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**P** “Let sleeping dogs lie” • A simple study of  
**PROVERBS**



## Our Proverbs

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### How many of these have you said?

- A penny saved is a penny earned.
- Don't put all of your eggs in one basket.
- Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
- A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.
- No pain, no gain.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
- A watched pot never boils.
- From little acorns mighty oaks grow.



## Our Proverbs

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**How many of these have you said?**

- If the shoe fits, wear it.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- Practice makes perfect.
- Haste makes waste.
- An apple a day keeps the doctor away
- A stitch in time saves nine.
- A rolling stone gathers no moss.
- Well begun is half done.



## Our Proverbs

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### What are proverbs and why do we use them?

- Proverbs are simple maxims that communicate specific principles and practices rooted in everyday experience and common sense.
- They relate an easily accessible thought powerfully and quickly.
- They are usually obvious • traditional • easily identifiable
- They are catchy • pithy • rhythmic • funny • easy to remember
- They encourage us to be diligent • wise • moral • busy • healthy •
- We use them because of their brevity • obvious application • encouragement



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Identity, equals, associations:** “This is really that.” • “It is what it is.”
    - Business is business. • A friend in need is a friend indeed.
    - “As is the man, so is his strength.” (Jdg 8.21)
    - “Who ever flatters his neighbor is spreading the net for his feet.” (Pr 29.5)
    - “Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.” (Gal 6.7)



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Contrast and paradox** • “This is **not** really that” • “It is what it isn’t”
    - All that glitters is not gold.
    - There is no such thing as a free lunch.
    - “Whoever loves money never has enough.” (Eccl 5.10)
    - “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1.46)
    - “A gentle tongue can break a bone.” (Pr 25.15)





# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Similarities and types** • “This is **(or acts like)** that” • “If it walks like a duck ...”
    - A chip off the bold block. • Like father like son.
    - Time and tide wait for no one.
    - “Like people, like priest” (Hos 4.9) • “Like mother, like daughter” (Ezek 16.44)
    - “ Like the cold of snow in time of harvest, Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters.” (Pr 25.13)



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Contraries and absurdities** • “That makes about as much sense as ...” • “That does not make sense at all.”
    - “As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.” (Pr 26.14)
    - “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?” (Jer 13.23)
    - “Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.” (1 Kgs 20.11)



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Stereotypical examples** • “You remind me of ...”
    - A fool and his money are soon parted. • A rolling stone gathers no moss.
    - “The simple believes every word ...” (Pr 14.15)
    - “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.” (Pr 13.1)



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Value, priority, degree** • “This is worth that” • “Better is this than that.”
    - A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
    - Better late than never.
    - “... And a poor man is better than a liar.” (Pr 19:22)
    - “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.” (Pr 22.1)



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Biblical proverbs ...

- Often make use of:
  - **Causes and consequences** • “If you do this, then ...”
    - No pain, no gain. • No guts, no glory. • Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
    - “A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,...” (Pr 1.5)
    - “They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind.” (Hos 8.7)
    - “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Gal 6.7-8)



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## The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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### Cautions in reading and interpreting Proverbs ...

- Do **not** take everything literally (15.19, 21.22, 23.2)
- Some proverbs are not **always** true in every circumstance (29.12, 15.25, 22.6)
- Proverbs often **suggest** thought before action and are not to be understood as permanent hard and fast rules (26.4-5, 22.26,27)
- Proverbs are parables and point to something beyond themselves
- Proverbs are primarily practical, not theoretically theological



# The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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## Cautions in reading and interpreting Proverbs ...

- They are written to be easily remembered, not technically precise
- They often reflect a culture that we are unfamiliar with
- They must not be taken to be divine guarantees, but rather behavior guidelines
- They use a number of literary techniques to make a point (hyperbole, absurdity)
- They gave great advice, but they are not exhaustive
- Though they endorse and encourage industry, they do not extol materialism



## The Basics of Biblical Proverbs

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**Proverbs tells us who to listen to and who not to listen to...**

- Listen to the wise man • Do **not** listen to the fool
- Listen to wisdom (often personified) • Do **not** listen to the scoffer
- Listen to parents • Do **not** listen to peers
- Listen to creation • to elders • to wise words • to family
- Listen to friends • Do **not** listen to enemies
- Listen to what leads to “life” • Do **not** listen to what leads to “death”
- Follow righteousness • Do **not** follow unrighteousness



