

Wrestling with the Issues of Life
Preaching from Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
DM8135
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RTS Charlotte

Course Description

Wisdom literature deals with the practical, nitty-gritty issues of life. The practical nature of this literature should not overshadow the difficult aspects of understanding how a proverb works, how to respond to suffering, and how to deal with life when everything seems to go wrong. This course will seek to understand the theology of wisdom literature and how to preach it effectively to God's people today through an examination of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. Each book will be discussed to understand the background of each book, the structure of each book, and the message of each book. This course will focus on the theology of each book with an emphasis on the way God is presented, the way human life is viewed, and the way the deed-consequence relationship is understood.

Course Objectives

1. To understand the hermeneutical issues which are prominent in wisdom literature
2. To understand the background, structure, and message of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
3. To understand how God is presented and how to live life from Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
4. To develop a method of how to preach from Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
5. To explore the various ways Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes relate to Christ

Course Structure

This class was originally scheduled to be taught over July 20-24 on the campus of RTS Charlotte. Changes have been made because of the coronavirus. Ten hours of this class will be completed during July 20-24, meeting two hours a day, from 10 AM-Noon (EST), using Zoom. The other 16 hours will be completed during the remaining three weeks. Students will also listen to several hours of audio lectures.

There may be some flexibility for the days we meet but everyone has to agree to the changes, otherwise we will go with the following schedule.

July 13 Week: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday (10 AM-Noon EST): meet through Zoom

July 20 Week: Monday through Friday (10 AM-Noon EST): meet through Zoom

July 27 Week: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday (10 AM-Noon EST): meet through Zoom

August 3 Week: Monday, Tuesday (10 AM-Noon EST): meet through Zoom

Online Interactions on Canvas

- a) Students must answer 6 Topical Discussion Questions and respond to each of Dr. Belcher's follow-up question
- b) Students must have 3 posts/interactions in the Student to Professor Forum (here you can ask the professor questions related to the content of the course or the Major Assignment)
- c) Students must have 5 posts/interactions in the Student to Student Forum

Reading and Assignments

Since you have not had as much time to prepare for this class, focus on the following minimal reading and be sure to finish the assignments for class listed as due by July 20 so we can discuss them in class. The rest of the reading you can finish by October 30.

A) Due by July 20

- 1) Read Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes: read them specifically for this class
- 2) Proverbs

Willem VanGemeren, "Proverbs" in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament [BTIOT]*, ed. Miles Van Pelt (Crossway, 2016), 373-397

Proverbs Assignment A

Read the following pages in the commentaries on Proverbs by Waltke and Longman. Compare and contrast their approach to understanding the relationship of individual proverbs to each other and whether the proverbs should be interpreted in relationship to other proverbs. A comparison of how they deal with Prov. 26:4-5 will be instructive. They also differ on the nature of a proverb. Be prepared to hand in this assignment (about 1-2 pages) and to discuss this in class.

Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* (Eerdmans, 2004), 45-50, 107-109
Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs* (Baker, 2006), 31-33, 38-42

Proverbs Assignment B

Choose a topic from the Book of Proverbs and come up with a proposition and outlines of two sermons based on the verses in proverbs that deal with the topic. The student will need to do some work in identifying which proverbs deal with the topic and then arrange them for use in a sermon. Be prepared to hand this assignment in and to discuss in class how you would preach one of the sermons

The following are possible topics, but students are not limited to these if there is a topic you are interested in and there are proverbs that deal with it: wealth, use of the tongue, discipline, foolishness, the naïve/simple, work, poverty, the godly woman, the foolish woman, the sluggard/lazy person

3) Job

Richard P. Belcher, Jr., "Job" in *BTIOT* (Crossway, 2016), 357-372

Job Assignment: read the Biblical text of Job 1-5, 8 (you do not need to check commentaries). Analyze how the various parties respond to the suffering of Job (be prepared to hand in [about 1-2 pages] and discuss in class):

Job in chapters 1-2

Job's wife

The friends of Job in chapter 2

Job in chapter 3

The friends of Job in chapters 4-5, 8

4) Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes Assignment: compare and contrast the way the following authors handle Eccl. 1:4-11; 7:15-18; and the "calls to enjoyment": Belcher's Mentor Commentary (Christian Focus) and articles posted on Canvas (be ready to hand in and discuss in class)

1:4-11	Belcher 77-87	Whybray, Ecc 1:5-7 art. on Canvas
7:15-18	Belcher 263-271	Ogden <i>Qoheleth</i> , 112-116, Canvas
Calls to enjoyment 2:24-26	Belcher 123-132	Whybray, Preacher of Joy, art. on Canvas
3:16-22	Belcher 156-166	
5:18-20	Belcher 220-224	
9:7-10	Belcher 326-335	

B) Reading due by October 30

The rest of the reading for this class. The professor will need a percentage (out of 100%) of what you have read for this course (can send it to rbelcher@rts.edu)

Desmond Alexander, "The Old Testament View of Life after Death," *Themelios* 11 (1986) 41-46; available on Canvas

Richard Belcher, Jr., *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature* (IVP, 2019)

Gordon Fee, "Wisdom Christology in Paul: A Dissenting View" in *The Way of Wisdom*, eds. Packer and Soderlund (Zondervan, 2000), 251-279

Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom* (maybe only accessed as part of a Goldsworthy trilogy)

Karen Jobes, "Sophia Christology: The Way of Wisdom?" in *The Way of Wisdom*, eds. Packer and Soderlund (Zondervan, 2000), 226-246

Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes* (IVP, 1985), 56-156

Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Proverbs* (IVP, 2002)

Ernest Lucas, *Proverbs* (Eerdmans, 2015), 199-382

Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 31-133

Belcher, "Suffering" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman and Peter Enns (IVP, 2008), 775-781; available on Canvas

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?* (IVP, 2004)

Michael R. Emler, "When It Won't God Away: A Biblical Response to Chronic Pain," *JBC* 23 (Winter 2005): 21-28; available on Canvas

Daniel J. Estes, "Communicating the Book of Job in the Twenty-First Century," *Themelios* 40.2 (2105): 243-252; available on Canvas

Robert S Fyall., *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (IVP, 2002)

Kline, Meredith G. 'Trial by Ordeal' in *Through Christ's Word: A Festschrift for Dr. Philip E. Hughes*, eds. W. Robert Godfrey and Jesse L. Boyd III (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), 81-93; available on Canvas

Alison Lo, *Job 28 as Rhetoric* (SBL, 2003), 1-21; available on Canvas

Sylvia H. Scholnick, "The Meaning of מִלְּפָנָיו in the Book of Job" in *Sitting with Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Baker, 1992), 349-358; available on Canvas

Major Assignment: Complete one of the following assignments

A) Prepare a sermon series on the Book of Proverbs

- 1) There are some passages in the book which can be preached without much trouble (some of the Instructions in Proverbs 1-9), yet there is some overlap with topics even in these chapters
- 2) The content of some sections of Proverbs will have to be arranged according to themes with proverbs being used for the main content of the sermon
- 3) The series should consist of thirteen sermons dealing thirteen different topics
- 4) Each sermon should have a Proposition/Theme, an Outline, and some reflection how this might relate to Christ and/or how it will benefit God's people
- 5) Two sermons should be written out in full

B) A twenty-to-thirty page paper on any topic related to Proverbs, Job, and/or Ecclesiastes. This paper could approximate a section of a DMin project, that is, it may be historically, exegetically, or hermeneutically oriented

The format of the paper should match general DMin project requirements. Paper must follow Turabian format with useful information at <http://rts.libguides.com/DMin-resources>

Due dates: the reading, the audio lectures, and the major assignment are due Friday, October 30, 11:59 PM. For the reading and the audio lectures send an email to the professor (rbelcher@rts.edu) indicating how much of the reading was completed and confirming that you listened to the audio lectures. For the Major Assignment, upload it to Canvas in a pdf format.

Grading

Major Assignment	50%
Reading	30%
Hand-in Assignments	10%
Class Participation	05%
Discussion Questions	05%

Course Objectives Related to DMin* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Preaching from Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes
 Professor: Richard P. Belcher, Jr
 Campus: RTS Charlotte
 Date: April 2020

<u>DMin* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the DMin curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the DMin outcomes.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Biblical/Theological Foundations:	Significant knowledge of biblical and theological foundations for pastoral ministry. (This includes interaction with Biblical texts, as well as awareness of Reformed Theology.)	Strong	Much of the course lectures relate to the original meaning of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
Historical/Contemporary Practices:	Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry.	Moderate	Not as much an emphasis on the historical, but there is an emphasis on the modern meaning of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
Integration:	Ability to reflect upon and integrate theology and practice, as well as implementation in a contemporary pastoral setting.	Moderate	Weaker on the integration question and stronger on the implementation into a pastoral setting as there is an emphasis on how to preach these books with a possible assignment on doing a sermon series on Proverbs
Sanctification:	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Exegesis of the Bible leads to some level of sanctification, plus dealing with the content of these books also helps deal with modern issues