

- ◆ As Creator and King, he has the authority and power to judge – both to vindicate and to condemn, 2.
- ◆ As Creator and King, he has the resources to reward people for what they have done, 14.
- ◆ He is eternal and grants eternal life to those who deal truthfully, 19, 28.

His goodness

- ◆ He is good and grants favor to those who are good, 2.
- ◆ He condemns those with wicked intentions, 2.
- ◆ He is righteous and rewards the righteous, 7. *See John 17:25.*

- ◆ He rewards diligent labor, 11, 14, 24, 27. *See Ephesians 6:8.*
- ◆ He rewards truthful and edifying speech, 14.
- ◆ He delights in the truth and in those who speak it, 22.
- ◆ He hates lying, 22.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the only truly good man to walk the earth, 2; *see John 7:12; 10:11; and Romans 3:12.*
- ◆ As the only righteous man that ever lived, 5; *see Matthew 27:19; Acts 3:14; 7:52; Romans 3:10; 1 Peter 3:18; and 1 John 2:1.*
- ◆ As the one who received public acclaim for his incomparable wisdom, 8
- ◆ As the one who speaks the truth and declares righteousness, 17
- ◆ As the one who speaks healing words, 18; *see Matthew 8:13; 9:6-7, 22, 29.*
- ◆ As the one who speaks words that will stand throughout eternity, 19

Mankind

Our fallen state: Our words have great power to hurt, to heal, and to comfort those burdened with anxiety, worry, and fear, 18, 25.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Despising correction and advice, 1
- ◆ Wicked intentions, motives, and plans, 2
- ◆ Giving bad advice, 5
- ◆ Deceit of any kind, 5, 17
- ◆ Seeking to harm others and speaking words of malice, 6
- ◆ Following frivolity – that is, vain and useless things, like most popular entertainment, 11
- ◆ Coveting what others have gained through lawful endeavor, 12
- ◆ Self-confidence, self-deception, and refusal to heed counsel, 15
- ◆ Expressing anger immediately and without restraint, 16
- ◆ Saying things that pierce like a sword and wound others' hearts, 18; for example, speaking "truth" without love; *see Ephesians 4:15.*
- ◆ Lying, 19, 22
- ◆ Expressing one's folly openly, 23

Their consequences

- ◆ Condemnation from God, 2
- ◆ Failure to build a solid life or reputation, 3
- ◆ Being overthrown – that is, experiencing failure, public disgrace, and eventual doom, 7
- ◆ Being despised by others, 8
- ◆ Being held captive to the consequences of one’s evil speech, 13
- ◆ Merely temporary “success” and eventual disappearance, 19
- ◆ A life “filled” with evil, harm, failure, and frustration, 21
- ◆ Having to serve others, 24
- ◆ Going further and further away from the way of life, 26
- ◆ Failure to complete even the most necessary tasks, and thus failure to enjoy the results of one’s labor, 27
- ◆ Death, both physical (and perhaps violent or premature) and spiritual (for all eternity), 28

Salvation

See “Revelation: Its benefits,” “God,” and “Christ,” above.

Marriage

It forges such a union that the actions of a wife greatly impact her husband’s public reputation and his inner peace, even his health, 4. *See Proverbs 31:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:7.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Eagerly desire, love, and delight in instruction from others and from the Word of God, 1.
- ◆ Be very, very careful in choosing a spouse, 4.
- ◆ Seek to entertain only thoughts that are right and righteous, 5. *See Philippians 4:8.*
- ◆ Avoid ostentation, and live frugally, 9.
- ◆ Treat our animals with kindness, 10.
- ◆ Attend to our daily tasks with diligence, 11, 27.
- ◆ Listen to the counsel of godly people, and heed it, 15.

- ◆ Refuse to react quickly to people who try to shame us; instead, hide our displeasure, 16.
- ◆ Speak with gentleness when we must rebuke others, 18.
- ◆ Do our best to advise others to maintain peaceful relations with each other, 20.
- ◆ Trust God to take care of us and not to allow serious harm to come to us, 21.
- ◆ Trust that he is with us and will use all events to his glory and our good if trouble does come our way from him, 21. *See Romans 8:28.*
- ◆ Refrain from unnecessarily telling people all that we know, 23.
- ◆ Use kind and truthful words to try to comfort those who are depressed, 25.
- ◆ Choose our friends carefully, 26.
- ◆ Praise and thank God for his character and his kindness toward us.
- ◆ Praise and worship Jesus for being the only truly righteous man who yet died for us.

Proverbs 13

Truth

Revelation

Its benefits

- ◆ Satisfaction, both physical and spiritual, 2, 25
- ◆ Preservation of life, both physical and spiritual, 3
- ◆ A “rich” spiritual life, 4
- ◆ Constant joy, 9
- ◆ Slowly increasing wealth, 11
- ◆ Ultimate satisfaction of all our hopes when Christ returns, 12; *see 1 Peter 1:13.*
- ◆ Favor with God and other people, 15
- ◆ The joy of benefitting others, 17
- ◆ Honor from God and other people, 18
- ◆ Increasing wisdom, 20

God

His greatness: He has the power punish sin and reward obedience, 13.

His goodness

- ◆ He is righteous, and rewards righteous, prudent, and diligent conduct, 4–6, 9, 21.
- ◆ He punishes sin and rewards obedience to his commands, 13.
Note: In the Bible, the passive voice of the verb often points to the action of God, 13.
See Matthew 5:30; 6:33; 7:2, 7, 19.
- ◆ Like a loving father, he disciplines his children for their good, 24. *See Proverbs 3:11–12 and Hebrews 12:3–11.*

Christ

His nature and power

- ◆ He is our hope and the fulfillment of all our desires, 12. *See Romans 8:18–30; Colossians 1:27; and 1 Timothy 1:1.*

- ◆ His teaching is a fountain of life, 14. *See John 6:63; 7:37-39.*
- ◆ He is the tree of life. *See Proverbs 3:18; John 1:5; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1-7; and Revelation 22:2.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Scorning the advice or rebuke of one's parents or anyone else, 1, 18
- ◆ Unfaithfulness of any kind, that is, failure to keep promises, 2, 15
- ◆ Violent behavior, 2
- ◆ Laziness, 4
- ◆ Lying, 5
- ◆ Pretending to have or be something that one is not, 7
- ◆ Pride, 10
- ◆ Dishonest acquisition of wealth, 11
- ◆ Despising God's Word and commands, 13
- ◆ Failure to deliver a message entrusted to us, 17
- ◆ Refusing to quit evil behavior, 19
- ◆ Close association with foolish people, 20
- ◆ Injustice in government or business, 23
- ◆ Failure to discipline one's children, 24

Their consequences

- ◆ Destruction of all kinds, including final destruction in hell, 3, 6, 13, 20
- ◆ Failure to achieve or receive what one desires, 4
- ◆ Shame, 5, 18
- ◆ Extinction of life and reputation, 9
- ◆ Conflict with other people, 10
- ◆ Loss of ill-gotten gains, 11
- ◆ Death, whether premature, eternal, or both, 14
- ◆ A "hard" life full of unnecessary frustration, labor, and trouble, 15, 17
- ◆ Poverty, 18

Note: Faithful followers of God may also experience poverty, but it won't be the result of their sin. See Luke 6:20 and James 5:1-7.

- ◆ Seeing one's wealth go to righteous people instead of to one's family, 22
- ◆ Constant insufficiency, 25

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Hear and heed our parents' instruction, 1.
- ◆ Watch over what we say, 3.
- ◆ Work at all our tasks diligently, 4.
- ◆ Speak only the truth, 5.
- ◆ Seek to live a blameless life – that is, one that is without reproach, 6.
- ◆ Listen to advice, especially when we disagree with others, 10.
- ◆ Work, earn, and save regularly, looking for long-term financial health, 11.
- ◆ Set our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 12. *See 1 Peter 1:13.*
- ◆ Fear and obey God's commands, 13.
- ◆ Teach others the way of life, 14.
- ◆ Seek to acquire sufficient knowledge before making any decision, 16.
- ◆ Faithfully communicate messages entrusted to us, especially the gospel of Jesus Christ, 17.
- ◆ Accept rebukes from others, 18.
- ◆ Associate with wise people as much as possible, either in person or through reading biographies and the Bible, 20.
- ◆ Discipline our children while they are still young, 24.

Proverbs 14

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ This chapter of Proverbs contains ideas seen, quoted, or built upon elsewhere in Proverbs and the rest of the Bible:
 - “The wise woman builds her house,” 1; *see Proverbs 9:1; 31:10–31; 1 Timothy 5:9–14; and Titus 2:4–5.*
 - “A rod of pride” [a rod to his back, *NIV*], 3; *see Proverbs 10:13; 19:29; 26:3.*
 - “The lips of the wise will preserve them,” 3; *see Proverbs 12:6.*
 - “A faithful witness” versus “a false witness,” 5; *see Exodus 20:16; 23:1; and Proverbs 6:19.*
 - The scoffer [mockers, scorner], 6; *see Proverbs 1:22; 13:1; 15:12; 19:25; 21:11, 24; 22:10; 24:9.*
 - “Knowledge is easy to him who understands,” 6; *see Proverbs 8:9; 17:24.*
 - “The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy,” 10; *see Romans 12:15.*
 - “The house of the wicked will be overthrown,” 11; *see Matthew 7:24–27.*
 - A way that ends in death, 12; *see Proverbs 5:4, 23; 7:21–27; 12:15; and Matthew 7:13–14.*

God

His greatness: He has the power to overthrow the house of the wicked and to cause the tent of the upright to flourish, 11.

Note: In the Bible, the passive voice in such statements often points to the action of God.

His goodness: He is upright and righteous and rewards those who are like him, 2, 11.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ♦ As the faithful witness, 5; *see John 18:37; 1 Timothy 6:13; and Revelation 1:5; 3:14.*
- ♦ As the only one who can really sympathize with us, 10; *see Hebrews 4:15.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ♦ Perverse, crooked conduct, 2
- ♦ Pride and prideful speech, 3
- ♦ Perjury, bearing false witness, speaking falsely of others to their harm, and lying, 5, 25
- ♦ Scoffing at, mocking, and scorning truth or the advice of godly people, 6
- ♦ Mocking sin, the need for a sin offering, or the need to make restitution for wrong, 9
- ♦ Turning away from God in one's heart, 14
- ♦ Foolish rage that comes from baseless self-confidence, 16
- ♦ Quick-tempered actions, 17
- ♦ Evil intentions, 17
- ♦ Despising one's neighbor (in any sense of "neighbor"), 21
- ♦ Making evil plans, 22
- ♦ Excessive talking about things that do not profit, 23
- ♦ Impulsive speech and action, 29
- ♦ Envy, 30
- ♦ Oppressing the poor or the weak, 31

Their consequences

- ♦ Ruin for one's household, 1, 11
- ♦ A "rod," that is, some sort of painful discipline, 3
- ♦ Inability to find wisdom even when it is sought, 6
- ♦ Loss of the respect and friendship of prudent people, 7
- ♦ Increasing self-deception, 8

- ◆ Death, 12, 27
- ◆ Being hated by others, 17
- ◆ Eventual servitude to good people, 19
- ◆ Going further astray into harmful paths, 22
- ◆ Poverty, 23
- ◆ Bad health at the deepest level, 30
- ◆ Banishment from society and eventually from God's presence, 32; *see Matthew 5:29-30; 7:21-23.*
- ◆ National shame and disgrace, 34
- ◆ Wrath of temporal authorities and God, 35; *see Matthew 25:40-46.*

Salvation

Its recipients: It comes to those who by grace persevere in doing good.

Its substance

- ◆ Prosperity for one's household, 1, 11
- ◆ Preservation from trouble, 3
- ◆ Increased knowledge, especially spiritual knowledge, 6
- ◆ Understanding how one should proceed, 8
- ◆ God's favor, 9
- ◆ Satisfaction of all sorts, 14
- ◆ The ability to foresee and avoid trouble, 16
- ◆ Eventual rule over wicked people, 19
- ◆ The friendship of many people, 20
- ◆ God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, 22
- ◆ Being the means of others' salvation, 25
- ◆ Confidence in times of trouble, 26
- ◆ Well-being for one's children, 26
- ◆ Constant provision of "life" from God, 27; *see Psalm 36:9 and Jeremiah 2:13.*
- ◆ Good health, 30
- ◆ A secure future after death, 32

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Walk with integrity, 2.
- ◆ Fear God, that is, respect, reverence, worship, trust, love, and obey him, 2.
- ◆ Tolerate a certain amount of “messiness” in order to be productive, 4.
- ◆ Avoid foolish people, both in person and in the media, that is, don’t spend time watching, reading, or listening to things that merely portray the actions of foolish people, 7.
- ◆ Accept the reality that no one really understand us but God, 10. *See Hebrews 4:15.*
- ◆ Be careful lest we deceive ourselves into doing something that “seems right” but is clearly shown by Scripture (or wise advisors) to be destructive, 12.
- ◆ Accept the mixed nature of life in this world, where we experience both joy and sorrow, sometimes simultaneously, 13.
- ◆ Refuse to believe all that we are told, but prudently consider the facts before making decisions, 15. This applies especially to how we respond to those who would sell us something.
- ◆ Ask God for the self-control to restrain our anger when we are provoked, 29.
- ◆ Honor and care for the poor and needy, 31.

Proverbs 15

Truth

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is omniscient and omnipresent, 3, 11.
- ◆ He deserves our heartfelt worship and the offering of all that we have, 8.
- ◆ He deserves our fear – that is, our reverence, awe, respect, worship, trust, and obedience, 16, 33.
- ◆ He is wise, that is, he possesses all intellectual attributes to an infinite degree, 33.

His goodness

- ◆ He hears and delights in the prayers of his faithful people, 8, 29.
- ◆ He cares for widows and other weak people, 25.
- ◆ He grants wisdom to those who fear him, 33.
- ◆ He is righteous and rewards righteousness, 6, 9.
- ◆ He hates wickedness, 8–9, 26, 29.
- ◆ He loves uprightness and integrity, 8.
- ◆ He disciplines his erring children, 10. *See Proverbs 3:11–12 and Hebrews 12:3–11.*
- ◆ He has placed laws of cause and effect, action and consequence, into the world; these include moral laws, 1, 4, 6, 10, 13, 18–19, 22–25, 27, 31–33.
- ◆ He punishes pride, 25. *See Proverbs 12:7; Isaiah 2:11; James 4:6; and 1 Peter 5:5.*

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the one who spoke words of wisdom, 2; *see Mark 6.*
- ◆ As the one who uttered words that brought life, both physical and eternal, 4; *see John 6:63; 11:43.*
- ◆ As the one whose prayer was heard because of his righteousness, 8; *see John 11:41–42 and Hebrews 5:7–9.*

- ◆ As the one who loved his disciples and who followed the way of righteousness, 9; *see John 13:1; 15:9.*
- ◆ As the one whose wisdom delighted his heavenly Father, 20; *see Matthew 3:17.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Harsh words, 1
- ◆ Foolish speech, 2
- ◆ Perverse language, 4
- ◆ Despising one's parents' instruction, 5
- ◆ Hypocritical worship, 8
- ◆ Scoffing at, scorning, and mocking the truth and its messengers, 12, 32
- ◆ Hatred, 17
- ◆ Unrestrained anger, 18
- ◆ Laziness, 19
- ◆ Despising one's mother, 20
- ◆ Pride, 25
- ◆ Greed, 27
- ◆ Evil thoughts and words, 28

Their consequences

- ◆ Provoking angry responses from others, 1
- ◆ Breaking others' spirits by our unhelpful speech, 4
- ◆ Trouble coming along with our income for ourselves and our households, 6, 27
- ◆ God's hatred, 8, 26
- ◆ Harsh discipline, 10
- ◆ Hell and destruction, 11, 24
- ◆ Contention and strife, 18
- ◆ Unnecessary frustration in life, 19
- ◆ Destruction for our households, 25
- ◆ Alienation from God, 29

Salvation

Its recipients

- ◆ They receive correction, 5.

- ◆ They pray to God from a sincere heart, 8, 29.
- ◆ They persevere in following righteousness, 9. *See Romans 2:5-8.*
- ◆ They seek knowledge, especially spiritual knowledge, 14. *See Hosea 6:3; John 17:3; and Colossians 1:9; 2:2; 3:1-2.*
- ◆ They fear God, 16.
- ◆ They accept correction and rebuke from God and others, 31.
- ◆ They are humble, 33.

Its substance

- ◆ Life, 4, 24
- ◆ God's favor and delight, 8, 20
- ◆ God's love, 9
- ◆ Contentment with little, 16
- ◆ A relatively smooth life, 19
- ◆ A way that leads to heaven and avoids hell, 24
- ◆ Answered prayer, 29
- ◆ Joy, 30
- ◆ Fellowship with wise people forever, 31
- ◆ Growth in wisdom, 33
- ◆ Honor, 33; *see 1 Peter 1:6-7.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Respond gently to provocation, 1. *See Ephesians 4:29-32.*
- ◆ Use our knowledge with discretion, not saying all that we know all the time, 2, 28.
- ◆ Speak wholesome words, 4. *See Ephesians 4:29.*
- ◆ Hear and heed our parents' instruction, 5.
- ◆ Share our knowledge of spiritual things with others, 7.
- ◆ Pray often, both in private and in public worship, 8, 29.
- ◆ Ask God to give us grace to follow righteousness, 9. *See Matthew 6:33.*
- ◆ Ask God to give us cheerful hearts, and cultivate these by rejoicing in the Lord always, 13, 15. *See Philippians 3:1; 4:4; and 1 Thessalonians 5:18.*
- ◆ Continually seek knowledge of all sorts, 14.

- ◆ Seek to be content with little, rather than acquiring great wealth, 16–17, 27.
- ◆ Nurture an atmosphere of love in the home, especially at mealtimes, 17.
- ◆ Ask God to make us slow to anger, 18. *See James 1:19.*
- ◆ Seek the advice of several others before making decisions, 22.
- ◆ Accept and heed God’s rebuke and discipline, even when it comes through others, 32.
- ◆ Constantly humble ourselves before God in repentance, faith, and complete reliance, 33. *See 1 Peter 5:5–7.*

Proverbs 16

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ This chapter of Proverbs contains ideas seen, quoted, or built upon elsewhere in Proverbs and the rest of the Bible:
 - “The LORD weighs the spirits [motives, *NIV*],” 2; see *Psalms 139:23; Proverbs 24:12; 1 Corinthians 4:4-5; and Hebrews 4:12.*
 - “Commit to the LORD,” 3; see *Psalms 37:5; Proverbs 3:6; and 1 Peter 5:7.*
 - “Your thoughts will be established [plans will succeed, *NIV*],” 3; see *Psalms 1:3; 55:22; 90:17; and Proverbs 3:5-6.*
 - Mercy – that is, lovingkindness, steadfast love, or grace – and truth – that is, faithfulness, 6; see *Exodus 34:6; 2 Samuel 15:20; Psalms 25:10; 40:11; 57:3; 61:7; 85:10; 86:15; 89:14; 115:1; 138:2; Proverbs 3:3; 14:22; and John 1:14, 17.*
 - “Makes even his enemies to be at peace with him,” 7; see *2 Chronicles 14:6-7; 17:10.*
 - “The LORD directs his steps,” 9; see *Psalms 37:23; Proverbs 20:24; and Jeremiah 10:23.*
 - “Honest weights and scales are the LORD’s,” 11; see *Leviticus 19:36 and Proverbs 21:2; 24:12.*
 - “A throne is established by righteousness,” 12; see *Deuteronomy 17:19-20; Proverbs 25:5; Isaiah 16:5; and Romans 13:3.*
 - “As messengers of death is the king’s wrath,” 14; see *Esther 7:7-10 and Proverbs 19:2.*
 - “A humble spirit,” 19; see *Isaiah 57:15 and Matthew 5:3.*
 - “Whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he,” 20; see *Psalms 34:8; 37:4-5; and Proverbs 3:5-6; 16:3; 28:25.*
 - “Health [healing, *NIV*] to the bones,” 24; see *Proverbs 4:22; 12:18; 15:30.*
 - “The silver-haired head,” 31; see *Proverbs 20:29.*
 - “Slow to anger,” 32; see *Proverbs 14:29; 19:11; and James 1:19.*

Its benefits

- ◆ Successful plans, 3
- ◆ Avoidance of sin and its consequences, 6
- ◆ Good relationships with others, even erstwhile enemies, 7
- ◆ God's guidance and protection on life's paths, 9
- ◆ Secure positions of authority, 12
- ◆ Favor with good rulers, 13
- ◆ Preservation of our lives and souls, 17
- ◆ Receiving good of all sorts, 20; *see Matthew 7:11; Romans 8:32.*
- ◆ True happiness, 20
- ◆ Increased knowledge and wisdom, 21
- ◆ The ability to speak with knowledge and healing effect, 23-24
- ◆ Long life, 31

God

His greatness

- ◆ He gives the ability to make wise statements at the right time, 1; *see Matthew 10:19.*
- ◆ He sees the hearts of men, 2.
- ◆ He orders all events according to his will, even using wicked men for his purposes and the casting of lots to carry out his plans, 4, 33; *see Genesis 50:19; Exodus 9:16; Job 21:30; Isaiah 43:7; Acts 2:22-24; Romans 8:28; 9:22; 11:36; and Ephesians 1:11.*

His goodness

- ◆ He rewards those who seek to please him, 7.
- ◆ He gives true happiness to those who trust in him, 20.
- ◆ He hates pride, 5. *See Proverbs 12:7; 15:25; Isaiah 2:11; James 4:6; and 1 Peter 5:5.*
- ◆ He is just and cares for justice in every area of life, 11.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the embodiment of God's grace and truth who made atonement for our sins, 6; *see John 1:14, 17, 29; Romans 3:24-25; and 1 John 2:2.*
- ◆ As the only perfect King, 10-13; *see John 18:33-36; 20:28.*

- ◆ As the King who has power over life and death, 14–15; *see Psalm 2:4–12 and Revelation 19:16.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Self-righteousness, 2
- ◆ Pride in the heart, 5, 18–19
- ◆ Injustice and especially acquiring wealth unjustly, 8
- ◆ Abuse of authority, 12
- ◆ Haughtiness toward others, 18
- ◆ Self-deception, 25
- ◆ Sowing conflict by bringing up evil things and spreading gossip and slander, 27–28
- ◆ Leading others into evil, especially violence (for example, gang recruitment), 29

Their consequences

- ◆ Doom; that is eternal damnation, 4
- ◆ God’s disgust and hatred, resulting in punishment, 5
- ◆ An unstable position as a ruler or leader, 12
- ◆ Temporal and even eternal failure and destruction, 18
- ◆ Death, both physical and spiritual, 25
- ◆ Relational and social strife and chaos, 27–28

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Commit our works to God, trusting him to guide, protect, and prosper what we do, 3. *See Psalm 37:5 and Proverbs 3:5–6.*
- ◆ Fear God and turn away from evil, 6, 17.
- ◆ Seek integrity and honesty in all dealings with money, 11.
- ◆ Seek to develop good relationships with those in authority over us by doing and saying what is right and avoiding what provokes them, if possible, 12–15.
- ◆ Make the acquisition of wisdom a higher priority than the acquisition of money, 16.
- ◆ Ask God to give us true humility of heart and soul, 18–19.

- ◆ Be content with little and with association with “little” people, rather than seeking wealth and influence with “big” people, 18–19.
- ◆ Listen carefully to advice from others and to the teachings of the Word of God, 20. *See Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1.*
- ◆ Try to speak in a way that is pleasing, avoiding unnecessary sharpness of speech, 21, 24. *See Ephesians 4:29.*
- ◆ Avoid gossip and slander, 27–28.
- ◆ Ask God for patience when we are provoked, 32. *See Matthew 5:5; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:1–3; James 1:19; and 1 Peter 2:21–23.*

Proverbs 17

Truth

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is omniscient and omnipresent, so he can see and test the hearts of men, 3.
- ◆ He made all people, including the poor, 5.
- ◆ He has the authority and power to punish evil.

Note: The passive voice, as in "will not go unpunished," 5, often refers to the action of God.

His goodness

- ◆ He cares for the poor, the needy, and the afflicted, 5.
- ◆ He detests injustice, especially acquittal of the wicked and punishment of the (relatively) good, 15.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the one who covers over sin with his blood, 9; *see 1 John 1:9-10.*
- ◆ As the true "friend" who loves at all times, 17; *see John 15:9-15.*
- ◆ As the one who spared his words when confronted with hateful accusers, 27; *see Matthew 26:62-63; 27:11-14, 27-31; and 1 Peter 2:19-23.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Engaging in strife and arguments at celebratory meals, 1
- ◆ Causing shame to our parents by our conduct, 2
- ◆ Mocking, scorning, and despising the poor, needy, and afflicted, 3
- ◆ Lying, especially by those in authority, 4, 7
- ◆ Listening to liars and believing them, 4
- ◆ Doing any evil deeds, 4
- ◆ Being glad at someone else's misfortune, 5
- ◆ Repeatedly talking about another's mistakes, faults, and sins, 9
- ◆ All forms of negative speech, including gossip, 9
- ◆ Seeking to stir up disobedience to authority, 11

- ◆ Persisting in folly despite others' advice, 12
- ◆ Paying back a good deed with an evil one, 13
- ◆ Continuing in a disagreement that will only lead to more conflict, 14
- ◆ Perverting justice, officially or privately, 15, 26
- ◆ Making premature commitments based on insufficient information, 18
- ◆ Any kind of deceit in the heart or speech, 20
- ◆ Scoffing at, mocking, and scorning those in authority and their advice, 21
- ◆ Giving or taking bribes, 23
- ◆ Ignoring present realities and directing our attention to distant matters instead, 24

Their consequences

- ◆ Being ruled over by others, 2
- ◆ God's punishment, 5
- ◆ Causing alienation among friends, 9
- ◆ Repeated punishment for the same mistake or offense, 10
- ◆ Severe penalties from ruling authorities and from God, 12
- ◆ Afflicting our households with evil and harm, 13
- ◆ God's hatred, 15
- ◆ Contention and destruction, 19
- ◆ All sorts of harm and hurt, 20

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Be content with little and with a quiet home, 1.
- ◆ Avoid those who spread falsehood, 4.
- ◆ Seek to bring honor to our parents, 6, 21, 25.
- ◆ Give presents – not bribes! – appropriately, 8.
- ◆ Refuse to bring up or talk about the sins, faults, and failings of others (after they have been dealt with biblically), 9. *See Matthew 18:15-20.*
- ◆ Give wise and gentle rebuke to those whom we think might receive it, 10.
- ◆ Accept the rebukes of wise people, 10.
- ◆ Avoid unnecessary arguments, 14.
- ◆ Be faithful and loyal to our friends, especially when they run into trouble, 17.

- ◆ Ask God for cheerful hearts.
- ◆ Seek to maintain an “attitude of gratitude” and praise, 22. *See Psalm 34:1; Proverbs 12:25; 15:13, 15; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 3:1; 4:4-8; Colossians 3:14-17; 4:2; and 1 Thessalonians 5:18.*
- ◆ Ask God to help us restrain our speech, especially when we are provoked by people or circumstances, 27-28. *See Psalm 37; Proverbs 10:19; and James 1:19.*

Proverbs 18

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ In this chapter of Proverbs, for example, “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook,” 4; *see John 4:14; 7:37-38.*

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is almighty, 10.
- ◆ He is personal and has a name, Yahweh, 10.

His goodness

- ◆ He protects those who trust in him, 10.
- ◆ He blesses us with marriage; in this case, he gives a wife as a “good thing” – that is, a good gift, 22.
- ◆ He punishes the proud and honors the humble, 13.
- ◆ He is implied here as the one who brings destruction and honor. *See Proverbs 3:34; 15:33; 16:18; Isaiah 2:10-12, 17; 5:15-16; Matthew 23:12; and 1 Peter 5:5.*

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the one who received ultimate honor as a reward for ultimate humility, 12; *see Philippians 2:5-11.*
- ◆ As the one who demonstrated prudence and wisdom even as a child by seeking knowledge, 15; *see Luke 2:46-47.*
- ◆ As the “friend who sticks closer than a brother,” 24; *see John 15:13-15.*

Mankind

Our nature

- ◆ Our words have great influence for good or ill, 4-8, 13, 20-21.

- ◆ Our bodies and souls [spirits, minds, and hearts] are intimately and intricately connected, 14.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Isolating ourselves, in the sense of making our desires king and refusing to listen to others' counsel or to consider their needs, 1; *see Philipians 2:4*.
- ◆ Talking rather than listening, 2
- ◆ Showing partiality to the wicked and denying justice to the (relatively) righteous, 5
- ◆ Foolish, provocative speech, 6
- ◆ Gossip, 8
- ◆ Laziness, sloth, and procrastination, 9
- ◆ Putting our trust in uncertain riches, 11; *see 1 Timothy 6:17 and James 5:1-6*.
- ◆ Pride of any kind, including haughtiness toward others, 12
- ◆ Declaring our opinions before we have listened enough to have an accurate understanding concerning a matter, 13, 17
- ◆ Keeping resentments and bearing grudges, 19
- ◆ Persisting in alienation from others, 19
- ◆ Treating others harshly because we have more than they do, 23

Their consequences

- ◆ Decreasing of our understanding, 2
- ◆ Contempt from others, 3
- ◆ Contention, conflict, and strife, 6
- ◆ Failure, loss, and final ruin in the realm of work, 9
- ◆ Destruction, both physical and spiritual, 12; *see Matthew 12:36*.
- ◆ Disgrace, 12-13
- ◆ Making poor decisions about others' conflicts, 17
- ◆ Irreconcilable conflicts with others, 19

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Beware of insisting on our own ways rather than heeding the advice of others, 1.
- ◆ Resist the temptation of speaking only to "express ourselves," 2.

- ◆ Ask God to give us the constant supply of the Holy Spirit so that we might speak words of life, 4, 21. *See Ephesians 5:18-20.*
- ◆ Trust in God's name – that is, his character as revealed in Scripture and especially the names of “Father” and “Jesus” our “Lord,” 10.
- ◆ Ask many questions before we state our opinions, 13.
- ◆ Try to speak words of comfort to those who are sick or downcast, 14.
- ◆ Acquire knowledge in any way we can, especially by listening and reading, 15.
- ◆ Give gifts appropriately, 16.
- ◆ Listen to both sides of a dispute before deciding who is right, 17.
- ◆ Ask God to guide us in the choice of a spouse; or if we are married, thank God for the persons he has given us, even if we find living with him or her difficult (as we almost certainly will!), 22.
- ◆ Look to Jesus alone as our “friend who sticks closer than a brother,” 24. *See John 15:9-15.*

Proverbs 19

Truth

God

His greatness

- ◆ He has the authority and power to reward good and punish evil, 5, 9, 12, 16.
- ◆ He governs all things, including the details of our lives, according to his own will, 21. *See Ephesians 1:11.*

His goodness

- ◆ He is slow to anger and shows his glory by “overlooking” transgression, because it has been atoned for in Christ, 11. *See Exodus 34:6; Psalm 103:6-14; John 1:14; and Romans 3:21-26.*
- ◆ He gives a prudent wife, 14.
- ◆ He cares for the poor and rewards those who pity them, 17. *See Matthew 25:31-46.*
- ◆ He is full of lovingkindness, and he desires that we be like him in this respect, 22. *See Ephesians 4:32.*
- ◆ He gives life, satisfaction, and safety to all who fear him, 23.
- ◆ He punishes all lying, 5, 9.
- ◆ He chastens his children, 18. *See Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:3-11; and Revelation 3:19.*

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the wisdom that we receive to the benefit of our souls, 8; *see Proverbs 1:20-33; 3:13-20; 8:1-36; 9:1-6; and Colossians 2:9.*
- ◆ As the King whose wrath terrifies and whose favor gives life, 12; *see Matthew 25:14-46 and Revelation 19:11-16.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Any perversity – that is, lack of truth and integrity – in speech, 1
- ◆ Blaming God for the baneful consequences of our own stupid decisions and actions, 3
- ◆ Avoiding former friends because they are now poor, 4, 7

- ◆ False testimony or lying of any kind, 5, 9, 22, 28
- ◆ Cultivating friendships with “rich” people in order to get something from them, 6; *see James 2:1-9*.
- ◆ Contentious and contrariness in a wife, 13
- ◆ Laziness, which includes failure to complete even the simplest tasks, 15, 24
- ◆ Inordinate anger, especially when it is habitual, 19
- ◆ Scoffing at and mocking others and God, 25, 29
- ◆ Mistreatment of our parents, 26

Their consequences

- ◆ A way of life that does not succeed, 3
- ◆ Punishment from God, 5, 9, 19
- ◆ The wrath of those in authority over us, including God, 12; *see Romans 2:5-10*.
- ◆ Ruin and loss for our family members, 13
- ◆ Decreasing energy (for sluggards) and consequent loss of income, 15
- ◆ Death to the body and the soul, 16
- ◆ Shame and disgrace, 26
- ◆ Judgment and punishment from both man and God, 29

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Choose integrity with poverty rather than wealth with dishonesty, 1.
- ◆ Gather as much information as we can before making decisions, 2.
- ◆ Stand by our friends even when they run into difficulties and have nothing to offer us, 4, 6-7.
- ◆ Ask God to give us grace to keep his commandments, rather than going heedlessly through life, 6.
- ◆ Ask God to give us calmness and patience with others when they offend us, 11.
- ◆ Seek to provide our children with an inheritance rather than spending our wealth all on ourselves, 14.
- ◆ Thank God for a prudent wife, 14.
- ◆ Remember to be kind to the poor and help them as much as we can, 17.
- ◆ Discipline our children while they are still young, 18.
- ◆ Avoid close friendships with people who are constantly angry, 19.

- ◆ Listen to the advice of others, 20.
- ◆ Bring all our plans to God and ask for his guidance, 21. *See Proverbs 3:5-6.*
- ◆ Learn from the discipline that comes to those who have a bad attitude, 25.
- ◆ Accept rebuke, 25.

Proverbs 20

Truth

Revelation

Its benefits

- ◆ Honor among men, 3
- ◆ Happiness for our children, 7
- ◆ Banishment of evil men and deeds from the nation, 8
- ◆ Satisfaction from diligent labor, 13
- ◆ The ability to speak words that display true spiritual knowledge, 15
- ◆ A stable government, 28
- ◆ Inner cleansing, 30

God

His greatness

- ◆ As Creator, he has made us and all our faculties, 12.
- ◆ He ordains all our actions and their outcomes, yet without depriving us of freedom or responsibility, 24.
Note: This is a great mystery which cannot be solved by human logic.
- ◆ He is holy and requires us to keep our promises to dedicate ourselves or our possessions to him as holy offerings, 25.
- ◆ He knows everything, even the depths of our hearts, 27. *See 1 Corinthians 2:11.*

His goodness

- ◆ He will save those who wait for him to act, 22.
- ◆ He rules as King with mercy [steadfast love, covenant love] and truth [faithfulness to all that he has said], 28. *See Exodus 34:6. See also John 1:14, where "grace" is equivalent to the Old Testament "mercy" [lovingkindness, steadfast love].*
- ◆ He is the King who sits on the throne of judgment, sifting out the wicked from the righteous and inflicting wrath upon unrepentant rebels, 2, 8, 26. *See Psalm 103:19 and Isaiah 6:1-5.*
- ◆ He hates all dishonesty and fraud, 23.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the King who sits on the throne of judgment, 26; *see Isaiah 6:1-10, compared with John 12:39-41 and John 1:18. See also Matthew 7:21-23.*
- ◆ As the King with mercy and truth, 28; *see Exodus 34:6 and John 1:14.*

Mankind

Our fallen state

- ◆ No one is pure from sin, 9. *See Psalm 51:5; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 43:9; and 1 John 1:8.*
- ◆ We do not fully understand our conduct or the course of our lives, 24.
- ◆ We each have a spirit that probes the depths of our heart, 27.
- ◆ Different ages have different marks of honor, 29.
- ◆ We tend to learn from harsh discipline, which often drives out bad attitudes and habits, 30.

Family

- ◆ The actions of parents affect their children, 7.
- ◆ Even children have a sense of moral responsibility and of right and wrong, and their character may be known by their deeds, 11.
- ◆ Children who receive a large inheritance too early in life tend to squander it, 21.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Drinking too much alcohol, 1; *see Proverbs 23:29-35; Isaiah 28:7-8; Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 5:18; and 1 Peter 4:1-4.*
- ◆ Rebellion against authority, 2; *see Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-3; and 1 Peter 2:11-17.*
- ◆ Contentiousness and being quick to disagree and argue, 3
- ◆ Laziness, 4, 13
- ◆ Falsely boasting of our own supposed goodness, 6
- ◆ Dishonesty in any transactions involving money, 10, 17, 23
- ◆ Sexual seduction, 16
- ◆ Gossiping, 19

- ◆ Flattery, 19
- ◆ Cursing – or in any way dishonoring – our parents, 20; *see Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 30:11; and Matthew 15:4.*
- ◆ Seeking to avenge a wrong rather than waiting for God to execute justice, 22; *see Deuteronomy 32:34; Romans 12:17–19; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; and 1 Peter 3:9.*
- ◆ Making rash commitments and then renegeing on them, especially if a vow to God is involved, 25

Their consequences

- ◆ Financial distress, 4, 13
- ◆ Remorse and bitterness of soul, 17
- ◆ Loss of friends, 19
- ◆ Extinction of life in deep darkness, 20; *see Job 18:5–6; Matthew 8:12; and 2 Peter 2:17.*
- ◆ God's detestation, 23

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Avoid quarrelling, 3. *See Romans 12:18; 14:19; and Ephesians 4:29–32.*
- ◆ Ask God to make us diligent in our work and disciplined in our rest, 4, 13.
- ◆ Ask God for the ability to glean wisdom from others, 5.
- ◆ Recognize that we are not morally pure, 9. *See 1 John 1:8–10.*
- ◆ Seek to acquire spiritual knowledge through Bible study, prayer, and learning from others so that we may speak words of life, 15.
- ◆ Seek counsel from others before making important decisions, 18.
- ◆ Realize that we can't understand all that happens in our lives, and trust God to direct our paths, 24.
- ◆ Ask God to make our rulers just and merciful, 28.
- ◆ Thank God for giving us Jesus as our King!

Proverbs 21

Truth

God

His greatness

- ◆ As universal King, he governs all actions and events, and he rules through all rulers, 1.
- ◆ He is omniscient and knows the secret motives of our hearts, 2. *See 1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 24:12; Acts 1:24; and Luke 16:15.*
- ◆ He fulfills his will, regardless of what we think or seem to understand, 30.
- ◆ He determines the outcome of our efforts, 31.

His goodness

- ◆ He is righteous and requires righteousness and justice from his people even more than he requires religious worship, 3, 12, 27. *See 1 Samuel 15:22; Proverbs 15:8; and Isaiah 1:10-17.*
- ◆ He rewards diligence and careful planning, 5.
- ◆ He punishes wickedness, 12.
- ◆ He rewards those who seek righteousness and mercy [steadfast love], 21.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is seen as the one who was counted wicked and paid a ransom for us so that we might be counted righteous, 18. *See Mark 10:45; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and 1 Peter 3:18.*

Mankind

Our fallen state: We tend to think that we are right all the time, 2.

Our lives

- ◆ Purity of motive leads to good work, 8.
- ◆ Wisdom and intelligence can overcome brute strength, 22.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Pride and haughtiness, 4, 24
- ◆ Lying, 6
- ◆ Violence, 7
- ◆ Refusal to do what is right, 7
- ◆ Contentiousness – that is, contrariness – in a wife, 9, 19; *see Proverbs 19:13*.
- ◆ Evil desires, 10
- ◆ Rejection and despising of others, 10
- ◆ Scoffing at, scorning, and mocking others and God, 11, 24
- ◆ Ignoring the pleas for help of needy people, 13
- ◆ Bribery, 14
- ◆ Excessive love of pleasure, 17
- ◆ An angry temperament, 19
- ◆ Squandering of assets, 20
- ◆ Laziness, 25
- ◆ Covetousness, discontent, and greed, 26; *see Exodus 20:17 and Ephesians 5:5*.
- ◆ Religious hypocrisy, that is, worshiping God with bad motives, 27
- ◆ Speaking falsely about others, 28

Their consequences

- ◆ Alienation from one's spouse, 9
- ◆ Punishment from man and God, 11
- ◆ Having our requests for help go unheeded, 13
- ◆ Destruction, 15
- ◆ Death, both physical and spiritual, 16
- ◆ Poverty, 17
- ◆ Perishing, both physically and spiritually, 28

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Pray for all in authority, that God would work through them, 1. *See 1 Timothy 2:1-2*.
- ◆ Avoid hastiness in planning and action, 5.

- ◆ Avoid marrying a contentious woman.
- ◆ Seek to understand why our wife is angry and to address the root issues.
- ◆ Gently tell our wives that contrariness is hard to take.
- ◆ Learn from the difficulties and punishments that come to scoffers, 11.
- ◆ Receive advice as a form of information, and learn from it, 11.
- ◆ Thank God for sending Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins, 18.
- ◆ Pursue righteousness and love more than honor and wealth, trusting that God will reward us both now and later, 21. *See Matthew 5:6; 6:33; Romans 2:7; and 1 Corinthians 15:58.*
- ◆ Ask God to help us control our tongues, 23.
- ◆ Give generously to those in need, 26. *See Ephesians 4:28.*
- ◆ Prepare as well as we can, but leave the results to God, 31.

Proverbs 22

Truth

Revelation

Its source: It comes through God's chosen messengers – in this case, Solomon and other writers of these proverbs, 17-19.

Its content

- ◆ It includes counsel and knowledge, 20.
- ◆ It is true, 21.

Its purpose and effects

- ◆ It is meant to delight us, 18.
- ◆ It equips us to respond to those who ask us about God, 18, 21. *See 1 Peter 3:15.*
- ◆ It instills in us trust in the LORD, 19.
- ◆ It has been written down for permanent reference and as an abiding standard of truth, 20-21.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He created all things, including each person, 2.
- ◆ He is the ultimate King, by whose authority all other kings rule, 14. *See Romans 13:1-2 and Revelation 19:16.*

His goodness

- ◆ He treats all people alike and does not discriminate according to social or economic status, 2. *See Job 34:19; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; and James 2:1-8.*
- ◆ He rewards those who are humble before him and who fear him – that is, who reverence, respect, believe, and seek to obey him – by giving them wealth (especially spiritual blessings), honor, and life, 4. *See Proverbs 8:12-21; Matthew 6:33; and Romans 2:6-10.*
- ◆ He blesses those who are generous, 9. *See 2 Corinthians 9:6.*

- ◆ He loves those with pure hearts and gracious words, 11. *See Matthew 5:8.*
- ◆ He watches over those who seek knowledge of the truth, especially the truth about God, 12, 17–21. *See Proverbs 8:17.*
- ◆ He vindicates and cares for the poor and other weak people in society, 22–23.
- ◆ He punishes those who persist in unrighteousness and who exercise authority [wield the rod] in anger and not in love, 8.
- ◆ He brings the declarations of unbelieving and unreliable people to nothing, 12.
- ◆ He punishes unrepentant sinners with further entrapment in sin, 14.
- ◆ He disciplines and chastens his children, 15. *See Proverbs 3:11–12 and Hebrews 12:3–11.*
- ◆ He punishes those who plunder the poor by causing them to be plundered also, 23.

Mankind

Children: Early childhood training has effects that last a lifetime, 6.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Perversity, that is, crookedness of thought and action, 5
- ◆ Scoffing at, scorning, and mocking God, his wisdom, and other people, 10
- ◆ Laziness, 13
- ◆ Sexual immorality and seduction, 14
- ◆ Oppressing the poor, 16
- ◆ Currying favor with the rich, 16; *see James 2:1–7.*

Their consequences

- ◆ Sorrow and trouble, 8
- ◆ Failure to realize our stated intentions, 12
- ◆ Poverty, 16, 27

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Seek good reputations and the affection of others by righteous conduct, and seek these things more than we seek wealth, 1.

- ◆ Be aware of the signs of the times and potential dangers; take precautionary steps, such as buying insurance or avoiding unnecessary danger and risk, 3.
- ◆ Ask God to give us hearts of humility and reverence toward him, 4.
- ◆ Bring up our children in the training (instruction) and admonition (cautionary warnings) of the Christian faith, at times and in ways that suit their unique personalities, 6. *See Ephesians 6:4.*

Note: The second part of verse 6 - "and when he is old he will not depart from it" - is a principle, not a promise.

- ◆ Avoid debt, 7.
- ◆ Be generous toward those in need, 9.
- ◆ Expel inveterate scoffers from our company, even our church, 10. *See Romans 16:17-18.*
- ◆ Beware of inaction stemming from unreasonable fears, 13.
- ◆ Avoid men and women who would seduce us into sin, 14.

Note: This includes avoiding all situations and media, including Internet sites, that tempt us to lust.

- ◆ Use corporal punishment to correct our children's bad habits, 15.

Note: This does not condone excessive force or violence against children, only the temperate use of means such as hitting with a light paddle to cause enough pain to discourage further misbehavior.

- ◆ Take time and energy to expose ourselves to the words of the wise, especially the words of the Bible, 17-18.
- ◆ Avoid close friendships with those given to chronic anger, 24.
- ◆ Avoid hasty commitments as well as financial obligations, if there is any doubt whether we can meet them, 26-27.
- ◆ Honor legitimate commitments and the rights of our forebears, 28.
- ◆ Ask God to give us diligence and proficiency in all our work (including housework), 29.

Note: We shall someday stand before the King of the universe! See Ephesians 6:8.

Proverbs 23

Truth

Revelation

Its literary forms

- ◆ Biblical revelation uses a variety of literary features to communicate God's truth.
- ◆ In this chapter, the word "heart" is used seven times, indicating the supreme role it plays in our lives and in our relationships with God and others, 7 (twice), 12, 15, 17, 19, 26. *See also Deuteronomy 6:5; Proverbs 4:23; and Matthew 22:27.*

Its nature and content: It is truth and includes words of wisdom, instruction, and understanding, 23.

Its supreme value: It is more valuable than anything else and must be acquired at all cost.

God

His greatness: He is infinitely great and deserves our fear, awe, reverence, trust, and obedience, 17.

His goodness

- ◆ He rewards those who fear him and follow his teachings, 17-18.
- ◆ He wants our hearts – that is, our total attention and allegiance – and will keep those who love and delight in him from the snares of sin, including sexual immorality, 26-28.
- ◆ He corrects and disciplines his children so that they may share his character and avoid eternal destruction, 13-14. *See Proverbs 22:15; 3:11-12; and Hebrews 12:3-11.*

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the powerful Redeemer who pities the weak and the poor, like orphans, 11; *see the Book of Ruth (where Boaz acts as kinsman, redeemer, and a type of*

Christ); Proverbs 23:24; Luke 4:17-19; 6:20-26; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; and James 2:5; 5:1-6.

- ♦ As the infinitely wise Son, who speaks right things and in whom his Father delights, 15-16; *see Matthew 3:17.*

Mankind

Our fallen world: People who invite us to dinner do not necessarily do so for our benefit, 1-3, 6-8.

Our character: Our thoughts indicate our inner motives and character and will inevitably lead to words and actions, 6-8, 15-16. *See Romans 12:1-2 and Ephesians 4:17-24.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ♦ Seeking excessive pleasure from food, 1-3, 20-21
- ♦ Overworking to become “rich” in money, prestige, power, or possessions, 4; *see Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, 18-23; 4:4-6; 5:10-17; 6:7-9.*
- ♦ Trusting in uncertain riches, 5; *see 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 16-17 and James 5:1-6.*
- ♦ Being stingy while pretending to be generous, 6-8
- ♦ Despising words of wisdom, 9
- ♦ Stealing from the weak and powerless, 10-11
- ♦ Overturning legitimate boundaries and limits, 10
- ♦ Failure to discipline our children when they need it, 13-14
- ♦ Envy of sinners and their temporary pleasures, 17
- ♦ Seeking intoxication from strong drink or drugs, 20, 30-31; *see Ephesians 5:18.*
- ♦ Despising our mothers when they are old, 22
- ♦ Sexual immorality of any kind, including prostitution, seduction, and sexual relations with anyone but our own spouses, 27-28

Their consequences

- ♦ Being caught by the charms of wily rulers, 1-3
- ♦ The loss of all we have worked so hard to attain, 4-5
- ♦ Wasting compliments on a stingy host, 8
- ♦ Poverty, 21

- ◆ Bondage to sexual sin and to sexual predators, 27-28
- ◆ Addiction to alcohol or drugs, with all the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual pain that brings, 29-35

The Last Things

The final judgment: At the end of this age, there will be a future – a hereafter – when God will punish evil and reward good, 13-14, 18.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Be self-controlled when dining with powerful people, 1-3.
- ◆ Seek to gain godly wisdom and knowledge, 1, 19, 23.
- ◆ Avoid overworking. Instead, work moderately, taking a weekly Sabbath and enough rest each day, 4-5. *See Genesis 2:2; Exodus 20:8-11; and Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 5:18-20.*
- ◆ Seek to honor our parents by our wisdom and words, 15-16, 24-25.
- ◆ Make the fear and service of God our chief desire, rather than seeking the pleasures of sin, 17-18.
- ◆ Listen to the wisdom of our parents, even when they are old, 22.
- ◆ Give our hearts entirely to God, seeking delight in his ways as they are revealed in his Word and in his workings in the world, 26.

Proverbs 24

Truth

Revelation

Its nature and content

- ◆ God's revelation comes in the form of a practical wisdom that applies to such things as building and establishing a house and filling it with good things, 3. *See Proverbs 14:1.*
- ◆ Wisdom, spiritual knowledge, and practical knowledge go together, 3-5.

Its effects

- ◆ Wisdom leads to words that have influence among leaders ["in the gate," where the elders sat to render judgments], 7.
- ◆ God's wisdom is sweet to the soul, 13-14.
- ◆ Wisdom leads to a good future, 14.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is omniscient, knowing our hearts and inner thoughts, 12, 18.
- ◆ He is able to keep watch over our souls, 12.
- ◆ He has the authority and power to reward good and evil actions, 12.

His goodness

- ◆ He preserves the (relatively) righteous from fatal falls and restores them to life and honor, if not in this life then in the life to come, 14-16.
- ◆ He cares for the weak and the oppressed and for justice, 10.
- ◆ He rewards us for what we have or have not done, 12.
- ◆ He punishes the unrepentant wicked, 16, 19-20.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the truly righteous man who fell “seven times” – that is, who suffered total calamity – but whom God raised up to everlasting glory, 16; *see Acts 2:22–36 and 1 Peter 3:18.*
- ◆ As the one at whose “fall” his enemies rejoiced, but from whom God eventually turned his wrath and inflicted it upon them instead, 17–18; *see Matthew 23:33–36; 24:1–2, 24:15–21; 27:39–44; Luke 21:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; and Revelation 6:16–17.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Plotting evil deeds, 8; *see Romans 1:30.*
- ◆ Devising – that is, thinking about, planning, or imagining – foolishness; this would include all sexual fantasies or daydreaming about worthless things, 9.
- ◆ Scoffing at, scorning, and mocking God, his wisdom, and the advice of godly people, 9
- ◆ Not speaking up in defense of those being wrongly led to harm or death, 10–12
- ◆ Showing partiality in judgment and, especially, acquitting the wicked and condemning the righteous, 23–24; *see Isaiah 5:23.*
- ◆ Bearing false testimony, 28; *see Leviticus 6:2–3; 19:11.*
- ◆ Returning evil with evil, 29; *see Romans 12:19–21 and 1 Peter 2:20–25.*
- ◆ Laziness and a love of rest and sleep when we should be working, 30–34

Their consequences

- ◆ Loss of influence in society, 7
- ◆ A bad name with God and men, 8
- ◆ The disgust and abhorrence of other people, 9
- ◆ God’s displeasure, 18
- ◆ Extinction of life (pictured as a lamp) in eternal death, 20
- ◆ Calamity from God and from rulers, 22
- ◆ Poverty, 34

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Do not fret – that is, do not become angry and anxious – at the success of the wicked, 19–20. *See Psalms 37:1; 73.*
- ◆ Fear the Lord and those whom he has placed in authority over us, not taking part in any revolt, rebellion, or revolution, 21–22.
- ◆ Rebuke those who do wrong, 25.
- ◆ Ensure our financial viability before building or buying a house, 27.
- ◆ Return evil with good, 29. *See Matthew 5:39–44.*

Proverbs 25

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ◆ It came through God's chosen messengers, including Solomon, whose sayings or writings were later faithfully copied for us to read, 1.
- ◆ It comes from God, who freely discloses to us what we otherwise would not know, 2.

God

His greatness: He is the ultimate King, high above the heavens, whose thoughts are unsearchable, 3. *See Isaiah 40:22, 28 and Romans 11:33-36.*

His goodness

- ◆ He is the kindly King who will eventually grant the persistent requests of his people, 15. *See Luke 18:1-8.*
- ◆ As righteous King, he will banish the wicked from his presence, 5. *See Psalm 5:4-5 and Matthew 7:21-23.*
- ◆ He abases the proud and exalts the humble, 6-7. *See Luke 14:7-11 and 1 Peter 5:5-6.*

Christ

His prefiguration: He is foreshadowed in all that was said about the King.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Pride and self-exaltation, 6, 27; *see Psalm 101:5.*
- ◆ Not giving gifts that we have promised, 14
- ◆ Abusing others' generosity and hospitality, 17
- ◆ Giving false testimony, slandering, and lying, 18; *see Leviticus 6:2-3; 19:11.*
- ◆ Proving unreliable in times of trouble, 19; *see 2 Timothy 4:10.*
- ◆ Not empathizing with those who are sad and sorrowful, 20; *see Romans 12:15.*
- ◆ Speaking bad things about others behind their backs, 23; *see Psalm 101:5.*

- ◆ Contentiousness or contrariness in a wife, 24; *see Proverbs 19:13*.
- ◆ Failure to stand firm against wicked men, 26; *see Galatians 2:11-18*.
- ◆ Gluttony, such as over-indulgence in sweets, 27
- ◆ Lack of internal self-control, 28; *see Galatians 5:23 and 2 Peter 1:6*.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Pray for our rulers to have heavenly wisdom and zeal for justice, 2-5. *See 1 Timothy 2:1-4*.
- ◆ Settle conflicts privately rather than taking them to others or to court, where people would hear the other side of the story, 8-10. *See Matthew 5:25-26; 18:15-20*.
- ◆ Ask God to give us words that build others up, 11. *See Ephesians 4:29*.
- ◆ Listen carefully to the rebukes of wise people, 12.
- ◆ Faithfully communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ so that others may find new life, 12-15. *See Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15*.
- ◆ Ask God to give us hearts of compassion for those who are in pain, 20. *See Hebrews 4:12*.
- ◆ Repay evil with good, 21-22. *See Matthew 5:44; Luke 23:34; and Romans 12:20*.
- ◆ Avoid marrying women who are angry and argumentative, 24.
- ◆ Ask God to give us control over our spirits and the expression of our emotions, especially anger, 28. *See Ephesians 4:30-32*.

Proverbs 26

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ In Proverbs this feature shows up in the repetition of various major themes:
 - The fool, 1-12; *see Proverbs 10:8, 10, 18, 23; 12:15; 13:16; 14:7, 16; 15:5; 17:7, 10, 12, 16, 21, 24, 28; 18:2; 19:1, 10; 20:3; 23:9; 24:1, 4-6, 8; and often.*
 - The dog that returns to its own vomit, 11; *see 2 Peter 2:22.*
 - Being wise in one's own eyes, 12; *see Romans 12:16.*
 - The sluggard or lazy person, 13-16; *see Proverbs 6:6, 9; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; and often.*
 - The talebearer [gossip], 20, 22.

Its literary forms

- ◆ Proverbs uses comparisons and similes to propound truths about life. This chapter is filled with statements that use the words "like" and "as" to express such comparisons, 1-2, 8-9, 11, 17, 22-23.
- ◆ The Bible contains some statements that seem to contradict each other, like the advice about answering a fool, 4-5, but that really present a matter from different standpoints, both of which are valid. The four Gospels are prime examples of this use of variation to paint a more complete picture.

God

His greatness: He is the great Creator God who formed everything, 10. *See Genesis 1:1.*

His goodness: He punishes folly and transgression of his revealed will, 10, 27.

Mankind

Our nature: We do not like others to try to meddle in our affairs or quarrels, 17.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Cursing others, even in our hearts, 2
- ◆ Repeating our foolish mistakes and sins, 11
- ◆ Being wise in our own eyes and not taking time to gather information, 12
- ◆ Laziness, 13-16
- ◆ Covering up lying with the excuse that we were only kidding, 19
- ◆ Gossiping, 20, 22
- ◆ Contentiousness and argumentativeness, 21
- ◆ Deceptive friendliness, 23-25
- ◆ Hatred, 24
- ◆ Lying, 28

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read Proverbs often to learn how to live in this tricky world.
- ◆ Trust God to punish evildoers and reward good actions.
- ◆ Examine our hearts to see whether we harbor resentment.
- ◆ Watch out for people who are charming but may have evil intentions.
- ◆ Avoid relying on those who are “fools” – that is, who are so willfully ignorant of God that they consistently act in ways that are not good for themselves or others, despite repeated failure and rebukes.
- ◆ Fight laziness and ask God to make us diligent in our work.

Proverbs 27

Truth

Revelation

Its content: Biblical revelation – especially the Wisdom Literature of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes – contains many maxims that teach principles of wise, intelligent, and prudent behavior.

God

His goodness: His greatness and goodness manifest themselves in his holy wrath against sin and in his jealousy for his reputation, his glory, and the exclusive allegiance of his people, 4. *See Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:21; Joshua 24:19; Psalm 78:58; Ezekiel 36:5; 39:25; Zechariah 1:14; 8:2; and 1 Corinthians 10:22.*

Mankind

Our nature

- ◆ We thrive on stability of place, 8.
- ◆ Our inner thoughts, emotions, and motives – that is, our hearts – reveal what we truly are as people, 19.

Our fallen state

- ◆ We tend never to be satisfied with what we see; we always want more, 20.
- ◆ Some people are so bent on doing things against God's revealed will that nothing will convince them to change, 22.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Boasting about our plans for the future, which is uncertain, 1
- ◆ Any sort of self-promotion or self-praise, 2
- ◆ Excessive and unrestrained anger, 4; *see Ephesians 4:26, 29-31.*
- ◆ Concealing our love for others when it should be expressed, 5
- ◆ Deceptive expressions of false affection, 6
- ◆ Seductive conduct, 13
- ◆ Contentiousness in a woman, 15-16; *see Proverbs 19:13; 25:24.*

The Last Things

The final judgment: There will be a hell, with eternal destruction, for unrepentant wicked people, 20. See *Matthew 5:29-30; 8:12; 25:30, 41; and Romans 2:5-9*.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Accept rebukes from wise and godly people (and even from those who are not!), 5-6.
- ◆ Seek friends who will speak frankly to us, 5-6, 9, 17.
- ◆ Be aware of potential threats to our physical, financial, and spiritual well-being, and take steps to avoid loss and ruin, 10, 12, 23-27.
- ◆ Cultivate solid friendships with people nearby rather than relying entirely on distant family members, 10.
- ◆ Build on friendships initiated by our parents, 10.
- ◆ Avoid making financial commitments for people whom we don't really know, or whom we know to be untrustworthy, 13.

Proverbs 28

Truth

Revelation

Its content: Biblical revelation includes the law that God gave to Israel through Moses, 4, 7. *See Exodus 20:1–36:1; Leviticus; and Deuteronomy.*

God

His goodness

- ◆ He gives wisdom to those who seek him, 5.
- ◆ He rewards a blameless life, 10.
- ◆ He forgives and prospers those who admit and turn from their sins, 13. *See 1 John 1:9–2:1.*
- ◆ He rewards hard work, 19.
- ◆ He rewards faithfulness, 20.
- ◆ He takes care of those who care for the needs of the poor, 27.
- ◆ He punishes nations for sin by creating unstable governments, 2.
- ◆ He will not hear the prayers of those who will not hear and heed his revelation, 9.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the supremely and uniquely righteous man who displayed magnificent courage, 1; *see John 18:1–11.*
- ◆ As the understanding and wise ruler whose rule will have no end, 2; *see Isaiah 9:6–7.*
- ◆ As the one who often rebuked his disciples but afterward was adored and revered by them, 23; *see, among many examples, Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:23; 26:34, 52.*

Mankind

Our world

- ◆ Wickedness instills fear, while righteousness engenders courage, 1.
- ◆ Governments may be influenced both by the sins of the many and by the wisdom and justice of one good ruler, 2.

- ◆ Poverty does not necessarily make us kind, 4.
- ◆ Wealth often makes us proud and blinds us to our faults and failings, 11.
- ◆ Wicked rulers drive good people “underground,” to the detriment of the state, 12, 28.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Oppression of the poor and weak, especially if we are poor and weak, too, 3
- ◆ Turning away from God’s law, 4, 9
- ◆ Expressing approval of wicked behavior and people, 4
- ◆ Perversity, crookedness, and dishonesty, 6, 18
- ◆ Gluttony, 7
- ◆ Exacting high interest rates, especially from the poor, 8
- ◆ Leading others away from the right paths on which they were walking, 10
- ◆ Hardening our hearts after repeated warnings and discipline, 14
- ◆ Abusing political power, 15
- ◆ Taking bribes or using power to get rich, 16
- ◆ Murder, 17
- ◆ Spending time on worthless things, such as silly entertainment, 19
- ◆ Putting all our focus on getting rich, 20, 22
- ◆ Failing to give our parents the support they are due from us, 24; *see Matthew 15:1-9.*
- ◆ Pride, especially pride that leads to conflict, 25
- ◆ Trusting in our own hearts – that is, in our own intuitions, ideas, assumptions, or inner senses of leading, 26
- ◆ Failure to give help to the poor, 27

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Contend with the wicked by exposing their wrong ideas and sinful actions, 4.
- ◆ Frequently read the Bible and seek to carry out its teachings, 4, 7.
- ◆ Seek God more than anything else, trusting him to guide us each day, 5. *See Matthew 6:33.*
- ◆ Seek integrity rather than wealth, 6.

- ◆ Pity the poor and give to them what we can, 8.
- ◆ Admit, confess, and ask forgiveness for our sins as soon as we become aware of them, 13.
- ◆ Attend to our daily work with diligence, 19.
- ◆ Avoid unedifying entertainment, and spend as little time on entertainment as possible, 19. This includes television, novels, social media, movies, etc.
- ◆ Administer honest and loving rebukes when necessary, 23. *See Galatians 1:11-21.*

Proverbs 29

Truth

Revelation

Its source: In the Old Testament, it often came through prophetic visions, which guided the people into the way of God, 18.

God

His greatness: He is the Creator God who made everyone and endowed each person with various faculties, including sight, 13.

His goodness

- ◆ He has the power to destroy unrepentant wicked people, 1.
Note: This is a case of the "divine passive," in which the passive voice, "will suddenly be destroyed," points to the action of God.
- ◆ He will destroy those who refuse to heed warnings to repent, 1.
- ◆ He is the righteous King under whose authority we rejoice, 2. *See Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12.*
- ◆ He judges justly; therefore, his throne endures forever, 14. *See Psalm 93:1-2.*
- ◆ He humbles the proud and exalts the humble, 23. *See Proverbs 3:34; 15:33; 18:12; Isaiah 66:2; and James 4:6.*
- ◆ He brings justice in his own time and way, 26.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is seen as the one who humbled himself and was therefore honored by God, 23. *See Philipians 2:5-11.*

Mankind

Our fallen state

- ◆ We generally do not learn without harsh discipline in our youth, 15, 17.
- ◆ The same is true even for adults: Those under authority may need some sort of corrective punishment to make them learn how to do what is right, 19.
- ◆ The wicked and the righteous have a natural aversion to each other, 27.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Any form of sexual immorality, including prostitution, 3
- ◆ Bribery, especially in government, 4
- ◆ Flattery, 5
- ◆ Lack of care for the poor and needy, 7
- ◆ Scoffing at, scorning, and mocking those in authority, including God, 8
- ◆ A heart set on harming others and filled with hatred for those who are good, 10
- ◆ Venting all our feelings, 11
- ◆ Lying and listening to liars, 12
- ◆ Oppression of the poor and needy, 13
- ◆ Anger that boils over into fury and rage, 22
- ◆ Stealing, 24
- ◆ Joining with others in doing wrong, 24
- ◆ Having an inordinate fear of people and their disapproval of us, 25

Their consequences

- ◆ Poverty, 3
- ◆ Loss of political power, 4
- ◆ Increasing bondage to sin, 6, 22
- ◆ Social chaos, 8

The Last Things

The final judgment: There will come a time at the end of the age when the (relatively) righteous will witness the irrevocable fall and destruction of the wicked, 16. *See Revelation 19:1-21.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Heed the warnings and rebukes of God and others, 1.
- ◆ Rejoice in the Lord, who has made us righteous by faith in Christ, 6. *See Philippians 3:1-11; 4:4.*
- ◆ Avoid arguing with foolish people, 9.
- ◆ Restrain ourselves from expressing all our negative feelings, 11.

- ◆ Discipline our children while they are young, 15, 17.
- ◆ Be quick to hear and slow to speak, 20. *See Proverbs 17:28; James 1:19.*
- ◆ Trust in God, and do not overly fear the displeasure of others, 25.
- ◆ Wait for God to execute justice on the earth, 26.

Proverbs 30

Truth

Revelation

Its nature

- ◆ Every word of God is pure – that is, completely true and without error of any kind, 5–6. *See Psalms 12:6; 19:8; 119:140.*
- ◆ The Bible as given to us is complete, and we must not presume to add to it, 6. *See Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; 2 Timothy 3:15–16; and Revelation 22:18.*

Note: Such presumed additions to the Bible include Roman Catholics' acceptance of the Apocrypha as the inspired Word of God and their addition of oral tradition as a source of authoritative divine revelation.

Its source

- ◆ It came as words, sometimes called “oracles” [utterances], meaning that they derived ultimately from God, 1.
- ◆ In many cases, the writers’ or speakers’ names are given, as here: Agur, the son of Jakeh, 1.

Its purpose: God gave us his revelation to evoke our trust, 5.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He possesses an infinite intelligence that would be hidden to us if he did not reveal his thoughts to us in special revelation, 2–3.
- ◆ He is utterly and completely holy, 3.
- ◆ He is transcendent, dwelling in “heaven” – a name for a place that is infinitely above our world, 4.
- ◆ He is the all–powerful Creator who made and governs the entire universe, 4.
- ◆ He owns and governs all things, so he has the capacity to give and withhold resources, 8.
- ◆ He is personal, with a name – Yahweh, 4, 9.
- ◆ He exists as an eternal Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, 4.

His goodness

- ◆ He has revealed his will and his ways to us in Scripture, 1, 5.
- ◆ He protects [literally, “he is a shield to”] those who trust in him, 5. *See Genesis 15:1; Psalms 3:3; 5:12; 18:2, 30; 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:11; 115:9-11; 119:114; 144:2; and Proverbs 2:7.*

Christ

His humanity and divinity, power and glory

- ◆ He is the divine-human Son of God, 4. *See John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 5:16-37.*
- ◆ He descended from heaven to earth to live among us as a man, 4. *See John 1:14 and Philippians 2:5-11.*
- ◆ After his resurrection, he ascended into heaven, where he now sits at the right hand of God the Father, 4. *See Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:9-11.*
- ◆ While on earth, he demonstrated total mastery over the winds and the waves, 4. *See Matthew 8:23-27.*

Mankind

Our fallen state

- ◆ We are greatly influenced by our environments, so prosperity and poverty alike can make us vulnerable to temptation, 7-9.
- ◆ Those who do not honor their parents will descend into greater and greater sin, 11-14.

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Subtracting from or adding to God’s words in the Bible, 6
- ◆ Deceit and lying, 8
- ◆ Denying God in any way, 9
- ◆ Stealing, 9
- ◆ Speaking ill of our “masters” – that is, our supervisors, superintendents, or superiors, 10
- ◆ Dishonoring our parents, 11, 17
- ◆ Self-righteousness, 12

- ◆ Hypocrisy, 12
- ◆ Pride and arrogance, 13
- ◆ Harmful speech, 14
- ◆ Oppressing the poor, 14
- ◆ Always seeking to get rather than to give, 15
- ◆ Constant dissatisfaction with our lots in life, 15–16
- ◆ Adultery, that is, any sexual relations with people who are not our spouse of the other sex, 20
- ◆ Misusing our prosperity, especially if it has come unexpectedly, 21–23
- ◆ Self-exaltation of any kind, 32
- ◆ Devising evil, 32

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Seek to know God above all else in life.
- ◆ Thank God for revealing to us his name as Father and for giving us his Son.
- ◆ Study God's Word carefully so that we may understand it, believe it, obey it, and teach it to others without distortion.
- ◆ Avoid the pursuit of wealth.
- ◆ Study the ways of people and of creatures in this world as signposts to moral truths.

Proverbs 31

Truth

Revelation

Its content and source

- ◆ Biblical revelation contains passages, including this chapter, which seem to come from non-Israelite sources and that reflect what is called “general revelation” – that is, the wisdom that comes from reflection upon this world by people who are made in his image.
- ◆ These passages were certainly edited by Israelite scholars before being included in Scripture, as indicated by the phrase, “fears the LORD,” 30.

Its literary forms: Proverbs 31:10–31 is an acrostic, meaning that each verse in the original Hebrew begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

God

His goodness

- ◆ He cares for the poor and needy, 5, 9. *See Proverbs 17:5; 19:17.*
- ◆ He has given us marriage to benefit us in many ways; here, he provides a wife of noble character to bless her husband, children, and the entire society, 11, 20, 23, 28.
- ◆ He has given us parents, both fathers and mothers, to instruct us in righteous and effective living, 1. *See Ephesians 6:1–4.*
- ◆ He has given us governments to guide and protect their people, 4. *See Romans 13:1–6.*
- ◆ He loves justice, 9. *See Proverbs 3:33; 16:11; 21:3, 12, 27.*

Sin and Folly

Their elements

- ◆ Giving our strength to intimate relations with those who are not our spouses, 3; the supreme example is Solomon. *See 1 Kings 11:1–3.*
- ◆ Indulgence in drink or drugs, 4–5
- ◆ Perverting justice, 5
- ◆ Dishonoring the noble role of wife, mother, and homemaker, 31

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Listen to the advice of our parents (when it is godly advice), 1.
- ◆ Speak up for those who are being deprived of their rights, 8–9.
- ◆ Encourage women to aspire to be excellent housewives and mothers, 10–31. *See 1 Timothy 5:3–10, 14 and Titus 2:5.*
- ◆ Praise our wives and mothers for their excellent work and for their godly character, 29–31.
- ◆ Beware of being misled by or placing too high a value upon feminine charm and beauty, 30.
- ◆ Instead, highly prize godliness in a woman, 30.

ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes 1–2

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ Ecclesiastes assumes knowledge of at least Solomon and David, and probably much of Israel's history.
- ◆ It must be read in the light of its concluding chapter, as well as Proverbs, Job, and the rest of the Bible, including Romans 8.

Its interpretation

- ◆ Biblical revelation includes not only problem passages, but also problem books, of which Ecclesiastes is an example.
- ◆ We are not certain of its authorship, for many scholars believe that the “son of David” refers not to Solomon, but to a later king, 1:1.
- ◆ On the other hand, many scholars believe Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. They have several reasons for this belief:
 - It reflects much old Egyptian and Babylonian wisdom literature.
 - He is identified as “David's son,” 1:1.
 - He had great wisdom, 1:16, and a prosperous reign, 2:1–9, and he enjoyed vast possessions, 2:7.
- ◆ The meaning of the book must be found not only from the study of its entirety, but also from a study of all the Scriptures.

General revelation

- ◆ Biblical revelation affirms our use of “natural revelation” (that is, the observation of the world and its ways) to form some conclusions about life “under the sun” (that is, life on earth, especially as it is considered apart from God), 1:3.
- ◆ With a few exceptions, almost every passage in Ecclesiastes consists of reflections based on experience and reason, not special revelation.

- ◆ Such “natural” revelation, though useful, does not and cannot lead to an understanding of the meaning of life; that must come from God’s special revelation.

God

His greatness: Ecclesiastes uses only the name “Elohim” to refer to God. This emphasizes his position as the sovereign maker and ruler of the world, who has the authority to put us into a position where we must try to figure out the meaning of life, 1:13.

His goodness: He gives true wisdom, knowledge, and joy in life to those who seek to live as he wills, and he repays unrepentant sinners for their willful disobedience, 2:26.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured in Solomon, the son of David, who ruled as king in Jerusalem, 1:1. *See Matthew 2:2.*

Mankind

Our created nature

- ◆ Created in God’s image, we are capable of great things.
- ◆ We imitate God’s work of the first Creation in our own smaller creative acts and attempts to set the world in an understandable order. *See the Creation, Genesis 1-2.*
 - We seek meaning, 1:2, 13-17; 2:11-16.
 - We use observation and reason to gain some understanding of this world, 1:3-11, 13-15; 2:12-16, 20-23.
 - We complete large building projects, 2:4-6.
 - We engage in agriculture, 2:4-6.
 - We create music, 2:8.

Our fallen state

- ◆ Having fallen into sin, we cannot understand life “under the sun” without divine revelation; instead, we fruitlessly seek meaning in contemplation, work, pleasure and mirth, possessions and wealth, and entertainment.

- ◆ We fail to find meaning in these, for they are temporary and unsatisfying; and when we die, we must leave everything behind, perhaps to a complete fool, 2:14-16, 18-19.
- ◆ Because of the curse upon Adam, life consists of hardship and toil, and it all ends in death, 2:20-23. *See Genesis 3:17-19.*

Sin

Its elements: It includes seeking life, happiness, and meaning from anything in this world.

The Last Things

The final judgment: After this life come death and judgment.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read Ecclesiastes to reflect upon the vanity of all temporal activity, accomplishments, and acquisitions.
- ◆ Do not seek to find satisfaction or meaning in life without God.
- ◆ Seek to do what is good in God's sight.
- ◆ Joyfully and thankfully receive the good things God gives us.
- ◆ Look beyond what is visible and seek to know the invisible God.
- ◆ Seek to gain eternal life, and do not place our hopes in this world. *See 1 Peter 1:13.*

Ecclesiastes 3

Truth

Revelation

Its interpretation

- ◆ Biblical revelation includes passages of poetry that must be interpreted figuratively – not literally, as we interpret prose, 1–8.
- ◆ It also includes statements that at first seem inconsistent with the rest of the Bible, like the saying that the fate of men and beasts is the same, 18–20.
 - Such passages must be read in the context of the whole book and in the context of the whole Bible.
 - We should interpret 1–8 in view of 11–15, which speaks of God’s eternity and our part in it.
 - We should interpret 18–20 in view of 21–22, which affirms the difference between men and beasts.

Its veracity

- ◆ Biblical revelation speaks candidly about our human condition, which is filled with painful contrasts and bears the mark of the curse of death that came from Adam’s sin.
- ◆ It does so from the perspective of faith in God, however, and thus truth looks beyond death, 10–15, 21–22.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He rules sovereignly over all of this world and has assigned times for everything we do and everything that happens to us, 1–8, 11, 14.
- ◆ He is inscrutable in his ways, 11.
- ◆ He is active, constantly working out his purposes on earth, 11.
- ◆ He is eternal and omnipotent, and all that he has done or has decided to do cannot be changed, 14.

His goodness

- ◆ He can make anything beautiful in its time, 11.
- ◆ He has put eternity in our hearts, causing us to seek the things that last and to seek God himself, 11.
- ◆ He gives enjoyment to those who receive the “good things of life” as gifts from him, 12–13, 22.
- ◆ He is good and requires us to do good, 12.
- ◆ He brings us troubles to show us our finiteness and thus deliver us from imagining that this world is all there is, 18.
- ◆ He is just and will justly judge all human behavior, 17.

Mankind

Our nature and purpose

- ◆ In this fallen world, we experience joy and sorrow, along with toil, labor, and injustice, 9, 16.
- ◆ God intends us to work at God–given tasks, 10.
- ◆ We are mortal, destined to die like animals, 19–20.
- ◆ Yet we are also in some way immortal, and the awareness of eternity in our hearts points us toward an eternal destiny, 11.

The Last Things

The last days

- ◆ We all experience our own personal last days, and after life comes the death of this body, 20.
- ◆ In the next life, and on the Last Day, there will be a righteous judgment by God, 15, 17.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Accept the realities of life, which include all sorts of contrasts, some of them quite painful.
- ◆ Do not be surprised by injustice.
- ◆ Recognize what “time” it is and learn to see God’s hand and purposes in each activity and event.

- ◆ Do not try to find “life,” immortality, or satisfaction in anything, including our work, in this life or apart from God.
- ◆ Receive God’s good gifts to us – work, food, drink, enjoyment – thankfully, and enjoy them amid this toilsome and trouble-filled life. *See 1 Timothy 4:4-5.*
- ◆ Set our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. *See 1 Peter 1:13.*

Ecclesiastes 4

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ♦ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones. It is progressive, given as God gradually unfolded his truth more and more clearly through the ages.
- ♦ Themes in the New Testament allude back to and illuminate themes in this chapter:
 - The tears without comfort, 1; *see Revelation 7:17; 21:4, where God will wipe away all our tears in the New Heaven and New Earth.*
 - The lack of comfort for the afflicted, 1; *see 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, which speaks of God's comfort to his people in this age.*
 - The blessed state of the dead compared to the living, 3; *see Philipians 1:23 and Revelation 7:14-17; 21-22, which speak of the true blessedness of the dead in Christ now.*
 - Working for God rather than out of envy, 4; *see Colossians 3:22-4:1.*
 - Working hard with no guarantee of reward or that our works will be of permanent value, 8; *see Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-4:1, which speak of a God-oriented view of work and its reward.*
 - The need for a close friend when we fall or are in danger, 10; *see Matthew 28:20, with its assurance that Christ is present with us now, and 2 Timothy 4:11, 17.*
 - The "threefold chord," 12; *see Ephesians 2:21-22; 5:18, which speak of the presence of the Holy Spirit among believers, including married couples. See also the eternal mutual love of the Trinity, 11.*
 - The statements about the need for rulers to listen, 13; *see Proverbs 20:18. See also 1 Kings 3:9, where Solomon asks for a listening heart (ZNIWSB).*

Christ

His prefiguration: He is perhaps obliquely prefigured as the one who went from prison to the throne, 14. *See Matthew 27:1-28:18 and Philipians 2:5-11.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Realistically face the facts of things we must face in this world: oppression, death, the uncertainty of the earthly results of our toil, loneliness, isolation, and foolish kings.
- ◆ At the same time remember that God will comfort us in all our afflictions and reward our labors in his own time and way. Christ will remain with us in all our trials, even when others will not or cannot be with us.
- ◆ Remember also that Christ is a wise King who even now rules the world and will eventually manifest his Kingdom visibly on this earth.
- ◆ Thank God for giving us the hope of eternal life after death, the surety of rewards for our labors, his presence with us even unto old age and loneliness, and the confidence that – though our rulers may be proud, obstinate, and foolish – Christ rules the world with wisdom and love.
- ◆ In all our troubles turn to God for the resources we have in Christ.
- ◆ Do our work unto the Lord and for his pleasure and reward, not for ourselves or even primarily for our children.
- ◆ Seek out godly companions both in work and in daily life, including a godly marriage partner if God so leads.
- ◆ Continue to listen to advice after we have risen to success and especially when we are old.

Ecclesiastes 5

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
- ◆ Themes in the New Testament allude back to and illuminate themes in this chapter:
 - Keeping our words few before God, 2; *see Matthew 6:7-8; 12:37.*
 - “God is in heaven,” which expresses distance, 2; *see Matthew 6:9, where Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father in heaven,” which indicates both distance and intimacy. See also Romans 8:14-17.*
 - The corruption of high officials, 8-9; *see Jesus’ trial and execution at the hands of Jewish religious leaders and the Roman governor, with the compliance of Herod the king: Matthew 26:47-27:27 and Luke 23:6-12. See also Paul’s imprisonment by a Roman governor, Acts 24:26-27.*
 - The folly of the love of money and the dangers of wealth, 10, 13-17; *see discussions of these by Jesus, Paul, the author of Hebrews, and James: Matthew 6:19-33; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Hebrews 13:5; and James 5:1-6.*
 - The duty and possibility of enjoying what God has given us in this life, 18-20; *see Philippians 4:10-13 and 1 Timothy 4:3-5; 6:17, which amplify this theme.*

God

His greatness

- ◆ He knows all and doesn’t need to be impressed by our prayers, 1-2. *See Matthew 6:5-8.*
- ◆ He dwells in heaven, far above us in every way, 2.
- ◆ He determines the length of our lives, 18.

His goodness

- ◆ He speaks only true and reliable words and requires that we do the same, 4-6.
- ◆ He gives good things for his people to enjoy in this world, 18-20. *See Matthew 7:7-11.*
- ◆ He is angry with those who don’t keep their promises, 6.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured obliquely as the innocent poor who are wrongly treated by those in power, 8.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Be careful what we say to God, not making rash promises.
- ◆ Keep our promises made to God, especially our marriage vows.
- ◆ Do not talk too much.
- ◆ Beware lest our “dreams” come only from our own ambition and not from God.
- ◆ Do not be surprised to see injustice and oppression in this world.
- ◆ Do not set our hearts on becoming rich.
- ◆ Enjoy what God has given us and be content.

Ecclesiastes 6–7

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ◆ Ecclesiastes shows the inability of human observation and reason to figure out the meaning of life.
 - These are especially inadequate for knowing what will happen in the future and for understanding the meaning of all the “bad” things we see, such as suffering, injustice, the loss of a just legal case, dying without an heir, or dying without being able to enjoy one’s life, 7:14, 23–25.
 - The writer of Ecclesiastes also could not “figure out” women and even had extreme difficulty understanding men, 7:28–29 (where “found” probably means “fully know or understand”).
- ◆ We need biblical revelation from God to understand these things and others like them. God has provided the answers to many of our deepest questions in the Scriptures.

Its interpretation

- ◆ Biblical revelation contains many passages that are hard to understand, like 7:16–17.
- ◆ Commentaries and study Bibles can often help us see possible meanings. In this case, the *HSCB* says that “righteous” here means “judged rightly by others.”
 - Therefore, we should not be obsessed with being considered “right” all the time, nor should we be overly willing to be slandered and considered “wicked.”
 - There are times when we should accept slander and times when we should seek to vindicate ourselves, for the glory of God.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is sovereign over our lives, including how much wealth we acquire and who will inherit our property when we die, 6:2.
- ◆ He determines and “names” what will come to pass in the future, yet leaves men responsible for their actions, 6:10.

- ◆ His sovereignty extends to what is made “straight” or “crooked,” that is, all things that come to pass, 7:13.
- ◆ He decides whether and when we prosper, and whether and when we suffer loss, 7:14.
- ◆ He created mankind, 7:29. Thus, he has authority over his creatures.

His goodness

- ◆ He generously gives wealth and prosperity to some, 6:2; 7:14.
- ◆ He protects those who please him from the snares of a seductress, 7:26.
- ◆ He is upright himself and made mankind upright in the beginning, 7:29.
- ◆ He brings those who have been unjustly treated and those who fear [reverence, love, or trust] him “out of” their plight, at least on the Last Day when he will render just judgment, 7:18.
- ◆ Being just and having built the world on moral laws, he allows habitual sinners to reap the bitter fruit of their sin, 7:26.

Mankind

Our created nature: We were created upright by God, 7:29.

Our fallen state subjects us to all sorts of hardships and frustrations:

- ◆ Having someone else enjoy the results of our hard work, 6:2
- ◆ Dissatisfaction with what we gain and own, 6:3
- ◆ The inability to enjoy what is good in this life, 6:6
- ◆ Perpetual discontent, 6:7
- ◆ Being prone to many foolish words, 6:10
- ◆ Being destined to a brief life, 6:12
- ◆ Vulnerability to all sorts of sorrows, 7:2–4
- ◆ Criticism by others, even those close to us, 7:5, 21
- ◆ Oppression and corruption, 7:7
- ◆ Long-held resentment, 7:9
- ◆ Adversities of all sorts, 7:14
- ◆ Being denied justice in the law courts, 7:15–17
- ◆ Being so corrupted by sin that we are all considered unrighteous, 7:20
- ◆ Perplexity about many deep questions, 7:23–25
- ◆ Seduction by evil women (and men), 7:26

Sin

Its nature

- ◆ See *“Mankind: Our fallen state,”* above.
- ◆ It is universal and ubiquitous, dominating every person, 7:20.
- ◆ It derives from our propensity for seeking out wicked schemes, that is, it starts from a wrong desire that leads to wrong thoughts, 7:29.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read Ecclesiastes at least every year to be reminded of the harsh realities and perplexities of life on earth, “under the sun.”
- ◆ Read Ecclesiastes in the light of the rest of the Bible, especially the accounts of the lives of God’s followers – supremely Jesus, but also his apostles – to see how godly people have endured and have been strengthened by God to do what is right, and to be reminded that life “under the sun” is not all there is: God will raise us from the dead and give us eternal life in a new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells and every tear will be wiped from our eyes.
- ◆ Meanwhile, seek wisdom from God, so that we may know and do his will, and so that we may respond well to the awful things that happen in this world.
- ◆ Seek to enjoy life while we can, as a gift from God, and also seek to endure hardship, accepting that it is God’s will for us sometimes.
- ◆ Do not set our hearts on happiness in this life, for that is very uncertain and temporary, but set our hopes fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastes 8

Truth

Revelation

General revelation

- ◆ Much of Ecclesiastes reflects what is called “general revelation,” that is, the kind of wisdom that comes from observation, experience, and reflection.
- ◆ This kind of wisdom is very useful, 1-2, 9, but it cannot explain everything we want to know, 17.

Biblical revelation

- ◆ Only special revelation can show us that those who fear God will reap a reward eventually, perhaps even in this life, and that the wicked will be punished in some way, 12-13.
- ◆ All passages in the Bible must be read in the light of the whole Bible, especially Ecclesiastes, which must be read in the context of the New Testament, where eternal life is promised to those who trust in Christ.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is the ultimate authority and keeps his promises; thus, he expects us to keep our promises to him, 2.
- ◆ He rules even over kings, 2.
- ◆ He has power to reward those who fear him and to punish those who do not, 12-13.
- ◆ He determines the length of our lives, 15.
- ◆ He retains knowledge of things too deep for us, 17.

His goodness

- ◆ He gives us many good things to enjoy in this life, along with life itself, 15.
- ◆ He is just, so he will reward those who fear him and punish those who do not, 12-13.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ In the absolute monarch of the Ancient Near East, who does whatever pleases him, 3
 - He rules with a powerful word, 4. *See Hebrews 1:3.*
 - He protects those who obey him, 5.
- ◆ In the innocent person who is treated as if he were unjust, 14; *see 1 Peter 3:18.*

Mankind

Our fallen state subjects us to all sorts of frustrations and hardships:

- ◆ Rule by men (and women) who abuse power, 4
- ◆ Great misery, 6
- ◆ Ignorance of the future, 7
- ◆ Inability to rule over our lives or deaths, 8
- ◆ Wickedness, 8
- ◆ Oppression, 9
- ◆ Being forgotten, 10
- ◆ A brief life, 13
- ◆ Being treated as if we were unjust, even when we are innocent, 14
- ◆ Hard labor, 15
- ◆ Inability to understand what is happening on earth, 17

Sin

Its elements

- ◆ Breaking oaths, 2
- ◆ Standing for evil causes, 3
- ◆ Oppression and exploitation, 9
- ◆ Continuing in sin because punishment has not come quickly to evildoers, 11
- ◆ Not fearing God, 13
- ◆ Perversion of justice, 14

The Last Things

The final judgment: Death will come to us all, and after that will come judgment, in which faith and fear toward God will be rewarded and evil will be punished, 6, 12–13.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Obey our rulers.
- ◆ Do not, however, participate in their evil schemes, 3.
- ◆ Expect toil, injustice, suffering, and death in this world.
- ◆ Fear God, and trust that he will reward those who seek him. *See Hebrews 11:6.*
- ◆ Enjoy life, including eating and marriage (and sex within marriage) during the days of our brief lives, for these are given to us by God, 15. *See Philippians 4:6-7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18.*
- ◆ Try not to unravel the mysteries of evil and injustice in this world; God knows, and he will reveal these things in his own time.
- ◆ Set our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastes 9

Truth

Revelation

General revelation comes to us in the form of natural wisdom, which has great – but not ultimate or necessarily determinative – value for successful living, 15–18.

God

His greatness: Every aspect of our lives is in the “hand of God,” that is, he rules sovereignly over all that happens to us, both to the timing and to the events themselves, which he knows beforehand, 1.

His goodness

- ◆ He distinguishes between the (relatively) good and the sinner, 2.
- ◆ He accepts our works if they are done in fear of him, and he wants us to enjoy the good things of life while we can, 7.
- ◆ He gives joy in marriage, eating, and drinking as gifts to us, 9.

Mankind

Our fallen state

- ◆ Our hearts are full of evil, even madness, 3.
- ◆ We cannot by our ability or strength determine our success or failure, 11.
- ◆ We do not know how long we will live, 12.
- ◆ A mighty king can be defeated by a poor wise man’s counsel, 14–15.
- ◆ Good deeds we perform for society may soon be forgotten, 15.
- ◆ Even wisdom may be despised, 16.
- ◆ Rulers are sometimes loud-mouthed fools, 17.
- ◆ One sinful person (especially a ruler) can destroy much good that has been done, 18.

The Last Things

After death

- ◆ We go to a place or state where all that was important to us in this life is irrelevant, 5-6, 10.
- ◆ We are soon forgotten, 5.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Entrust our futures into God's hands, for he rules over all, 1.
- ◆ Do not imagine that we can know what will happen to us, 1, but remember that we will surely die.
- ◆ Enjoy our food, marriage, and sex within marriage as gifts from God, 7-9.
- ◆ Work heartily, as unto God, 10. *See Colossians 3:23.*
- ◆ Do not, however, put our hopes for success in physical ability, wisdom, intelligence, or skill, for God may give success in ways that seem random to us.
- ◆ Work to benefit society because it is the right thing to do and not with the hope of being honored or rewarded, 13-16.
- ◆ Listen to wise counsel, even if it is spoken quietly, 17.
- ◆ Do not hope in this world, but place all our trust and hope in God, especially in the grace he will bring to us at the last time. *See 1 Corinthians 15:19 and 1 Peter 1:13.*

Ecclesiastes 10–11

Truth

Revelation

Its content: It includes wise counsel about all aspects of life, including work, money, and dealing with those in authority; this shows God's concern for all created life.

God

His greatness

- ♦ As Creator who has made everything, he also “makes” everything that comes to pass, 11:5.
- ♦ As Creator, he will also be Judge of all at the end, 11:9.

His goodness: He will see to it that evil actions bring evil consequences, 10:8, 11.

- ♦ Laziness leads to loss, 10:18.
- ♦ Diligent labor leads to gain, 11:1–2, 6.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is obliquely foreshadowed in the rule of the wicked and the ruin of the good, 10:6–7.

Mankind

Our fallen state subjects us to all sorts of frustrations and hardships:

- ♦ Our inability to be completely wise, 10:1
- ♦ The anger of those in authority, 10:4
- ♦ Exaltation of folly and degradation of virtue, 10:5–7
- ♦ Accidents at work, 10:9
- ♦ Unexpected attacks from snakes, 10:11
- ♦ Endless babbling of fools, 10:14
- ♦ Immature and self-indulgent rulers, 10:16
- ♦ The need for money, 10:19
- ♦ Surveillance by suspicious rulers, 10:20

- ◆ Ignorance of God's purposes in much of what we see in life, 11:5
- ◆ Certain death, which will cut off all our earthly joys and opportunities, 11:8

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read the Wisdom books of the Bible, especially Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, to know how to conduct ourselves in ways that are more likely to lead toward success and away from failure and loss.
- ◆ Avoid responding to angry authorities with either avoidance or anger, 10:4.
- ◆ "Sharpen our axe" by keeping all our "tools" in good shape, including our bodies, minds, spiritual life, and material possessions, 10:10.
- ◆ Restrain our words as much as possible, 10:12-14. *See also James 1:19.*
- ◆ Diversify our investments, and do not rely on one source of income, one friend, or one opportunity, 11:1-2.
- ◆ Do not avoid prudent risk just because of the possibility of loss, but keep working and investing, 11:3-4.
- ◆ Be diligent to work and to share the gospel ["sow your seed"] at all times, 11:6. *See also Matthew 13:1-23.*
- ◆ Enjoy the pleasures of life without imagining that they will last forever.
- ◆ Remember that someday God will bring all our actions into judgment, 11:9. *See also 2 Corinthians 5:10.*

Ecclesiastes 12

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ◆ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones. Thus, each part must be read not only in the light of its immediate context, especially the entire book, but also in the light of its context within the Bible.
- ◆ Ecclesiastes traces the spiritual journey of Solomon, who by experience, reason, and observation tried unsuccessfully to understand the mysteries of life.
- ◆ His despairing comments must be read in light of what he learned from special revelation: that we should fear God and enjoy life while we can, before we die and face the judgment of God after death, 1, 13-14.

Its literary forms

- ◆ The Bible contains all sorts of literature, including poetry, in which metaphors and similes convey truths in pictorial language. For example, old age is here portrayed through a variety of metaphors that illustrate increasing weakness, fragility, impotence, and finally death, 3-7.
- ◆ Some of the language also has apocalyptic meaning, since death is everyone's personal apocalypse (*HCSSB*), 2.

Its veracity: Much of the Bible spurs us like goads and pierces to the center of our being with words of wisdom that challenge our assumptions and idols, 11.

God

His greatness

- ◆ As Creator, he is almighty and the Judge of all the world, 1, 14.
- ◆ Implicitly, he is eternal; as Creator he existed before this world, and as Judge he remains after this world has been destroyed, 1, 14.
- ◆ He is a Spirit, and the giver of our spirits, which will endure after death, 7.
- ◆ He has the right to issue commands that must be obeyed, 13.

His goodness

- ◆ He has given us life and all the good things in it, 7.
- ◆ He has revealed his moral will to us, so that, though we don't understand much of what happens in life, we know how to live before him, 13.
- ◆ He is just and will judge all men justly, rewarding good deeds and punishing bad actions, 14.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ As the one who spoke words of wisdom, 9–11; *see Luke 2:52 and John 7:46.*
- ◆ As the one Shepherd, 11; *see John 10:11.*
- ◆ Obliquely, as the one to whom God the Father has committed all judgment, and who will judge everyone after they have been raised from the dead, 14; *see Matthew 7:21–23; 25:31–46 and 2 Corinthians 5:10.*

The Last Things

The last days

- ◆ At the end of this age come cosmic upheaval and judgment, 2.
- ◆ Our own last days end in death, and after death comes judgment, 14.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Enjoy life while we are young, but always in the sight of God and with remembrance of our Creator, by whose laws we must seek to conduct our lives.
- ◆ Do not forget that we shall one day become old and feeble.
- ◆ Do not look for ultimate meaning and satisfaction in this life, for all is fleeting and ephemeral – vanity, 8.
- ◆ Attend to the words of the wise, especially those in Scripture, including the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.
- ◆ Do not study so much that we ruin our health.
- ◆ Fear God and seek to keep his commandments, always trusting in his mercy to us through Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Live in the remembrance that we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Solomon: Introductory Notes

Truth

Revelation

Its structure: The Bible contains much poetry, like this “Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s” – a love song with an intricate literary structure.

[There are] seven sections, a sevenfold praise (4:1–5), twice a tenfold praise (5:10–16; 7:1–5), and a tenfold occurrence of the abstract word for love (2:4–5, 7; 3:5; 5:8; 7:6; 8:4, 6–7). Apart from the title (1:1), he wove Solomon’s name into six other places (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11–12), ... a perfect seven times, [which were] symmetrically balanced within the Song: twice in the first section balanced by twice in the last one, with three in the central...
(*HCSSB*)

Its content: The *HCSSB* describes “the central theme of the Song of Songs” as “a celebration of the goodness and beauty of romantic love.”

Its interpretation

- ◆ Based on several biblical passages that speak of Christ as a bridegroom or husband, Christians have interpreted this Song in comparison with the love of God and Christ for his people, the Church. See *John 3:28–29; Ephesians 5:22–33; and Revelation 19:7–9; 21:9.*
- ◆ Interpreters also interpret the song as a celebration of “the ideal love that God intended for a husband and wife” (*HCSSB*).
 - The Song illustrates a type of return to paradise:
 - ◆ A courtship that blossomed in the uncluttered beauty of nature, 1:15–2:3; 2:8–14
 - ◆ A wedding night consummated, with allusions to the garden of paradise, 4:12–5:1
 - ◆ A marriage that delights in innocent lovemaking, 4:1–5:1; 7:1–8:3
 - One classic of Christian meditation on the Song of Solomon is *Union and Communion* by J. Hudson Taylor, whose own married life was filled with romance and passion.

- ◆ Like Ecclesiastes, Esther, and other books of the Old Testament, the Song presents a problem of authorship: How could Solomon, with his many wives and concubines, have written it, especially since his first wife was an Egyptian princess?
 - Many scholars, therefore, assert that Solomon is not the author.
 - Others believe that the title should be taken at face value, and that God somehow touched Solomon with his grace, as reflected in this Song.
 - Another possible reading is that “Solomon is understood not as an intruder but as a somewhat distant figure, whom the woman brings into her dreams as her idealization of the young man she loves” (*ESVSB*).
 - We don’t know, nor do we need to know the authorship of the Song to appreciate its beauty and learn much from it about love, both human and divine.
- ◆ The speakers
 - Some scholars identify three main characters: the rural Shulamite girl, a shepherd whom she really loves, and King Solomon, but this interpretation has some problems.
 - Traditional interpretation identifies three speakers in the Song: the Shulamite girl, Solomon, and her friends (the “daughters of Jerusalem”).
 - Some translations, such as the *NKJV*, use gender, number, and person of the Hebrew words to identify most of the words, but some identifications are uncertain.
- ◆ Like all poetry, the Song is filled with word–plays, images, metaphors, and similes, which are not to be interpreted with precision; and while some verses seem to describe actual events, others appear to reflect the imagination of the lovers, who dream of what it will be like to be together.

God

His presence: Though not named, the Creator stands behind and within each verse of this love poem.

- ◆ He is the author and source of all that is good, lovely, and pleasant in life.
- ◆ He is the Creator of man and woman in his own image and as meant for each other.
- ◆ He is the author of human love, since he is love. *See 1 John 4:7.*

- ◆ He is the one who has fashioned a beautiful world, full of marvelous things like food and drink, sheep and pastures, gorgeous women and handsome men, banqueting and love, and brilliant words of poetry to describe all things in a way that speaks to our hearts.

Love

Even in our fallen state, we are made for love, including romantic love between man and woman, but even more for an intimate relationship with Christ as our true Beloved and Husband. The delights of romantic love between husband and wife are from God, are meant to be enjoyed purely, and point toward the ultimate bliss of eternal union and communion with Christ in a new earth.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read all the Bible, so that we may receive all of God's revelation for us and understand its various levels of meaning.
- ◆ Accept romantic love as a gift from God, as long as it is enjoyed purely within marriage.

Song of Solomon 1:1–2:7

Truth

God

His goodness: His irresistible grace is seen in his “drawing” his people with “cords of love,” 1:4. *See Hosea 11:4 and John 6:44; 12:32; 18:10; 21:8, where “draw” translates a word that implies irresistible strength on the part of the one who draws.*

Christ

His prefiguration

- ♦ As the lover who seeks his beloved, delighting in her though she is “dark” – that is, not perfectly beautiful in the eyes of the world, 1:5–6, 8, 15
- ♦ As a shepherd, 1:7–8
- ♦ As the one who brings her into a banqueting hall, 2:4; *see John 14:2.*
- ♦ As the one who sets a banner of love over her, 2:4

The Church

Its prefiguration as the Shulamite girl

- ♦ She desires above all to be with her beloved and loves his name, 1:2–3.
- ♦ She runs after him with single-minded devotion and passion, 1:4. *See Philippians 3:12–14.*
- ♦ She sees him as a king, 1:4.
- ♦ She follows the footsteps of the other “sheep” to the shepherd’s dwelling place, 1:8.
- ♦ She admires his beauty, 1:16.
- ♦ She rests in his presence with great delight, 2:3.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Do not be surprised when lovers praise each other to the point of worship, for they are created in God's image and are seeing the beauty of God in each other.
- ◆ Do not, however, deify romantic love, for in our fallen state it can be made into an idol, and the passions it arouses can lead us into sexual sin outside of marriage.
- ◆ Do not try to "stir up" romantic love or to arouse its passions until we are ready for marriage.
- ◆ Do not be so bound by conventional standards of beauty, especially skin color and complexion, that we overlook beauty of character.
- ◆ Do not become so busy "keeping other's vineyards" that we neglect to "keep our own vineyard," 1:6. That is, do not serve others so much that we neglect our own devotional life with God, family, health, finances, and basic responsibilities.
- ◆ Enjoy whatever love God gives us in marriage without expecting perfection or uninterrupted happiness in this life.
- ◆ Set our hopes fully on the consummation of all love in the new heaven and new earth, when we shall, with all believers in Christ, enjoy his love fully and forever.

Song of Solomon 2:8–3:5

Truth

Revelation

Its content: This passage, especially 2:10–14, reminds us of the ardent desire of God for the heartfelt devotion of his people, whom he invites into intimate communion with himself.

Its interpretation

- ◆ The Bible contains many passages that are hard to interpret.
- ◆ For example, does 3:1–5 narrate an actual event or a dream? Most likely, it tells merely of a dream the Shulamite girl had “by night on [her] bed,” 3:1.

Its literary forms

- ◆ Biblical revelation contains historical records of God’s dealings with his people, along with commands to guide our lives, proverbs of wisdom, prophecies which speak either judgment or comfort, and doctrinal passages that explain the gospel to us.
- ◆ It also contains poetry, as here, that is meant to touch our hearts and move our wills to love God, to cling to him, and to follow him.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is reflected here as the Creator of a lush and wonderful world, where spring follows winter, bringing with it flowers, the song of doves, luxuriant foliage and the fruit of the vine, and the renewed appearance of lovely animals like the gazelle upon the hilltops, 2:10–13, 17.
- ◆ He is also reflected in the knowledge of the girl that “my beloved is mine, and I am his,” 2:16, reminding us of God’s repeated promise, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” *See Genesis 17:7–8; Exodus 6:7; and every time he calls himself “your God.”*

Christ

His prefiguration: He is foreshadowed in the tender call of the lover, “Come away,” 2:10. See *Matthew 11:28; Mark 6:31; and John 7:37*.

The Church

Its prefiguration: It can be seen in the beloved girl, who adores her lover, thrills at his voice, and longs for him day and night, 2:8-9; 3:1-4.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Eagerly wait to hear the voice of Christ, think often of his beauty and goodness, and long to be with him, both now and forever.
- ◆ Tell others about the Lord whom we love, as the Shulamite did.
- ◆ Each of us should express love to the person whom God gives as a lifelong partner.
- ◆ Husbands and wives should often speak words of praise to each other.
- ◆ Men should take the initiative in pursuing and wooing the women to whom they think God has led them. Both before and after the wedding, they should constantly court their wives with words of love.
- ◆ Watch out for the “little foxes that spoil the vines,” 2:15, such as impure thoughts, disordered affections, careless words, ungodly habits, worldly distractions, empty entertainment, unbelieving companions, and anything that would draw us away from Christ and from our marriage partners.

Song of Solomon 3:6–6:3

Truth

Revelation

Its interpretation

- ◆ Biblical revelation contains passages and even whole books that are hard to understand, and that have evoked various interpretations.
- ◆ This section, like the entire Song, has been interpreted in three descriptions:
 - Solomon and his beloved
 - An idealized man, who is like Solomon in his beloved's eyes
 - A shepherd boy, whom the Shulamite girl loves, in contrast to Solomon in all his kingly glory
- ◆ This section has also been interpreted either as actual encounters between the two lovers or as dream-like experiences of the Shulamite girl.
- ◆ Regardless of the interpretation, this section's truths remain.

God

His goodness: He has given man and woman to each other for mutual love, delight, enjoyment, and a foretaste of that unending worship and praise which will be for all believers when Christ returns.

Christ

His prefiguration: The love of Christ for his people is foreshadowed in the total commitment of the lover to his beloved and in his complete enjoyment of her beauty.

Love

Romantic love: It calls forth the most intense desire, longing, and satisfaction known to man and woman; nothing but poetry of the highest beauty can begin to express the feelings of enjoyment, wonder, and love a man and woman can have for each other.

- ◆ The eyes receive the most attention in both the man's praise for the woman and her praise for him, 4:1; 5:12.

- ◆ The mouth, as distinct from the lips, is the source of words of love and adoration, 4:11; 5:16.
- ◆ A man delights in a woman's breasts, 4:5.
- ◆ A woman delights in the body of a man who is fit and strong, 5:14-15.
- ◆ Both appreciate beauty of countenance, healthy teeth, and a pleasant aroma.
- ◆ Sexual love within marriage provides not only physical ecstasy but also refreshment of body and soul, 4:12-15.
- ◆ A woman in love wants above all to know that she has the exclusive affection, devotion, and commitment of the man whom she loves, 6:2-3.
- ◆ A man in love wants to be sure that no one else has access to his beloved's charms and sexuality, 4:12.

Love in a fallen world: The frustration described in 5:2-8, referring either to a real event or to a nightmare, reflects the present reality of life and love, in which "the course of true love never did run smooth" (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

The Church

Its prefiguration

- ◆ It is foreshadowed in the loveliness of the girl; the Church possesses this now by faith in Christ and will someday possess it in reality.
- ◆ True Christian devotion to Christ is also seen in the girl's intense longing to be with her beloved. *See Philipians 1:23 and Revelation 22:17.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Men and women in love, if they are sexually pure with each other, may anticipate surpassing joy in their sexual life after the wedding.
- ◆ Men should praise their wives often, especially after marriage. Wives should also praise their husbands. Everyone likes to be complimented!
- ◆ Men should strive to be as strong and attractive as possible, and women should seek to retain the loveliness of their youth as much as possible. For both, this requires self-discipline in eating and in regular exercise, as well as care in personal grooming, especially at home when they are alone together.

- ◆ Expect frustration and disappointment in romantic love in this life, and do not place our hopes in this world, but look to the full satisfaction that will be ours only when Christ returns.
- ◆ Meanwhile, be alert to opportunities to receive love, and respond quickly to them, not allowing little things to impede us from opening our hearts either to a human beloved or to Christ, 5:2-6.

Song of Solomon 6:4–8:14

Truth

Revelation

Its source: The presence of the Song of Solomon in the canon shows that God is the author of romantic love in marriage, that he means to bless it, and that his revelation is meant to speak to all of life, even our sexuality.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is a consuming fire, 8:6. *See Hebrews 12:29.*
- ◆ No powers of chaos, symbolized here and often in the Bible by waters, can overwhelm or overpower him, 8:7.

His goodness

- ◆ He is love. *See 1 John 4:7-8.*
- ◆ His love is everlasting and cannot be quenched by waters, as was seen at Creation, the Flood, the Red Sea, the crossing of the Jordan River, and the stilling of the storm on the sea by Jesus, 8:7.

Mankind

Our created nature

- ◆ Created in God's image, we are meant to love.
- ◆ Created as man and woman, we are meant to love someone of the other sex with our entire heart and body, expressing our love in praise, words of longing and desire, and ardent passion, as seen in this Song.
- ◆ A woman's beauty deserves praise and even wonder, as the most glorious and splendid of God's works.
- ◆ Sex in marriage is meant to lead to the procreation of children, 8:2.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Express affection within the family, 8:1-2.
- ◆ Treat romantic love as precious, not to be lightly awakened or too quickly indulged, but reserve its full flowering and sexual expression for marriage, 8:4.
- ◆ Realize that true love is priceless, and do not let anything else, such as a desire for monetary gain, spoil it, 8:7.
- ◆ Keep ourselves pure before marriage, as this Shulamite girl was kept as a walled garden. Additionally, a woman's brothers – and her brothers in Christ – should do all they can to protect her virginity before marriage, 8:8-9.
- ◆ Look to the return of Jesus and the marriage supper of the Lamb for the perfect consummation of all our longings for romantic and sexual love.