

Proverbs

(Edited from various sources)

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Problems in interpreting Proverbs

Untrue to experience; 10:27, 22:4

Seem to contradict one another; 26:4-5, 15:16, 6:6-11

Reflect secular common sense without theology

Excessively moralistic; 24:21; 20:13; 14:20; 17:8

Many unconnected sayings; 10:1-22:12, et.al.

Cultural problems, 23:13

Resources

Hubbard, *Guidelines for Proverbs*, especially useful for preaching and hermeneutics, understanding and proclamation

Collins in Knox preaching guides

Hermeneutics

1. Interpret individual passage in light of the overall context, motto, purpose, setting, themes.
 - Use a concordance to understand the unique wisdom language context, understand the “collection of collections”
2. Recognize literary forms and devices
 - Admonition and imperative--wisdom sentence is in indicative mood, 12:4
 - The torah in Proverbs is usually not Moses’ Torah, but is usually parental
3. Beware of idea that proverbs are unconditional promises, some proverbs have limits
4. Some proverbs are unconditionally true, 16:2; 12:33; 11:1; 12:22; 15:3
5. Interpret Proverbs in the historical-cultural context of extra-biblical wisdom literature

Homiletics

1. Apply Proverbs—validate the text through the rest of the Bible (10:22)
2. Utilize the nature and character of Proverbs to communicate graphic principles
3. Explain the creative use of proverbial characters (26:14)