# Expounding the Poetic Books

1. The issues (1): Psalms – four ways of speaking to God; St Barnabas; Psalm 103 (50)
2. Group discussion of Psalm 22 or Psalm 95 or 22 or 27 or 30 (20)
3. Plenary (20)
4. Break (20)
5. The Issues (2): Proverbs (30)
6. Group discussion (20)
7. Plenary (20)

## The Issues (1)

### Be Filled with the Spirit

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. (Eph 5:18-20)

Through all prayer and petition, pray at all time in the Spirit. To this end be alert with all persistence and petition concerning all the saints, and for me, so that a message may be given to me as I open my mouth to make known with freedom the revelation of the gospel. (Eph 6:18-19)

Ephesians urges us towards a life of worship, prayer, thanksgiving, and intercession. It does not tell us what that looks like. It does not need to do so, because the Old Testament has already done so. Yet the church largely ignores the guidance the Old Testament offers on the nature of worship, prayer, and spirituality.

### Four Things You Can Say to God

1. You’re great!

Exhortation to praise

Reasons for Praise

1. Help, help, help!

The past

The present – I, they, you

The future - plea

1. I trust you

Reasons for hope in our experience

Reasons for hope outside our experience

1. Thank you, thank you, thank you

How things were

How we prayed

How God answered

St Barnabas Pasadena

Lent Course 2012

February 28 - March 27

Praying the Psalms

Come to John and Kathleen’s house on Tuesdays from 6.00 to 7.30 to study some of the Psalms, think about how to pray, and enjoy a simple dinner. We live at 111 South Orange Grove Bvd, Apartment 108 (626 405 0626). Park in Green Street.

The course will last five weeks, but you can come just to one or two if you can’t come to all of them.

After the first week, there will be a psalm for you to pray each day as you can, and we will talk about these psalms and about your experience of praying them when we meet.

Before the first evening, you could start reading Psalm 119…

February 28

## The Way the Psalms Pray:

Giving Praise: “You’re great”

Praying for Oneself:

“Help, help, help!”

Praying for Our Church

Praying for Someone Else

Praying for Our Neighborhood

Praying for Our Nation

Praying for the World

Giving Thanks:

“Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

Making Confession:

“Sorry, sorry, sorry.”

March 6

## Praying for Oneself

A psalm each day to pray and think about, as you have time:

Wednesday Psalm 6

Thursday Psalm 15

Friday Psalm 19

Saturday Psalm 25

Sunday Psalm 30

Monday Psalm 33

Tuesday Psalm 42

March 13

## Praying for Someone Else

A psalm each day to pray and think about, as you have time:

Wednesday Psalm 11

Thursday Psalm 22

Friday Psalm 27

Saturday Psalm 31

Sunday Psalm 34

Monday Psalm 43

Tuesday Psalm 63

March 20

## Praying for the Neighborhood

A psalm each day to pray and think about, as you have time:

Wednesday Psalm 20

Thursday Psalm 23

Friday Psalm 32

Saturday Psalm 38

Sunday Psalm 40

Monday Psalm 41

Tuesday Psalm 57

March 27

## Praying for the Nation and the World

A psalm each day to pray and think about, as you have time:

Wednesday Psalm 46

Thursday Psalm 47

Friday Psalm 51

Saturday Psalm 65

Sunday Psalm 66

Monday Psalm 72

Tuesday Psalm 80

### A “Sermon” on Psalm 103

The Psalms are in scripture for us to make into our prayers. When we read the psalms, we are accepting an invitation to overhear the psalmists praying, to listen in on what was going on between them and God. We are being invited to see if we can make their prayer our own and to test our prayer by theirs. We are not being invited to learn something some thing about prayer. We are being invited to pray. The Psalms are there to teach us how to pray, by giving us model prayers. So their biblical way to teach people to pray is to give them examples of prayer. (Actually, Jesus and Paul do the same.) And the biblical way to preach on a psalm is to ‘re-pray’ it.

This is my attempt to do that with Psalm 103. There are a number of references to political events and to circumstances in my own life which derive from the time I first made this attempt and which are therefore dated. However, I have not tried to change these, because this feature of what follows itself illustrates the nature of prayer.

So I was not just preaching, but also praying. It was not just me praying, because I had been reading the commentaries to see how (by implication) the commentators had prayed this psalm (Yes, you’re right, there was no evidence they have in some cases, but there was in other cases). I got my faculty colleagues to pray on the basis of Psalm 103 one day, and I listened to their prayers. I was preaching, but I was praying. I invited people not just to be listening, but to be praying: to pray with me, and to pray the particular prayers that they needed pray as they joined in Psalm 103.

***Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*** I sometimes look round church and see people doing that, Father, and I feel a funny mixture of a sort of vicarious joy, a thrill at other people being thrilled, a bit like the feeling you have when the kids open the Christmas presents (well, the feeling you hope you’ll have when the kids open the Christmas presents) - a mixture of all that with some more negative feelings, a bit of jealousy, of resentment that I don’t usually come to church with my arms itching to lift as soon as I walk through the door, an insecurity that comes from the suspicion that I don’t really belong to the spiritual elite that these people belong to. Is there an ‘all’ within me that can praise his holy name? Father, I confess that it doesn’t usually seem to be there instinctively. ‘I really want to thank you, Lord’, the song says. But I don’t often feel like that instinctively, it’s not a song I find it easy to sing.

But perhaps the psalm is starting where I start, after all. Because the psalmist begins by exhorting the self to praise God. So perhaps this wasn’t instinctive for them either. So how do I move from sense of obligation to worship, and a real desire to worship God with heart and mind and soul, to actually doing so?

The psalm does actually suggest the way. ***Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits.*** What it’s inviting me to do, Father, is to bring to mind the good things you give me. And I do find that when I’m drawn into worship at heart and soul, it’s because something has made me aware of some of those good things.

***Do not forget all his benefits – who forgives all your iniquity.*** That’s what drew me to this particular psalm for Ash Wednesday. Today has invited me to face up to sin, and that means that, at the end of the day, I need to be reminded about forgiveness. I know I always need that, because I know that a lot of my own needs are tied up with an awareness of guilt. It can make me defensive – and aggressive. It’s the most basic thing you ever give me, Father, your forgiveness. One of the commentators remarks on the extraordinary fact that God keeps forgiving us for the same sins, and I realized that’s just as well. I read that just after I’d got annoyed with someone, with a situation that often makes me angry, I fall into that trap, Father, time after time. After the self-righteousness that justifies the anger abates, I hate myself, though only momentarily – perhaps it would be better if I hated myself for a bit longer. But you forgive me. Today I have looked in the face one or two of those recurrent sins, and now I wonder at the fact that you forgive. You yourself see the failures and the neglects and you forgive. You yourself look into what goes on in my heart and mind, you see the mixed motives and the low desires, and you forgive. How dispiriting it is that in so many ways I stay the same. But how wondrous it is that you stay the same, that you take the risk of keeping forgiving.

***Bless the Lord… who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.*** Some of that’s harder to say, Father. I know in my own experience that you forgive, but I also have a lot of experience of you not healing. But I remember something someone said who’d been involved in healing ministry and had seen people healed, that nevertheless some of the biggest miracles were the way you enabled people to cope with not being healed. And I know that even as I experience you refusing to heal, I experience you redeeming my life from the Pit. And it’s like being born again: pain and new life somehow coalescing. The Psalms often talk about the Pit as somewhere where you are not known, but then they contradict themselves and affirm that you reach into whatever pit I find myself in and make yourself known there, and you make the place of death a place of praise. In one sense I still live in the realm of death, but somehow it ceases to have any power over me. It’s lost its sting. I suppose that’s one of the reasons why I’m able to keep declaring that you heal all our infirmities even though you obviously don’t. We do experience healing in all our infirmities. You do redeem. You treat me as someone who belongs to your family and as someone to whom you therefore have family obligations, and I experience healing in all my infirmities. And in that we recognize the guarantee that you will heal all our infirmities.

***Bless the Lord… who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like eagle’s.*** Well, I know more about that, Father. There have been moments over the last few months when I wasn’t sure I could actually sustain what I was committed to. And I’ve experienced a strange feeling of being sustained, of being carried, of finding I had got through a series of commitments that had threatened to be simply too much. Not exactly my youth being renewed (I’ve no great desire for that), but at least my middle age being renewed.

Then, Father, I find the psalm turning me away from my personal experiences to generalizations. ***The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.*** I know that it’s no good my prayer and praise being confined to what I experience. For one thing, when I see myself forgiven and healed and sustained, I see myself handled in a way that’s in keeping with your dealings with your people through the ages. It’s a sign that I belong with them. My healing is one with the way you have acted in authority and justice with your people from the beginning. My story belongs with that story. I belong with them, I find myself in their story, and that means a lot to me. It challenges me, too. It pulls me away from a privatized faith, an individualistic spiritual experience because it makes me put healing and liberation together – not to identify them, but to make then inseparable. If I’m interested in healing, I have to be interested in liberation – and vice versa. Father, please help me to hold together more of the things that scripture holds together. ‘Your authority exercised in justice on behalf of the oppressed’. It makes me think of the Philippines, Father, and Uganda. It makes me think of my brothers and sisters in Christ, in the midst of that life-threatening crisis in Manila, and of brothers and sisters in Christ whom I actually know who live in the area through which the defeated Ugandan army has probably been fleeing – Henry Orombi’s family and Yeko’s family. Lord, please be to them today the redeemer who manifests his authority and justice. Please protect them.

***The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.*** ’Full of compassion and mercy’ - overflowing with it, I guess that means. Unable to move without it spilling-out. You can’t hold your love in, Father, even when you rather feel you ought to be strict at this point.

***He has not dealt with us according to our sins.*** The psalmist talks about the past, Father, and makes me think about my own past. I can become burdened with the failures of the present, the sings that recur in my life. But I also remember the sins of the past. My mind goes back to one or two incidents in particular, to an occasion when I hurt someone I said I loved, and my head bows in shame before you again at the memory; and I wonder what happened to her and whether she ever forgave me and I realize I cannot escape the responsibility for that; but t least I hear you say that you propel my sins to an infinite distance, rather than letting them dangle between me and you.

***For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who revere him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.*** How far is the east form the west? How far is the Kremlin from the White House? How far is the north from the south? How far is the first world from the third world? How high is the sky above the earth? Much further than the psalmist realized! How far is the east from the west? Did the psalmist realize the answer is infinity?

***As a father has compassion for his children*** [or a mother, scripture elsewhere says],  ***so the Lord has compassion for those who revere him. For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.*** I’ve been puzzling over the way the psalm moves between talk of sin and talk of suffering, Father, puzzling over the link between these. It’s complicated, I suspect. Sometimes my sin means I suffer, sometimes my suffering means I sin. I’ve been aware of that today, and I’ve been newly aware of your recognizing my frailty and the way that’s at the back of some of the temptations I fall to, the things that I’m not sure whether they’re sins or not. I’m scared, Father, of making talk like that an excuse for sin, but somewhere there, there’s another precious evidence of your compassion, that you know my frailty. You know it better now than when the psalmist prayed his prayer, because you know it from the inside in Christ (I hope it’s not a heresy to say you know it better now, but I’m sure someone will tell me afterwards if it is). And that might have made you more judgmental towards me. After all, if Jesus was in every way tempted as I am without sinning, perhaps I ought to be able to manage. But I think I hear you still saying that you know my frailty and put your loving arms around me when it takes me within inches of sin.

***As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like the flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone and its place knows it no more.*** Frailty connects not just with sin, of course, Father, but with suffering. You seem determined to keep facing us with the fact of suffering and mortality. You almost seem to will illness and death to walk among us. Time after time we find ourselves weeping with those who grieve or weep or fear.

***But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who revere him, and his righteousness to children’s children.*** Thus I am called to affirm before you, Father, and I believe it. I believe it partly because I have also seen the evidence of it. But I have to say, Father, that I see much that belies it, and I have to plead with you to be that merciful goodness to Peter Gow and his family, and Pete Jeffries and his family, and people here in church who hurt and grieve and fear and weep.

***The Lord has established his throne in all the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*** So the psalmist’s immediate response is to invite me to an even more searching confession. You have established your throne. You rule. I find your rule harder and harder to understand. Not harder to accept or to believe in. It’s just that the more I know you, the less I know you. The more inexplicable you become, the more mysterious the way you act. The more evidence I see that you are the God who is there, that makes me unable to conceive that you are merely the figment of our colluding desire to kid ourselves that we are not alone, the more mysterious you become. Sometimes I can see the edges of the reasons why you act as you do, but much of the time it’s mystery. And I have to live through the mystery on the basis of the ‘sometimes’. And I can do that (which is just as well, because I can’t see you giving me any choice).

Maybe the psalmist is hinting at something of that when putting together the pictures of you as the father and protector and redeemer, and affirmations of your holiness and of the response of fear before you. It’s with your holy name that the Psalm began - and your holiness is your transcendent mystery, your divine absoluteness, that ‘god-ness’ which silences our questioning. Yet when it talks about you in your holiness, it’s you as the one who forgives and heals and redeems and crowns. Then when it talks about mercy, it also talks about fear; and when it talks about you being a father, it also talks about fear; and when it talks about your goodness, it also talks about fear. So it invites me into an awe before your holiness and into a surrender to your love. Or perhaps it’s even an awe before your love and a surrender to your holiness.

***Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word. Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.*** The psalm invited me to begin with me and what goes inside me, and then he drew me to the people of God and what you are for us all, but the end of his worship is with heaven. I love that line in the metrical version of this psalm: ‘Angels help me to adore him, you behold him face to face’ - you ought to be able to do it better!

***Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul.*** I end where I began. Yet it’s not the same place, because of the journey I’ve traveled.

## Group discussion of Psalm 95 or 22 or 27 or 30 (20)

## Plenary (20)

## Break (20)

## The Issues (2): The Wisdom Books (30)

Proverbs, Song of Songs

Job, Ecclesiastes

### Proverbs

Many topics recur in different places in Proverbs. Presumably the compilers intended it that way, to encourage people to reflect on one saying at a time. Proverbs mirrors the Bible as a whole in not being ordered systematically. But there’s also value in putting together its sayings on different topics. The following pages collect the sayings on a number of topics

#### Anger

6:34 Jealousy [arouses] a man’s fury; he won’t pity on the day of redress

11:23The longing of the faithful is only good; the expectation of the faithless is wrath.

12:16 A stupid person – his vexation makes itself known at the time, but a shrewd person conceals a humiliation.

14:16 Someone wise fears and turns from what is evil, but a stupid person rages and is confident.

14:17 One who is short-tempered will do stupid things; a person of schemes will be repudiated.

14:29 Long-temperedness is much understanding, but shortness of spirit exalts stupidity.

14:35 The favor of a king [will be] towards servant of good sense, but his rage will be [towards] a shameful one.

15:1A gentle response turns back wrath, but a hurtful word arouses anger.

15:18 A heated man stirs up arguments, but one who is long-tempered quietens contention.

16:14 The king’s wrath is death’s aide, but the wise person will expiate it.

16:32 Better to be long-tempered than a warrior, and ruling over one’s spirit than taking a city.

19:11 A person’s good sense lengthens his anger, and his glory is passing over an act of rebellion.

19:12 The king’s rage is a growl like a lion’s, but his favor is like dew on grass.

19:19 One who is big in wrath carries a penalty; if you rescue [him], you’ll do it again.

20:2 The dreadfulness of a king is a growl like a lion’s; one who infuriates him loses his life.

21:14 A gift in secret calms anger, a present in the pocket [calms] fierce wrath.

21:19 Better living in wilderness land than an argumentative and vexatious woman.

21:24 The haughty, presumptuous person – arrogant his name – acts in a frenzy of haughtiness.

22:8 One who sews wrongdoing will reap wickedness; their furious club will fail.

22:24-25 Don’t befriend a person characterized by anger, don’t go about with someone hot-tempered, lest you learn his ways and get a snare for your life.

25:23 A north wind may stir up rain, and a secretive tongue an indignant face.

27:3 A stone is weighty and sand is heavy, but a stupid person’s vexation is heavier than both of them.

27:4 There is the cruelty of fury and the flooding of anger, but who can stand before passion?

29:8 People who mock stir up a town, but the wise turn away anger.

29:22 An angry person provokes arguments, and a hot-tempered person rebels much.

30:33 Pressing milk produces butter, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces contention.

#### Arguments

3:30 Don’t contend with someone for no reason, when he hasn’t done you any wrong.

10:12 Animosity stirs up strife, but giving oneself conceals all acts of rebellion.

13:10 Only by means of arrogance does someone produce strife; wisdom is with people who take advice.

15:16 Better a little with awe for Yahweh than much treasure and turmoil with it.

15:18 A heated man stirs up arguments, but one who is long-tempered quietens contention.

16:28 A crooked person stirs up arguments, and a gossip separates a friend.

17:1 Better a dry crust and quiet with it, than a house full of contentious sacrifices.

17:14 The beginning of an argument releases waters, before contention breaks out, abandon it.

17:19 One who likes rebellion likes strife; one who builds a high gate seeks breaking down.

18:6 The lips of a stupid person come to contention, and his mouth summons to blows.

18:18 The lot puts an end to arguments and separates powerful people.

18:19 A brother acting rebelliously [is stronger] than a strong city, and arguments are like the barrier of a fortress.

20:3 Ceasing from contention is an honor for a person, but every stupid person breaks out.

21:9 Better living on a corner of the roof than an argumentative woman and a shared house.

21:19 Better living in wilderness land than an argumentative and vexatious woman.

22:10 Drive out the arrogant person and arguments will depart; lawsuit and humiliating will cease.

23:29 Who says “Oh,” who says “Aagh,” who has arguments, who has complaints, who has wounds without reason, who has bleary eyes?

23:30 People who linger over wine, who come to investigate mixed wine.

25:7-8 What your eyes have seen should not come out into contention quickly.

Lest – what will you do at the end of it, when your neighbor puts you to shame?.

26:17 One who seizes the ears of a passing dog is one who gets furious at a dispute that isn’t his.

26:20 In the absence of wood a fire goes out, and when there’s no gossip, arguments go quiet.

26:21 Charcoal for embers and wood for a fire, and an argumentative person for heating up contention.

27:15 A continuing drip on a rainy day and an argumentative woman are alike.

27:16 One who hides her hides the wind, and oil on his right hand announces her.

28:25 One broad of appetite provokes argument, but one who trusts in Yahweh will be refreshed.

29:9 A wise person may dispute with a stupid person, but he’ll rage and joke and there will be no peace.

29:22 An angry person provokes arguments, and a hot-tempered person rebels much.

30:33 Pressing milk produces butter, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces contention.

#### Friends and Neighbors

3:28 Don’t say to your neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I’ll give [it to you],” when it’s with you.

3:29 Don’t devise evil against your neighbor, when he’s living trustingly with you.

13:20 The one who walks with the wise gets wise, but the friend of stupid people experiences evil things.

14:7 Get away from the stupid person; you won’t have known knowledgeable lips.

14:20 Even by his neighbor a poor person is repudiated, but the friends of a wealthy person are many.

14:21 One who despises his neighbor is an offender, but one who is gracious to the lowly: his blessings!

16:28 A crooked person stirs up arguments, and a gossip separates a friend.

16:29 A violent person misleads his neighbor, and makes him go in a way that isn’t good.

17:9 One who seeks a relationship covers over rebellion, but one who repeats a matter separates a friend.

17:17 A neighbor is a friend at any time; a brother is born for trouble.

17:18 A person lacking in sense pledges his hand, standing surety before his neighbor.

18:24 There are neighbors to act like neighbors and there’s one who gives himself, who sticks firmer than a brother.

19:4 Wealth makes many friends, but a poor person becomes separate from his friend.

19:6 Many seek the face of a ruler, and everyone befriends the person with a gift.

19:7 All the brothers of a poor person repudiate him –how much more do his neighbors keep their distance from him.

22:24 Don’t befriend a person characterized by anger, don’t go about with someone hot-tempered,

22:25 lest you learn his ways and get a snare for your life.

24:28 Don’t become a witness against your neighbor without reason; will you mislead with your lips?

25:9 Contend your cause with your neighbor, but don’t reveal the secret of another person,

25:10 lest someone who hears it reproach you and the charge against you doesn’t turn away.

25:17 Let your foot hold back from your neighbor’s house, lest he gets his fill of you and repudiate you.

26:18 Like a madman who is shooting fiery arrows of death,

26:19 so is someone who deceives his neighbor and says, “I was joking, wasn’t I?”

27:6 The wounds of a friend are trustworthy; the kisses of an enemy are importunate.

27:9 Oil and incense gladden the heart, and the sweetness of one’s friend more than one’s own counsel.

27:10 Don’t abandon your friend or your father’s friend, or go to your brother’s house on your day of calamity.

 Better one who dwells near than a brother far away.

27:14 One who blesses his neighbor in a loud voice in the morning early: it will be counted for him as humiliating.

27:17 Iron sharpens iron, and a person sharpens the edge of his friend.

28:7 An understanding son guards instruction, but one who befriends gluttons disgraces his father.

29:5 A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

#### Husbands and Wives

5:15 Drink water from your own cistern, running water from within your own well.

5:16Should your fountains gush outside, your streams of water in the squares?

5:17They should be for you alone, so that there is none for strangers with you.

5:18May your spring be blessed, may you rejoice in the wife of your youth,

5:19She is a doe to love, a graceful deer.

 Her breasts should satisfy you all the time; be crazy on her love always.

5:20 So why be crazy on a stranger, son, and embrace the bosom of a foreigner?

6:28 If a man walks on coals, will his feet not burn?

6:29 So it is with someone who has sex with his neighbor’s wife; no one who touches her will go free.

6:30People don’t despise a thief when he steals for the sake of his appetite, when he’s hungry.

6:31 But if he’s found out, he’ll pay back sevenfold; he’ll give all the wealth of his household.

6:32 The person who commits adultery with a woman is lacking in sense; one who so acts is destroying himself.

6:33 He’ll meet with injury and disgrace; his reproach will not be wiped away.

6:34 Because jealousy [arouses] a man’s fury; he won’t pity on the day of redress.

6:35 He won’t have regard for any compensation; he won’t agree, even if the inducement is great.

10:12 Animosity stirs up strife, but giving oneself conceals all acts of rebellion

11:16 A woman of grace attains honor; violent men attain wealth.

11:22 A gold ring in a pig’s nose is a beautiful woman turning away from discernment.

12:4 A strong woman is her husband’s crown, but a shameful one is like decay in his bones.

14:1 The wisest of women builds her house, but stupidity tears it down with her own hands.

15:17 Better a helping of greens when love is there than a fattened bull when hatred is with it.

17:1 Better a dry crust and quiet with it, than a house full of contentious sacrifices.

18:22 He finds a wife, he finds good things, and obtains favor from Yahweh.

19:13 A stupid son is a disaster to his father, but a woman’s arguments are a continuing drip.

19:14 House and wealth are the property of parents, but a woman with good sense comes from Yahweh.

21:9 Better living on a corner of the roof than an argumentative woman and a shared house.

30:21Under three things the earth shudders, and under four that it cannot bear:

30:22under a servant when he becomes king, under a mindless person when he’s full of food,

30:23under a woman who has been repudiated when she marries, and under a servant when she replaces her mistress.

See also the description of “a capable wife” in 31:10-31

#### Honor, Humility, and Arrogance

3:34 If he himself behaves arrogantly to the arrogant, to the lowly he gives grace.

6:16 These six Yahweh repudiates, seven are abhorrent to him:

6:17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood….

8:13 Superiority and self-importance and the way of evil, and a crooked mouth, I repudiate.

11:2 Arrogance comes, then humiliation comes; with modest people there is wisdom.

13:10 Only by means of arrogance does someone produce strife; wisdom is with people who take advice.

13:18 Poverty and humiliation – one who rejects discipline, but one who heeds correction is honored.

14:3 In the mouth of the stupid person is a shoot of arrogance, but the lips of the wise guard them.

15:25 Yahweh tears down the house of the arrogant, but he establishes the territory of the widow.

15:33 Awe for Yahweh is wisdom’s discipline; lowliness is before honor.

16:5 Anyone who is arrogant of mind is an abomination to Yahweh; hand to hand he won’t go innocent.

16:18 Arrogance goes before brokenness, majesty of spirit before collapsing.

16:19 Humbleness of spirit with the lowly is better than sharing plunder with the arrogant.

16:31 Gray hair is a splendid crown; it’s attained by way of faithfulness.

17:6 Grandchildren are the crown of elders, but their parents are the glory of children.

18:12 Before being broken a person’s mind is arrogant, but before honor comes lowliness.

20:3 Ceasing from contention is an honor for a person, but every stupid person breaks out.

21:4 Exaltedness of eyes and wide of mind: the yoke of the faithless is an offense.

21:21 One who pursues faithfulness and commitment finds life, faithfulness, and honor.

22:1 A name is preferable to much wealth; favor is better than silver and gold.

22:4 The effect of lowliness is awe for Yahweh, wealth, honor, and life.

25:27 Eating much honey isn’t good, nor is honorable to investigate people’s honor.

26:12 I have seen a person wise in his own eyes; there’s more hope for a stupid person than for him.

27:2 A stranger should boast about you and not your mouth, a foreigner and not your.

28:11 A rich person is wise in his own eyes, but a poor person of understanding sees through him.

29:23 An individual’s majesty will make him fall, but one lowly of spirit will attain honor.

30:32 If you have been mindless in exalting yourself, and if you have schemed – hand on your mouth!

#### The Inner Person (Mind and Heart)

3:1 Don’t disregard my teaching, son; your mind is to safeguard my commands.

3:3 Commitment and truthfulness must not abandon you; bind them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your mind.

3:5 Trust in Yahweh with all your mind, don’t lean on your own understanding.

4:23 Above everything that you guard, protect your mind.

5:11 You’ll groan at your end, when your flesh and body are spent.

5:12 You’ll say, “How I repudiated discipline, and my mind spurned rebuke’”

10:8 The wise of mind accepts commands, but the stupid of lips comes to ruin.

11:20 The crooked in mind are an abomination to Yahweh; people of integrity in their way are the ones he favors.

12:25 Anxiety in a person’s mind weighs it down, but a good word makes it rejoice.

13:12 Hope deferred sickens the heart, but desire that comes about is a tree of life.

14:10 The heart knows its inner bitterness, and in its joy a stranger doesn’t share.

14:13 Even in laughter a heart may hurt, and celebration – its end may be grief.

14:14 Someone who turns back in heart will be full from his ways, and the good person from his deeds.

14:30 A healthy heart is life for the flesh, but passion is rot for the bones.

15:11 Sheol and Abaddon are before Yahweh; how much more the minds of human beings.

15:13 A joyful heart enhances the face, but by hurt in the heart the spirit is crushed.

15:14 The mind of a person of understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of dense people feeds on stupidity.

15:15 All the days of a lowly person are evil, but a good heart – a continual feast.

16:1 Ordering his mind belongs to a human being, but the answer of the tongue comes from Yahweh.

16:5 Anyone who is arrogant of mind is an abomination to Yahweh; hand to hand he won’t go innocent.

16:9 The mind of a person plans his course, but Yahweh establishes his step.

16:21 The person who is wise in thinking is called understanding, but sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

17:3 The crucible for silver, the furnace for gold, and Yahweh tests minds.

17:22 A joyful heart enhances healing, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

19:21 Many plans are in a person’s mind, but Yahweh’s counsel is the one that stands.

20:9 Who can say, “I’ve kept my mind pure, I am clean from my offence?

20:27 The breath of a person is Yahweh’s lamp, revealing the inner rooms of the heart.

21:2 All a person’s way is upright in his own eyes, but Yahweh weighs minds.

21:4 Exaltedness of eyes and wide of mind: the yoke of the faithless is an offense.

23:7 He says to you, “Eat and drink,” but his heart isn’t with you.

23:17 Your mind must not be envious of people who offend, but rather of [people who live in] awe for Yahweh all day.

28:26 One who trusts in his own mind – he’s stupid, but one who walks in wisdom – he will escape.

#### Justice and Judgment

11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight

11:9 With the mouth the impious person destroys his neighbor, but through the knowledge of the faithful, people escape.

12:17 The person who testifies truthfully speaks with faithfulness, but a false witness with deceit.

13:23 The fallow ground of the poor – abundance of food, but it’s swept away for want of [right] exercise of authority.

16:11 Balance and scales for decision belong to Yahweh; all the stones in the bag are his making.

17:23 A faithless person takes a bribe out of his pocket, to divert the processes of decision-making.

18:5 Lifting the face of the faithless person isn’t good, by pushing aside one who is faithful in making a decision.

18:17 The first person in a dispute seems right, then his neighbor comes and examines him.

19:28 A worthless witness is arrogant towards the taking of decisions, and the mouth of the faithless swallows wickedness.

20:7 A faithful person walks about with integrity – the blessings of his children after him!

20:10 Stone and stone, measure and measure, both of them are an abomination to Yahweh.

21:3 Exercising authority in a faithful way is preferable to Yahweh over a sacrifice.

21:7 The violence of the faithless sweeps them away, because they refuse to exercise [right] authority.

21:13 One who stops his ears to the cry of the poor person – he too will call and not be answered.

21:15 Exercising authority is joy to the faithful but ruin for the wrongdoer.

21:28 A lying witness will perish, but one who listens to the end will speak

22:28 Don’t remove an age-old boundary mark, one which your ancestors made.

23:10 Don’t remove an age-old boundary mark, and don’t go into the fields of orphans

23:11 Because their restorer is strong; he will contend their cause with you.

24:23 Having regard for the person in making a decision isn’t good.

24:24 Someone who says to the faithless person “You’re in the right”: peoples curse him, nations are indignant at him.

24:28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips

28:21 Having regard for the person isn’t good, but a man will rebel for a piece of bread.

29:14 A king who decides for the poor in truth: his throne will stand firm forever.

31:8 Open your mouth for the dumb, for the cause of all the people who are passing away.

31:9 Open your mouth , exercise authority faithfully, decide for the lowly and needy person.

#### The Mouth

4:24 Keep away from you crookedness of mouth; put deviousness of lips far away.

10:11 The mouth of a faithful person is a fountain of life, but the mouth of faithless people conceals violence.

10:18 The person who conceals repudiation [with] lying lips and the one who issues charges, he is stupid.

10:19 Where there is a multitude of words, rebellion isn’t lacking, but one who restrains his lips in sensible.

10:21 The lips of a faithful person pasture many, but stupid people die for lack of sense.

10:31 The mouth of the faithful person is fruitful with wisdom, but the crooked tongue will be cut off.

11:11 A town rises up by the blessing of the upright, but by the mouth of the faithless it breaks down.

12:6 The words of the faithless are a deadly ambush, but the mouth of the upright rescues them.

12:18 There is one who rants like sword-thrusts, but the tongue of the wise person is a healing.

12:19 A truthful lip stands firm forever, but a lying tongue lasts for the blink of an eye.

12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to Yahweh, but people who act truthfully are his favor.

12:25 Anxiety in a person’s mind weighs it down, but a good word makes it rejoice.

13:2 From the fruit of his mouth a person eats what is good, but the appetite of treacherous people is for violence.

13:3 One who guards his mouth preserves his life, but one who opens his lips wide – ruin is his.

15:1 A gentle response turns back wrath, but a hurtful word arouses anger.

15:4 A healing tongue is a tree of life, but deviousness in it is brokenness in spirit.

15:23 In the response of his mouth there is joy to a person, but a word at its time – how good!

15:28 The mind of a faithful person talks in order to answer, but the mouth of faithless people pours out evil things.

16:24 Nice words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing for the body.

17:9 One who seeks a relationship covers over rebellion, but one who repeats a matter separates a friend.

17:27 One who knows knowledge holds back his words; a person of understanding is cool of spirit.

17:28 Even a stupid person, keeping silence, is thought wise; keeping his lip closed, understanding.

18:4 The words from a person’s mouth are deep waters; a fountain of wisdom is a flowing wash.

18:7 The mouth of a stupid person is his ruin, and his lips are a trap for his life.

18:13 One who returns word before he listens – it’s his stupidity and shame.

18:21 Death and life are in the hand of the tongue; those who give themselves to it eat its fruit.

20:15 There is gold and abundance of jewels, but lips with knowledge are a valuable object.

20:19 Someone who reveals a confidence goes about as a slanderer; don’t share with someone who has his lips open.

21:23 One who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his life from troubles.

24:26 He kisses with the lips, the one who replies with straight words.

25:11 Golden apricots in silver settings is a word appropriately spoken.

26:4Don’t answer someone stupid in accordance to his denseness, lest you become like him, you too.

26:5 Answer someone stupid in accordance with his denseness, lest he become wise in his own eyes.

29:11 A stupid person expresses all his feelings; a wise person holds them back.

29:20 If you see someone hasty with his words, there’s more hope for a stupid person than for him.

#### Family Life and Discipline

3:11 Don’t reject Yahweh’s discipline, son, don’t despise his correction.

3:12 Because the one Yahweh gives himself to, he corrects, just like a father the son he favors.

6:20 Son, guard your father’s command and don’t turn your back on your mother’s teaching.

6:21 Fasten them into your mind always, bind them onto your neck.

6:22 When you’re going about, it will lead you, when you lie down it will keep watch over you, when you wake up, it will talk to you.

6:23 Because the command is a lamp and the teaching is a light, and the rebuke that disciplines is the way to life

10:1 A wise son brings joy to a father, but a stupid son brings grief to a mother.

13:1 A wise son [listens to] a father’s discipline, but an arrogant person doesn’t listen to a rebuke.

13:22 A good man endows grandchildren; the strength of the offender is stored up for the faithful person.

13:24 The person who is sparing with his club repudiates his son, but one who loves him gets him up early with discipline.

15:5 A stupid person spurns his father’s discipline, but one who heeds reproof shows shrewdness.

15:10 Discipline is evil to the one who abandons the path, but the one who repudiates reproof dies.

15:20 A wise son rejoices his father, but a stupid person despises his mother.

15:31 The ear that listens to life-giving reproof lodges among the wise.

19:26 One who destroys a father or drives out a mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace.

20:20 One who humiliates his father and his mother, his lamp will go out at the approach of darkness.

22:15 Stupidity is bound up in a youth’s mind; the club of discipline will take it far away from him.

23:22 Listen to your father who begot you, and don’t despise your mother when she is old.

25:12 A gold earring or an ornament of fine gold is a wise person reproving into a listening ear.

27:5 Open reproof is better than concealed friendship.

27:6 The wounds of a friend are trustworthy; the kisses of an enemy are importunate.

28:7 An understanding son guards instruction, but one who befriends gluttons disgraces his father.

28:23 One who reproves a person in the end will find more grace than one who makes his tongue smooth.

28:24 One who robs his father and his mother and says “It’s not an act of rebellion” – he is a companion of one who destroys.

29:1 A person of many reproofs who stiffens his neck will suddenly break, and there will be no healing.

29:3 Someone who gives himself to wisdom rejoices his father, but someone who keeps company with immoral women destroys wealth.

29:15 Club and reproof give wisdom, but a youth let loose shames his mother.

29:17 Discipline your son and he’ll give you peace, and give much delight to your spirit.

30:11 A circle that humiliates its father and doesn’t bless its mother!

30:17 The eye that mocks a father and despises a mother’s teaching:

30:18 the ravens in the wash will gouge it out, and young eagles will eat it.

#### Work and Laziness

6:6 Go to the ant, lazybones, look at its ways and get wise.

7One that has no commander, officer, or ruler

8produces its food in summer, gathers its provisions at harvest.

9How long will you lie down, lazybones, when will you get up from your sleep?

10A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down,

11and your poverty will come walking in, your want like someone with a shield.

10:4 A lazy hand makes for poverty, but the hand of diligent people makes rich.

10:5 One who stores up during summer is a sensible son, but one who sleeps during harvest is a shameful son.

10:26 Like vinegar to the teeth, like smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy person to the people who sent him.

12:11 One who serves his land will have his fill of food, but one who follows empty pursuits lack sense.

12:24 The hand of determined people rules, but slackness leads to subjection.

12:27 Slackness will not roast game, but the wealth of a person is valuable – determined.

14:23 In all toil there will be profit, but the word of lips is only to be in want.

15:19 The way of a lazy person is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is cleared.

16:26 The appetite of a laborer labors for him, because his mouth is pressing on him.

18:9 Really, one who is slack in his work – he is brother to someone destructive.

19:15 Laziness make deep sleep fall, but a slack person gets hungry.

19:24 The lazy person buries his hand in the bowl; he cannot even bring it back to his mouth.

20:4 After fall the lazy person doesn’t plow, but he asks at harvest and there is nothing.

20:13 Don’t give yourself to sleep lest you become poor; open your eyes, be full of food.

22:13 The lazy person says, “A lion in the street, in the middle of the square I shall be slain!”

24:27 Establish your work outside, get it ready in the fields for yourself; afterwards build your house.

24:30 I passed by the field of someone who was lazy, and by the vineyard of one lacking sense.

24:31 There: it all had come up in weeds, chickpeas covered its surface, its stone wall lay in ruins.

24:32 When I myself looked, I applied my mind; when I saw, I grasped a lesson.

24:33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down,

24:34 and your poverty will come walking about, your want like someone with a shield.

26:13 A lazy person says, “There’s a cougar on the road, a lion among the squares.”

26:14 The door turns on its hinge, the lazy person on his bed.

27:23 You should really know the faces of your flock, apply your attention to your herds,

27:24 because wealth isn’t forever or a crown for generation after generation.

27:25 The hay goes away and the new grass appears and the growth of the mountains is gathered.

27:26 The lambs are for your clothing, the goats for the price of a field,

27:26 enough goats’ milk for your food, for food for your household and life for your young girls.

28:19 One who serves his land will be full of food, but one who pursues empty things will be full of poverty.

#### Wealth and Poverty

3:9 Honor Yahweh with all your wealth, with the first of all your revenue.

3:14 Wisdom’s profit is better than the profit of silver, her revenue than gold.

10:15 The wealth of the rich person is his strong city; their poverty is the ruin of the poor.

10:22 Yahweh’s blessing – it enriches, and toil doesn’t add to it.

11:4 Wealth doesn’t avail on the day of wrath, but faithfulness rescues from death.

11:24 There is one who scatters and gets still more; [there is] one who holds back beyond what is upright, only to be in want.

11:25 A person of blessing will be made fat; someone who refreshes – he will also be refreshed.

11:26 One who withholds grain – the community will curse him; but blessing will be on the head of one who sells it.

11:28 The one who trusts in his wealth – he falls, but the faithful flourish like foliage.

14:20 Even by his neighbor a poor person is repudiated, but the friends of a wealthy person are many.

14:31 One who oppresses a poor person insults his maker, but one who is gracious to a needy person honors him.

15:16 Better a little with awe for Yahweh than much treasure and turmoil with it.

19:1 Better one who is poor who walks with integrity than one who is crooked with his lips and stupid..

19:17 One who is gracious to a poor person lends to Yahweh, and he will pay him his recompense.

21:6 Working for treasures by means of a lying tongue is a breath driven off, people seeking death.

21:13 One who stops his ears to the cry of the poor person – he too will call and not be answered.

21:20 Valuable treasure and oil are in the dwelling of someone wise, but a stupid person will consume them.

22:2 Rich and poor meet; Yahweh makes each of them.

22:9 One who is good of eye will be blessed, because he gives of his bread to the poor person.

22:16 One who oppresses the poor person – it’s to make much for him; one who gives to the rich person – it’s only to come to want.

23:4 Don’t get weary in order to become wealthy; out of your understanding, desist.

23:5 Should your eyes flit upon it, it’s gone, because it definitely makes itself wings; like an eagle, it flies to the heavens.

27:20 Sheol and Abaddon don’t get full, and the eyes of a human being don’t get full.

28:8 Someone who increases his wealth by means of interest and profiteering, amasses it for someone who will be gracious to the poor.

28:11 A rich person is wise in his own eyes, but a poor person of understanding sees through him.

28:22 One who is evil in eye hurries for wealth and doesn’t acknowledge that lack will come to him.

30:8 Emptiness and a lying word keep far from me, poverty and riches do not give me, let me grab the food that is my due.

30:9 Lest I get full and renounce and say, “Who is Yahweh?”

 Or lest I get poor and rob take the name of my God.

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#### The Wealth of the Rich is Their Fortress (Proverbs 10:15)

1. A message especially for people who stress poverty and the option for the poor

1a. The advantages of money: it gives security 10:15

 popularity 14:20

 enjoyment 21:20

Proverbs is realistic about how life really works:

 does not assume that property is original sin (Marx)

 encourages us to seek wealth.

 So how?

1b. How to get hold of some:

be bold 11:16: compare the parable of the bag of gold

be generous 11:25: business involves being sharp, but it also profits from getting on with people

be honest 15.6: another surprising comment that assumes it is a moral universe; cf. 10:2; this connects with...

be reverent 10:22: prosperity comes from God so trust is important – cf. 3:9-10; prosperity gospel like most heresies gets into trouble by taking a truth out of context

but be realistic 11:24: prosperity is unpredictable; Proverbs’ “rules” are broad generalizations not universals

2. A message especially for people who stress the prosperity gospel

2a. The drawbacks of money:

it comes to seem all-important 11:28

but it has its limitations 11:4: money can’t buy me love/wisdom (3:14)/forgiveness/God

it tends to make people forget its moral connections 11:6

it tends to make people forget relationships 15:27 (if money becomes all-important it affects friends, family)

it tends to give people inflated ideas 28:1; 22:2: in other words, it tends to drive you to the opposite of the attitudes that will actually lead to your making some - generosity, honesty, reverence; so be moderate 30:8-9

so don’t “rely” on it - “rely” on God; you can’t serve two masters

2b. How to get rid of it:

honor God with it 3:9

serve the community with it 11:26

be generous to the needy with it 28:27; 14:31

The answer to Marx’s point about money causing evil is to do good with it.

Usually in the world there are people who have none and people who have lots doing nothing. Proverbs’ solution is cash-flow.

## Group discussion (20)

## Plenary (20)