1:5 *That the wise man may be obedient*- There is an upward spiral in spiritual life, whereby God’s commandments are designed to lead the wise to yet more obedience if they are obeyed; wisdom leads to more wisdom.

1:12 Sheol is the Hebrew word translated “hell” in some Bibles; it is also translated “the grave”, and is here parallel with “the pit”. It refers simply to the grave and not to any place of eternal torment.

1:23 *My spirit... my words*- The Bible is written by inspiration of God. God’s words are a vehicle by which His Spirit works in the lives of His children (Jn. 6:63).

1:26 *Mock... laugh*- God will mock and laugh at the Gentile nations who come against Him in the last day (Ps. 2:4), and yet He will do just the same to those of His people who refuse wisdom’s voice. If we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from them when the judgments fall. We will be “Condemned with the world...” (1 Cor. 11:32). If we don’t come out from Babylon, we will share her judgments (Rev. 18:4).

1:28 *Then will they call on me, but I will not answer*- In the day of judgment, everybody will desperately want to be in God’s Kingdom, to live eternally in the way of wisdom. The rejected will urgently seek acceptance, but it will be too late (Mt. 25:11; Lk. 13:25).

1:29 *Hated knowledge*- They ‘despise’ wisdom (:30); but they likely never said so in those words. In their lives they lived in “careless ease” (:32), but this is tantamount to proactively hating spiritual knowledge.

2:3 Wisdom cries out loud to be heard (8:1), and yet the righteous man cries after wisdom, and lifts up his voice for understanding; there is thus a sense of mutuality here between God's wisdom and the sincere seeker. Every genuine believer will have felt this; we urgently cry for wisdom, and yet God's word is crying out to teach us. If this is our attitude, the things of God’s word will be our life (4:13). As Israel were to talk about the word as they went out and came in and as they walked along the way, so should the new Israel (7:2,3).

2:16,17 Solomon was inspired to write the Proverbs in his youth, and yet he did the very things he warns others against. Here he teaches that wisdom would save a man from the Gentile woman who made a covenant with the God of Israel in her youth (in order to marry an Israelite, by implication), but soon forgot it. This was exactly the case of Solomon, who married Gentile women in his youth; yet he just couldn't see the personal relevance of his own wisdom to himself. The more spiritual knowledge we have, the more prone we are to make this same mistake.

3:4 This is alluded to in Lk. 2:52, where we read that Jesus grew in wisdom and in favour with God and man. The “my Son” spoken of in Proverbs can therefore be understood as *the* Son, the Lord Jesus. It could be that the various warnings to the son about not getting involved with Gentile women, not getting in with bad company in his youth etc. were all speaking directly to temptations the Lord Jesus encountered in His youth. In this case we could build up some picture of the experiences of the Lord’s early life on the basis of the “my son” exhortations of Proverbs.

3:11 All Scripture is recorded for our learning and comfort (Rom. 15:4). The exhortation here in Prov. 3:11 “speaks unto you as unto children...” (Heb. 12:5). We are to constantly personalize Scripture and hear God speaking to *us* directly.

3:20 *And the skies drop down the dew* - The historical creation of all things by God’s word of command is ongoing, in that His word in an ongoing way commands the dew to fall just as His word re-arranged the waters as recorded in Genesis 1. The idea of :19,20 is that the same word which God used as the agency of physical creation- He said, and it was done- is ongoing in our lives if we respond to the word of wisdom, thereby becoming a new creation through that same word, centred as it is in the Lord Jesus as that word made flesh (2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 1:14).

3:34 *He gives grace to the humble*- Quoted in James 4:5,6 in an appeal to us not to be envious but rather to be humble. The truly humble aren’t envious; God’s gift of grace to them in Christ is so wonderful that we have quite enough to personally glory in, and there will be no envy of others.

4:4-9 This is Solomon quoting to *his* children what his father David had taught him about wisdom. He was raising his children as he had been raised, which is what all parents inevitably tend to do by default. But Solomon himself lived without personally applying the wisdom to himself; all he says is true, but the lesson is that we can accept theoretical truth, pass it on to others with great conviction, and yet be unmoved by it ourselves.

4:16 Doing evil is defined as making another fall. The sinfulness of sin is especially in the negative effect we have upon others.

4:23 The heart is used in the Bible as a metaphor for the mind. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity. How we think now will affect our eternal future.

4:26 *Make the path of your feet level*- Quoted in Heb. 12:13 about the need to do this so that *others* don’t stumble in the way of life. Our personal life path must be straight not only for ourselves to reach the Kingdom, but so that others can follow us there. Again we see that spirituality is never limited to ourselves; it always affects others.

5:5 Sheol is translated in some Bibles as “hell”, but the word refers simply to the grave, which is how it is often translated. Here it is parallel with “death”, as in 7:27. It doesn’t refer to any place of eternal conscious torment.

5:15 *Springing water out of your own spring*- The metaphor likens the man’s wife to a spring of ever fresh water which is personally for himself. A husband should find in his wife something ever fresh, and thus marriages blessed by God don’t default into the same old scene scenario, there’s always something fresh and new for us in each other if we perceive our partners as we should.

5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of Yahweh- Sexual unfaithfulness is precluded by the fact that God sees and knows all things; Job likewise answered a false accusation of marital infidelity by saying that this wasn’t possible for him, because he lived in the constant presence of the God who sees all things (Job 31:1-4).

6:7 *Having no chief, overseer or ruler*- We can learn from meditating upon the natural creation. Human beings tend to work best when overseen by a human leader; but in spiritual life, we are to work for God from self motivation, regardless of whether or not we have good leadership within the family of God.

6:13 God is sensitive to the body language of people, and so should we be.

6:14 *Who always sows discord*- In terms of the sentence structure, this is the crowning characteristic of the wicked man introduced in :12. Division and fracture of human relationships is perceived by God as the end result of sinfulness- thus indicating the huge value He places upon unity amongst His children. Divisiveness is the very essence of sinfulness. Likewise the seven things which God hates culminate in the sin of sowing discord amongst brothers (:16-18). Indeed, :16 could imply that this seventh sin is the ultimate abomination to Him.

6:25 *Neither let her captivate you with her eyelids*- The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. He warned the young man about being captivated by the eyelids of the Gentile woman; yet it was the eyes of his Egyptian lover that he openly admitted stole his heart (Song 4:9; 6:5).  The Gentile woman has words like a honeycomb ( 5:3); and  yet  this  is  exactly  how Solomon found his woman's words (Song  4:11).

6:27 These verses powerfully pierce deeply into the psychology of sin, especially sexual sin. We reason that we can go *so* far into it, but not *too* far. But once we launch into sin, we will be damaged by it. The call of wisdom is to total abstinence from it, rather than spiritual brinkmanship.

7:2 The idea of keeping commandments in order to live is a reference back to the many Deuteronomy passages where Moses pleads with Israel to keep God’s commands and live. But Solomon came to perceive his father David’s commands as those of God, and in his generation he watered this down in his own mind until he assumed that his commands to his children were to be treated by them as the law of God- no matter how far he had strayed himself from God’s law. It’s a gripping, frightening psychology. “O my son, receive my sayings; and the years of your life shall be many” (Prov. 4:10) is alluding to the promise of long life for the obedient to God’s laws; but never does Solomon make the admission that his laws are only a repetition of God’s laws. He was playing God by implying that his words carried the weight of God’s words. He taught his son obedience to him as a father, but not to God Himself.

7:14 *Sacrifices of peace offerings are with me*- It is the mixing of spirituality and sensuality which is such a powerful temptation; in the same way as Israel never totally rejected Yahweh, but mixed His worship with that of idols. Likewise many false doctrines contain a mixture of truth and error.

7:16 *With striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt*- Solomon perceived the association of Egypt with failure with women; and yet made the very same mistake which he so well perceived and eloquently preached against to others.

7:18 *Let’s solace ourselves with loving*- The justification of any sin, but especially sexual sin, is that we have had hard lives and deserve some break, some solace, some human comfort.

8:11 Often Solomon’s Proverbs bring out the tension between wealth and wisdom, and the need to choose wisdom (see too 16:16). But whilst he was inspired to write this, and true as it all was, it is inevitable that Solomon said all this with his mind on the way that he had rejected wealth for wisdom when in his youth he was asked by God for his wish (1 Kings 3:11,12). He thought that his right choice in early life [cp. Christian baptism] justified him in later loving wealth rather than wisdom. He taught that wisdom filled the treasuries of the wise (:21)- just as his treasuries were filled with wealth. Yet in his old age in Ecclesiastes he says that he amassed wealth for himself to see if he could find fulfilment in it- and he seems to have done that because now in his younger days he thought that amassing wealth was justified because he loved the possession of wisdom. Many a middle aged businessman, baptized in his youth and knowing God’s truths very well in theory, has made just the same tragic mistake.

8:32 *Now therefore, my sons, listen to me*- These are words attributed to wisdom, but they are the words Solomon uses about his own instruction of his sons in 5:7. Solomon came to assume that he personally was wisdom personified. He had been given wisdom, but the very possession of it led him to assume that he was somehow infallible and spiritually invincible. This was his downfall. The fact we may possess God’s Truth doesn’t mean that we personally are thereby infallible in every aspect of life. We hold those truths in clay, fallible vessels (2 Cor. 4:7).

9:1 In this chapter we have a classic example of where something abstract- like wisdom- is personified. Personification is widely used in the New Testament, where abstract things like sin and God’s power, the Holy Spirit, are spoken of as persons even though they aren’t.

9:5 An invitation to bread and wine represents fellowship together. The bread and wine of the communion service likewise speak of our fellowship with God and His Son, and our willingness to learn of them.

9:7-9 These verses appear to be the advice of wisdom to her young women who preach her message (:3). We begin the whole enterprise of sharing wisdom with the recognition that we are likely to be rejected and abused by some who hear our message. Wisdom is calling to everyone, it’s not that she advises her preachers to ignore people they consider wicked. But she warns her representatives ahead of time that they can expect rejection and hurt as a result of their work.

9:8 An ability to take criticism is required if we are to become wise. But as people increasingly withdrawn within themselves in modern society, this is a characteristic increasingly rarely seen.

10:1 Solomon has himself in view here, for he was known internationally for his wisdom. Yet much of his apparent spirituality and zeal for God seems to have been a result of living out David’s parental expectation. The emphasis he places in Proverbs upon pleasing fathers reflects Solomon’s personal living out of parental hopes. Hence his collapse of faith later in life.

10:11 Our words really can be the water of life to others; this is why how we speak is so important.

10:12 *Love covers all wrongs*- The first and second halves of the verses in Proverbs are often related to each other. The way of love is not to turn a blind eye; but it covers wrongs in the sense that it doesn’t ‘stir up strife’ in the sense of continually exposing the fault lines which there are in every relationship but rather covers them.

10:15,16 These verses speak of attitudes to wealth; the rich trust in their wealth and become isolated by it, like a man within a fortified city. The poor are soul destroyed because they are poor, and because they think that not having wealth means they are nothing. However, the righteous labour for God with eternal life as their end in view (:16), thus making their economic status simply not an item in their self-perception.

10:20 Note the frequent parallel in Proverbs between the tongue and the heart. Our words reflect how we think; we can’t think badly and never reflect it in our speech. Jesus understood, maybe from studying Proverbs, that our mouth speaks in reflection of our heart (Lk. 6:45).

11:4 *The day of wrath*- A reference to the final day of judgment at Christ’s return. As we bow there naked before God’s Son, it’s bizarre to think that bank accounts, home ownership or wealth of any kind will be in the slightest bit relevant.

11:5 *Will direct his way* – If we live according to God’s principles, we will not have the rudderless spirit which there is in this world. Somehow our life path becomes naturally clear to us.

11:7 *Hope perishes*- The Bible doesn’t teach universal salvation nor some automatic reincarnation of the person after death. The wicked will ultimately remain dead without hope.

11:9 The tongue is more powerful than we think; people can be destroyed by others’ words; even whole communities can be (:11). But the righteous will not be destroyed by such words, because their focus instead is on their knowledge or relationship with God.

11:26 A reference to Joseph’s wisdom in selling grain to the starving.

11:30,31 We can be to others as the tree of life was in Eden. We can win people for eternal life; their eternity is delegated by God to us. Such is the power and importance of preaching. It is our fruit which becomes the fruit which gives eternal life. The fruit of the Spirit as seen in our characters is what will attract people to the eternal life, because we are living now how we will eternally live.

12:10 A gracious and sensitive spirit will be reflected in how we treat the natural creation.

12:14 The way we talk is here paralleled with our works, what we do with our hands. How we speak is really so important; good actions don’t displace bad speaking.

12:15 *Right in his own eyes*- What seems right to us isn’t necessarily so. We aren’t born with any natural wisdom; unless we have a teachable spirit, open to God’s teaching, then we will have only our very dysfunctional natural senses to guide us.

12:17 *He who is truthful testifies honestly*- This may seem to be obvious; but the idea is that the person who is truthful as a way of life, within their own heart, is going to also be truthful when it comes to having to testify in court.

12:25 *A kind word makes it glad*- Here and in :18 we see how powerful good words can be (Job 6:25). There’s a positive power in words, even just one word, which we are prone to ignore, thinking that actions are so much more important than words.

12:28 *In its path there is no death*- We have here an Old Testament equivalent of the times when Jesus says we can have eternal life right now. It doesn’t mean that the righteous don’t die. They do, and will be resurrected to eternal life at Christ’s return. But we can start living right now the kind of Kingdom life which we will eternally live. In this sense we “have eternal life”, and there is “no death” in the way of life of the righteous.

13:3 *He who guards his mouth guards his soul*- In this sense as Jesus put it, we will be eternally justified or eternally condemned by our words (Mt. 12:37).

13:7 This last phrase is quoted about the Lord Jesus, who made Himself poor on the cross (2 Cor. 8:9). And yet Solomon, who made himself rich, was the very anti-Christ.  These words are also part quoted in Phil. 2:7, about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus made himself poor, of no reputation, and now has been so highly exalted. Our living out of the Lord’s cross is shown in our making of ourselves poor, in whatever sense. That is surely the unmistakable teaching of this allusion.

13:14 We have it within our power to disentangle people from the snare of eternal death. And we do this by teaching them. See on 14:27.

13:16 *A fool exposes folly*- The fact something is wrong or foolish doesn’t mean that we should therefore always expose it. The way of wisdom is to decide when to speak and when to be silent.

13:19 *Longing fulfilled*- The opposite of this is to “detest turning from evil”. The “longing” is therefore for spiritual growth, for victory against sin. And this is what is the sweetest thing in spiritual experience.

14:7 *Stay away from a foolish man*- This is typical of many such commands in Proverbs. But we should remember that Solomon was writing to Israelites living within the people of God. Just because someone is part of God’s people doesn’t make them wise; we still have to decide wisely as to with whom we will closely walk in life.

14:8 Folly is here parallel with a lack of serious self-examination. In our day, the breaking of bread service is designed to provoke self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28).

14:10 The way of wisdom isn’t to wear our heart on our sleeve, sharing our innermost thoughts with everyone and anyone.

14:11 Note the contrast between “the house” and “the tent”; the upright have the attitude that they are just passing through this life, with no permanent abode in this world in this present age (Heb. 13:14).

14:17 Quiet craftiness is as bad as hotheaded behaviour which is visible to everyone.

14:27 *Turning people from the snares of death*- But 13:14 says people are saved from the snares of death by our teaching them. The content of that teaching must therefore be the fear of God. His salvation is there in His word, but it becomes real for people by our teaching of it to them.

14:31 Therefore our attitude to the poor is our attitude to God. Hence Jesus teaches that He will judge us according to how we treated our poor brethren, because they represent Him (Mt. 25:40).

14:33 The fool perceives wisdom in his innermost conscience, but only in passing; it doesn’t remain within his consciousness as it does within the heart of the righteous. Passing interest in spirituality is very common in our world; but God’s truth must abide within our heart if we are to be truly wise.

15:3 *Yahweh’s eyes are everywhere*- A reference to God’s presence everywhere through His Angels. This reminder is given in the context of warning us about our words; if we believe that God is really aware of absolutely everything, this will influence our words.

15:4 People are psychologically crushed when they realize that words spoken to them lacked integrity. The importance of our words is therefore because of their influence upon others. Appropriate gentleness in speech can also lead people to eternal life.

15:7 Again we see how the heart and the tongue (“lips”) are paralleled; what we think really issues in our words (Lk. 6:45).

15:8 Here and elsewhere in Scripture, prayer is seen as a sacrifice. It requires the same effort and careful preparation beforehand (Heb. 13:15). The altar of incense represented the offering of prayer as a sacrifice (Rev. 8:3,4).

15:12 The implication is that people don’t mix with the wise because they subconsciously fear being criticized, directly or indirectly. Those who can bear criticism relax with the wise (:31).

15:14 *Fools feed on folly*- A relevant warning to us who live in an age of constant comedy and entertainment, where folly is presented as joy (:21).

15:26 God watches every thought of every person. Such knowledge is amazing. And we can please God Almighty in distant Heaven, just by how we are thinking. Such is the colossal significance of spiritual mindedness.

16:1 The implication is that there is an element to which God controls our thoughts and the words we come out with. This element which is beyond human effort is from God’s grace through the operation of His Spirit. This same ‘element’ is alluded to in :4- God somehow overrules and uses even the failures of the sinful; and in :9 we have the same theme, that there is an element of Divine direction over and above what we ourselves will in our own minds. Otherwise, salvation would be by steel-willed human effort alone rather than God’s grace. This same theme, of God playing a role over and above our own efforts, concludes this chapter in :33. See on 20:24.

16:2 *Yahweh weighs the motives*- Our justification isn’t on the basis that we happen to feel good about ourselves (:25); God’s judgment rather than our own gut feelings is all important. Although He is Almighty, God “weighs” our motives, expending some effort of analysis of our deepest heart processes.

16:10 Solomon writes inspired truth in Proverbs, but it seems that much of what he writes was written with an eye to his own self-justification, especially about the need to respect the man who has wisdom and the wise man’s superiority over all others (:16). He even writes as if the king must be accepted as automatically infallible: “Inspired judgments are on the lips of the king” (see too 20:2).   We too can teach God’s truths whilst also motivated in doing so by a desire for our own self-justification rather than His glory.

16:20 We see here the connection between God’s word and faith; faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17).

16:30 Negative body language may appear so insignificant, but it is judged by God as being “bent on evil”.

16:32 *One who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city*- A reference to Samson.

17:5 The poor are God manifest to us; how we treat our poor brethren is how we treat God, and is the basis of our final judgment (M 25:40). This is a common theme in Proverbs; and we need to remember it constantly, especially as we are often tempted to consider others’ poverty as the result of their own poor decision making and to think this excuses us from helping them.

17:9 *He who covers an offence*- This is paralleled in the second half of the verse with not gossiping about others’ failures. It doesn’t mean that we are to turn a blind eye to others’ sins, rather that we shouldn’t gossip about them to others.

17:14 Relationship breakdown needs to be bridged as soon as possible, as a matter of urgency; otherwise irreparable damage will be done and like water bursting from a dam, many others will be affected by it.

17:19 *One who builds a high gate seeks destruction*- Isolationism is actually a proactive seeking of destruction for others. In our age of retreat into ourselves, this needs to be considered carefully. 18:1 likewise exhorts against isolationism- it’s a form of selfishness.

17:24 *The eyes of a fool wander to the ends of the earth*- Those whose hearts aren’t focused upon God and His word are rudderless, looking worldwide for wisdom on the internet, but never finding true direction.

18:4 Words are important; yet they are so common, as we hear and speak millions of them each week, that we can easily forget their profound significance in our lives and those of others.

18:6 *His speech asks for beatings*- According to our words we will be judged at the last day (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 12:47,48); our words now may actually be as it were requesting our punishment then. We must so speak as those who will be judged, knowing that he who showed no mercy in his words will receive none (James 2:12,13); our words of mercy or condemnation, and perhaps *the way we say them,* will be the basis upon which we will be accepted or rejected. In this sense death or life are in the power of our tongue (:21).

18:8 It’s attractive to us to hear gossip; the one who hears it will often not just ignore it but will take it deep within themselves.

18:9 Again we see passive behaviour- in this case, laziness- paralleled with proactive destructive behaviour.

18:10 This has relevance to us in that we can be baptized into the Lord’s Name.

18:11 One implication of this could be that those who trust in wealth isolate themselves from others.

18:18 The use of lots is seen positively here; they were used by the early church in Acts 1:26.

19:2 *Zeal without knowledge*- Applied by Paul to the Jews and all people who seek justification by works rather than faith in God’s grace which is in Christ (Rom. 10:2), which is for us the ultimate “knowledge”. This is like someone who walks earnestly but in the wrong direction, who has missed “the way”, which is Christ (Jn. 14:6).

19:8 This verse is in the context of the preceding reflections that in human life, people who have wealth have friends but the poor have few friends. Whether or not we have popularity with others and human friendships, the wonder of finding the ultimate “understanding” of God, relationship with Him, makes that irrelevant.

19:11 We are not to take up every offence against us with others. There are times when our silence under provocation is in God’s eyes our “glory”. This verse alludes to the fact that God is slow to anger and overlooks offences without always demanding our specific repentance (Ps. 103:8; 145:8). We are to reflect our experience of this to others.

19:14 *A prudent wife is from Yahweh*- Marriage is in one sense a gamble, as we never really know our partner until we have been married some time to them. A good partnership is therefore a “grace” from God (18:22); whilst we can do our human best to have a good marriage, it is ultimately God who does the humanly impossible, of joining two different people together (Mt. 19:6); and marriage is therefore a grace from Him.

19:17 Our attitude to the poor is our attitude to God and will be the basis of our judgment (Mt. 25:40).

19:22 The implication is that the poor can still be kind; in our money-obsessed world, there’s the wrong impression that generosity and kindness must involve financial giving.

19:25 *The simple will learn*- We are to learn by observing how sinners are punished even in this life.

20:1 *Beer is a brawler*- It is people and not liquid who brawl. The alcoholic drink is therefore put by metonymy for the alcoholic; they become identified with the substance of their addiction. Anything in human life with which we become totally identified, be it football teams or alcohol, is an addiction which takes us away from being the persons God intends us to be.

20:5 There is good wisdom within many faithful people which never becomes apparent until another person draws it out. This should be the result of good company and true spiritual fellowship- bringing out the best in each other which is often latent and would be otherwise unavailable for others’ benefit.

20:6 There’s much talk in the world about “love”, but no word is more misunderstood. Love must be connected to faith and hope if it is to be love as God intends (1 Cor. 13:13); although faith and hope produce love in their ultimate term (Col. 3:14).

20:7 Integrity is what will most influence our children in practice.

20:16 *Hold him in pledge for a wayward woman*- An allusion to Judah’s sin with Tamar (Gen. 38:25).

20:22 If we are wronged, the ultimate justice will be done when we are eternally saved at the time of Christ’s return- and not in this life.

20:24 There is an element of Divine guidance in our lives over and above our own efforts; see on 16:1.

20:27 Our self-examination is what reveals us to the Lord. What we think about at the memorial meeting, as we are faced with the memory of the crucified Saviour, is therefore an epitome of what we really are. If all we are thinking of is the taste of the wine, the cover over the bread, the music, what we didn’t agree with in the meeting, all the external things of our Christianity; or if we are sitting there taking bread and wine as a conscience salver, doing our little religious ritual to make us feel psychologically safe- then we simply don’t know Him. We are surface level believers only. And this is the message we give Him. Our spirit / attitude is the candle of the Lord, with which He searches us. Our thoughts when confronted by the cross reveal us to Him who died on it. Likewise Joseph (one of the most detailed types of the Lord Jesus) knew / discerned his brethren by his cup (Gen. 44:5). 1 Cor. 11:31,32 suggests that our self-judgment at the breaking of bread is in fact the lord’s judgment of us.

21:2 *He turns it wherever He desires*- See on 16:1.

21:4 The wicked see life within the light of their own pride; everything becomes subjected to their need to present themselves well.

21:13 We will all cry out for mercy and grace at the day of judgment. The mean may appear prosperous in this life, but we should live ever aware that we are spiritually poor, through our own bad decisions just as the poor are often poor because of their own weaknesses and poor decision making; and we will cry out to God for His mercy at the last day. We therefore ought to be responsive to the cries of the poor today.

21:16 *Remain in the assembly of the dead*- The punishment for the wicked, including those who once walked with God, is eternal death, and not eternal conscious torment.

21:19 Solomon often interjects some comment about the misery of living with an unspiritual woman, apparently out of context with what he is writing about (:9 also). Although he was inspired in his writing, this may reflect how always weighing on his mind was the fact that his 1000 wives and concubines never brought him happiness but only a desire for isolationism from everybody (1 Kings 11:3); and he therefore keeps on making this kind of comment. Intimacy between persons can only be achieved God’s way, which is through lifelong stable relationships bound together by Him (Mt. 19:6).

22:2 One implication of believing that God is our personal creator is that we will not be envious of the rich; we will not see them as so fundamentally different from ourselves.

22:4 *Wealth, honour, and life*- The gift of “life” surely refers to eternal life; this will be given at Christ’s return along with wealth and honour.

22:5 *Thorns and snares are in the path of the wicked*- The Proverbs often allude to the Law of Moses or earlier Israelite history. Here the reference is to the only other time that “thorns and snares” occur together in the Bible, in Josh. 23:13, where Israel are warned that association and intermarriage with the pagan world around them will be as thorns and snares to them. The wicked therefore put these things in their own path; and again, Solomon makes this warning whilst failing spectacularly himself in this very thing.

22:6 God works with individuals and we are each independently judged regardless of whether we had believing or unbelieving parents, and so it cannot be that someone comes to the Kingdom simply because of faithful parents. And yet none of us will reach salvation purely by our own effort; there are other elements over and above that, and faithful parenting is one such element in the final algorithm which determines who is saved and who isn’t. It’s an endless motivation for parents, therefore, to raise their children in God’s way.

22:16 *Come to poverty*- Considering that the wicked often prosper materially in this life, “poverty” must refer to poverty of spirit.

22:21 *To the ones who sent you*- People came to hear Solomon’s wisdom from many nations (1 Kings 4:34), so the book of Proverbs was maybe first compiled as an answer to be sent back to them.

22:25 Bad company, even amongst the people of God, rubs off on us; we are more vulnerable to negative spiritual influences than we think.

23:5 He had all the right theory. Solomon was an active, industrious person by nature; and whilst all his many proverbs criticizing the lazy and glorifying the diligent are true as they stand, is there not in all this some element of self-justification, interpreting his own natural personality type as inherently righteous?

23:11 *He will plead their case*- God is here likened to the counsel for the defence in the final court of Divine justice. And yet He is also the judge of all. Each of the situations we find ourselves in is played out before the court of Heaven, and the judgment of the last day will be a statement of those judgments which are happening in our lives today. God hasn’t as it were turned off from this world, to open the books at the end of history and see how we behaved; He is watching and passionately judging today.

23:17 Envy of others just isn’t on our agenda if we are rejoicing in our relationship with God, and focused on the future hope we have of eternity in God’s Kingdom at Christ’s return (:18). These things eclipse any tendency to wish we were like the rich and powerful in this brief, fleeting life. See on 24:20.

23:26,27 Even when married to Gentile women, Solomon could charge his son to "observe my ways. For... a Gentile woman is a narrow well". The fact he himself had fallen into the pit of marriage to unbelievers just didn't seem to occur to him; he was sure that he was in fact an upright example. This passage reflects more than many the extent to which Solomon's conscience was so deeply damaged. For he wasn't saying 'Do as I say but not as I do'. He was beyond that- doing the very wrong that he warned others not to do, and confidently presenting himself to them as a good example. The death of conscience is something we have to watch against all our days.

24:12 As God keeps us from spiritual destruction, so we should to others. We aren’t to say within ourselves that we didn’t realize that they were going wrong. This is a piercing analysis of our psychology; we hold back from the awkwardness of engagement with others about their life path because we kid ourselves that they are OK really.

24:16 The righteous fall, spiritually and materially- but rise up. This rising up again is one of the characteristics of the righteous, not being swamped by failure.

24:18 God is more angry with gloating over others’ fall than over the fall itself.

24:20 Our hope of future, eternal reward at Christ’s return means we will not be jealous of others (:19). See on 23:17.

24:25 The Proverbs give so much advice about judgment. At first sight it may appear directed to the tiny minority within Israel who were called to be judges; but whilst we cannot condemn others, we are to judge righteously, to have righteous opinions and draw spiritual conclusions about life situations. This is why we have so much advice about how to ‘judge’.

24:29 *I will render to the man according to his work*- We are not to say this, because Christ is coming to judge and render to each person according to their work (Rev. 22:12). We can know great peace from resigning the need to render others their judgment.

25:3 When Solomon laments that a sinful land has many rulers, but stability comes from a wise ruler (28:2), he is stating an inspired truth; but it is inevitable that he framed it in such terms as justified his own dictatorial rule, as if his wisdom justified him in crushing any opposition leaders. It was really Solomon's self-justification. Solomon taught that the heart of kings is unsearchable, i.e., it cannot be examined, being as far above the earth as heaven is. Solomon thought that his possession of theoretical wisdom placed him in a God-like position above his people, and therefore they dare not even begin to question him or examine him; and none should therefore dare to ‘exalt himself’ in the King’s presence (:6). Truly, “knowledge puffs up”. And our very possession of ‘the truth’ of Christ and the word of God carries with it the same potential temptations, leading us to consider the world so far beneath us, that we can do what we wish with no accountability to anyone.

25:5 This was justifying the way Solomon killed Shimei at the establishment of his kingdom. His teaching of wisdom is constantly mixed with self-justification; our preaching must never be like this. See on 29:7.

25:7 Jesus says that this is exactly what will happen at the day of judgment (Lk. 14:10).

25:16 Solomon warns about only eating a limited amount of the honey you may find. Yet Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 show how Solomon found honey as it were, he had the opportunity to do and experience what he wanted- and he ate so much he became spiritually sick.

25:22 This is applied to each of us in Rom. 12:20.

26:4,5 These verses don’t contradict, rather the intention is to teach us that we must treat people in different ways at different times; sometimes we should say something, others we should remain silent. It is wisdom which teaches us. It’s too simplistic to respond to people the same way every time.

26:11 This verse is applied in 2 Pet. 2:22 to baptized Christian believers who return to their old way of life. The implication is that at our conversion we as it were vomited up our old way of life; to return to it is as vile as a dog returning to its own vomit.

26:13 Laziness is often justified as caution.

26:16 Just assuming that we are right and refusing to be self-critical, allowing discretion or wisdom to teach us, is a form of laziness.

26:22 We all naturally like to hear gossip, we find it tasty; let’s not deceive ourselves that actually, *we* aren’t like that; we are, and must make conscious effort not to listen to it.

26:26 *Exposed in the assembly*- Yet the wicked prosper in this life, and often go to their graves without their deceitful words having been revealed. Yet they shall be exposed “in the assembly”. There is a theme in Bible teaching about the day of judgment, that our individual judgment will somehow be visible to all (Lk. 12:1-3; Rev. 16:15). All our secret words, thoughts and real intentions will then be made public to all; there’s therefore no point to be hypocritical in this life, thinking we have cleverly hidden our real positions and feelings, because ultimately all will be public knowledge to everyone for eternity.

27:1 James 4:14,15 alludes to this verse, teaching that our speech should be characterized by frequent statements that our plans are “God willing” or “If the Lord will”.

27:5 The implication is that if we love someone, we must show it- and that may require us to rebuke them at times, as a reflection of that love we have for them (:6).

27:7 *To a hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet*- The context of the surrounding verses speak of loving friends rebuking their friends in love. So the idea may be that we are all spiritually hungry, and the bitterness of receiving rebuke from our friends will therefore be sweet to us. It’s the spiritually proud, who consider themselves full, who have no liking for rebuke.

27:10 This whole section teaches the importance of having faithful, spiritually minded friends. True fellowship within the family of God’s people means that we can relate to each other as if we really are natural family. The idea of ‘out of church Christians’ is a contradiction in terms; we are designed to develop spiritually as a result of true fellowship with other believers. Poor church experiences shouldn’t lead us to retreat within ourselves, because there is no path to growth within the body of God’s people if we cut ourselves off from them (Jn. 15:5).

27:21 How we respond to praise is an indicator of who we really are spiritually, because our response will indicate whether we are proud or humble.

28:2- see on 25:3.

28:5 *Those who seek Yahweh understand it fully* – Note the paradox between ‘seeking’ and ‘fully 'understanding’. The seeker recognizes he hasn’t yet arrived at full understanding; but that process of humble seeking God is in fact reckoned as ‘fully understanding’.

28:9 Our attitude to God’s word is related to the effectiveness of our prayers; insofar as God’s word abides in us, we will ask for things which God will grant (Jn. 15:7), and we will ask in faith, because faith comes from hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17). The various aspects of the believing life, e.g. prayer and Bible reading, mesh together to produce an upward spiritual of spiritual development.

28:11 The problem with wealth is the illusion it brings that everything can be bought for a price, including wisdom and spirituality. It’s not surprising therefore that the majority of God’s people have been kept poor by Him.

28:14 *Blessed is the man who always fears*- This is in designed contrast to the way :1 speaks of the righteous as bold as a lion, and the wicked as fearful. The ‘fear’ spoke of here must refer to a fear of God, of sinning against Him- and this, paradoxically, makes us not nervous, bold and positive in our life path.

28:21 People will betray others and do and say awful things to them just in the hope of a tiny material advantage to them. Judas’ betrayal of Christ can be read as largely motivated by a love of money, and a relatively small sum too.

28:25 Seeking after wealth is contrasted with trusting in Yahweh- i.e. in His promise to provide our daily bread and clothing.

28:27 *One who closes his eyes*- This is the opposite to ‘giving to the poor’. We often fail to be generous spirited (and we can give to the poor in many ways apart from financially) because we pretend we didn’t notice human need, we close the eyes of our perception to the situations we encounter. Notice how deeply our psychology is penetrated by the Proverbs!

29:7 This sounds like a reference to the way Solomon judged the two prostitutes. See on 25:5.

29:14 Solomon is clearly referring to the promises to David, which he assumed were about him. He thought that because he had judged the poor harlots wisely, therefore he would be the promised Messiah. And this was just what David his father had hoped and expected of him. David had even asked Solomon to “do wisely” i.e. to show wisdom, in order that the promises to him about Messiah would be fulfilled (1 Kings 2:3). So this was surely one of Solomon’s motives in giving them justice and being ‘wise’; he sought to live out his father’s expectations and to fulfil the requirements of the Messiah figure. Solomon uses language elsewhere used about Messiah’s final judgment and applies it to himself in 20:26). He felt that his judgment must be that of God, therefore he had to be right, because he ‘had wisdom’, he ‘had the truth’; he assumed that because he was the king, therefore his heart would inevitably be guided by the Lord (21:1). Those raised in wisdom’s way often find it very hard to take criticism in later life. They find tolerance of others’ views hard; they perceive themselves to be right to an intolerant extent. Is this not a little bit of the Solomon syndrome?

30:6 Although we may accept that the Bible is indeed inspired by God, we have a tendency to add to God’s word in that we are tempted to look elsewhere for truth. Because God’s word is true (“flawless”, :5) any other word is relatively speaking untrue, a lie. Having stated that he himself is ignorant, Agur is directing his pupils to God’s word; he recognized that wisdom cannot come from within a teacher, but only from God’s word which is taught by the teacher.

30:8 Feed me with the food that is needful for me- Maybe Jesus was influenced by this in commanding us to ask God each day to give us the food necessary for the day (Mt. 6:11).

30:10 *Along with his master*- Household servants were considered as one with their master. But Agur is teaching that we shouldn’t operate guilt by association, but instead recognize that even the humblest member of a community is still an individual and independent person both before God and ourselves.

30:10,11 *Curses... doesn’t bless*- Note how sins of omission [to not bless, in this case] are parallel with sins of commission [to curse].

30:12 The fact we may feel no conscience for sin isn’t any cleansing from it; the only effective washing from sin is through baptism into Christ, not playing mind games with ourselves whereby we don’t feel bad about our sins.

30:20 There’s a connection between the things of :18,19 and the adulterous woman who thinks she has done no wrong. Those things of :18,19 leave no visible trace. Because there is at times no trace of sins like adultery, they fade away as the path of a ship through the sea does, we aren’t to think that God doesn’t notice and that they will not be brought to judgment.

30:32,33 Just as the things of :30,31 are inexorable in their march and will not be deflected by anything, so just as surely judgment will come for sin, and we must repent rather than continuing to churn up Divine judgment against us.

31:1 *Lemuel*- An equivalent name for Solomon, having a similar meaning to Solomon’s other name, Jedediah (2 Sam. 12:25). This chapter would therefore be the inspired words of his mother Bathsheba.

31:3 Bathsheba was warning Solomon not to make the mistake his father David had, who destroyed his family for the sake of his adultery with Bathsheba. The warning against sinning with women under the influence of alcohol, which would lead the king to forget God’s law, could suggest that David sinned with Bathsheba whilst under the influence of alcohol.

31:8 There are those who whilst not physically mute are relatively voiceless; and we are to be a voice for them, to speak up for those who can’t speak for themselves.

31:15 *Portions for her servant girls*- The wise woman is great because she serves those who are her servants; we see here the New Testament principle of servant leadership.

31:23 The implication is that the respect given her husband is thanks to her, for the surrounding verses are speaking of what *she* achieves for her family.