



The Book of Proverbs

Programmed Syllabus

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Course Description

“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding” (Proverbs 3:13). In this course learners discover the role of wisdom in the Book of Proverbs by doing an exegetical study of its contents in their cultural, historical, and literary settings. The course begins with an analysis of the book’s structure and purpose, focusing on the forms of wisdom literature as seen in the literary structure of Proverbs. Dr. Waltke then moves to poetic analysis and finally to the prominent theme of wisdom that permeates the book. Students are encouraged to apply wisdom themes to life.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the Book of Proverbs in its historical, canonical, and contemporary contexts.
2. Recognize the forms of wisdom literature in the Book of Proverbs in light of Ancient Near Eastern collections of sayings and admonitions.
3. Define “wisdom” and understand the relationship of God and man to wisdom.
4. Understand the interpretive issues in the Book of Proverbs.
5. Know God by doing His will as expressed in this book.

Required Readings

Required Reading: The following readings are listed in alphabetical order, not in the order, which will be followed in the course. Daily requirements will be specified at the beginning of each lecture’s assignment sheet.

Bryce, G.E. *A Legacy of Wisdom: The Egyptian Contribution to the Wisdom of Israel*. London: Associated United Press, 1979, pp. 80-87.

Clements, Ronald E. *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976, pp. 99-117.

Crenshaw, James L. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Kidner, Derek. *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, Vol. 15. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1964, pp. 36-38, 57-59.



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_____. *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes: An Introduction to Wisdom Literature*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1985, pp. 11-55, 90-124.

Malchow, Bruce V. "A Manual for Future Monarchs." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985): 238-245.

Ruffle, John. "The Teaching of Amenemope and its Connection with the Book of Proverbs." *Tyndale Bulletin* 28 (1977): 29-68.

The Teaching of Amenemope (found in either ANET, pp. 421-425; or DOTT, pp. 172-186).

Von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972. Reprint, Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993, pp. 53-319.

Waltke, Bruce K. "The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (1979): 221-238.

Whybray, R. N. *Proverbs*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. pp. 3-431. **(only available from ITS)**

Suggested Reading: See Lecture notes for readings relative to specific topics.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. ITS Online Interactivity Forum (see course requirements) – fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. Spiritual Formation Project (see course requirements) – fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. Learning Community Assignments (see end of syllabus) – fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ for the most up-to-date ITS resources.



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Course Requirements

1. **Required Time:** In order to receive three semester or four quarter hours of academic credit, the student must complete the course requirements within a one-year period unless otherwise specified by the institution granting credit. During this time, the student is expected to devote at least 120 hours to the completion of the course.
2. **Required Reading:**
 - a. Book of Proverbs: Every chapter of the Book of Proverbs should be read at least three times, preferably once in the King James Version, and once in each of the New International Version and the New American Standard Version.
 - b. Additional readings: The students will be expected to read at least 1200 pages from the assigned required as well as suggested readings, listing the author, book, and pages read.
3. **Assignments:** The individual lecture assignments (see “Assignments” section of this syllabus) must be turned in at the end of the course.
4. **ITS Online Interactivity Forum:** Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:
 - ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
 - ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
 - ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for details.

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.



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5. Spiritual Formation Project:

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
 - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
 - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?
 - Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?
 - Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?
 - Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?
 - b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
 - c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).
2. **Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:



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a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: **Identify your mentor early in the course**, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
- b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
 - ♦ What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
 - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
 - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ♦ Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:



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- ◆ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation”, how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- ◆ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
- ◆ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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6. **Examination:** There will be one final examination.

Course Grading

Lecture Assignments.....	40%
ITS Online Interactivity Forum.....	5%
Spiritual Formation Project.....	15%
Final Examination.....	<u>40%</u>
Total.....	100%



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Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.