



POETRY BOOKS

BCtoAD: Bridal Theology Edition

A Course By Timothy Ministries
www.timothyministries.info

THE BOOK OF JOB

HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF TRIBULATION

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

VOCABULARY

Advocate
Apocalypse
Redeemer (*Goel*)
Repent, Repentance
Sanctification
Septuagint (LXX)
Summum Bonum
Theophany

KEY PASSAGES

Job 2.9 (LXX): “How long wilt thou hold out, saying, Behold, I wait yet a little while, expecting the hope of my deliverance? For, behold, thy memorial is abolished from the earth, even thy sons and daughters, the pangs and pains of my womb which I bore in vain with sorrows; and thou thyself sittest down to spend the nights in the open air among the corruption of worms, and I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun, that I may rest from my labours and my pangs which now beset me: but say some word against the Lord, and die.”

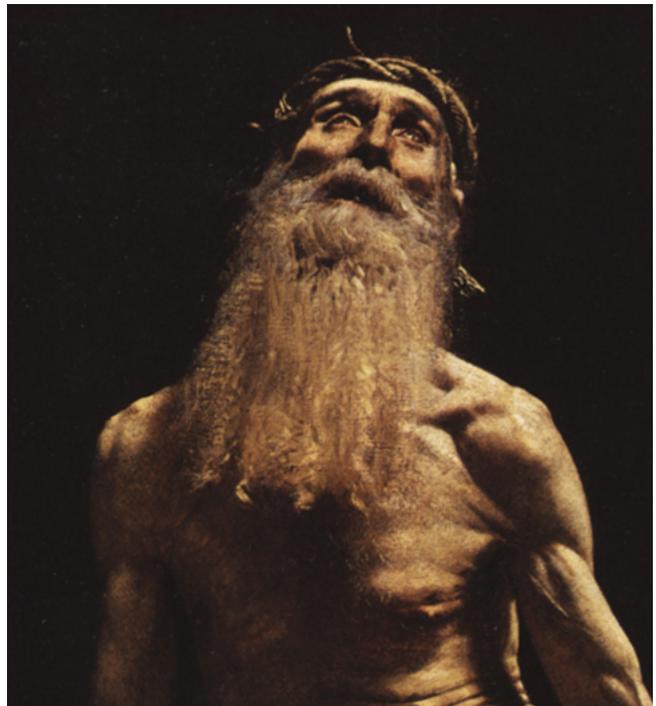
Job 4.12-17: “A word was secretly brought to me, my ears caught a whisper of it. 13 Amid disquieting dreams in the night, when deep sleep falls on men, 14 fear and trembling seized me and made all my bones shake. 15 **A spirit glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end.** 16 It stopped, but I could not tell what it was. A form stood before my eyes, and I heard a hushed voice: 17 ‘Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?’

Job 16.19-21 (NIV): Even now my **witness** is in heaven; my **advocate** is on high. 20 My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; 21 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.

Job 16:18-21 (NAS): “O earth, do not cover my blood, And let there be no [resting] place for my cry. 19 “Even now, behold, my **witness** is in heaven, And my **advocate** is on high. 20 “My friends are my scoffers; My eye weeps to God. [Though the mockers of me are my friends— To Eloah mine eyes pour forth tears... (F. Delitzsch)] 21 “O that a man might plead with God As a man with his neighbor!

Job 19.25-27: I know that my **Redeemer** **lives**, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth [dust]. [cf. Job 17:16 Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"] 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God (Eloah); 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes —I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Detail from “Job” by Bonnat.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Job was the first “Christian Handbook.” What three important doctrines did the book of Job teach people who lived in patriarchal times?

1. The Doctrine Of _____
(Job 1; 2.9; 4.12-17; 7.13-15; 13.21; 26.1-4; 32.18)
2. The Doctrine Of _____ (Job 4.7-8 vs Gal 6.7; see John 17.3)
3. The Doctrine Of _____



How does the book of Job help us understand the book of Revelation?

1. It clearly illustrates a _____ perspective.
2. It helps us understand the nature and purpose of a divine _____.



Since Job repents at the end of the book (Job 42.05-06), in what sense was he a “perfect man” at the beginning of the book?

Job was in perfect _____ to his God relative to the _____ he had at the time (cf. Hebrews 2.10; 5.8-9; 9.9; James 2.22; also Luke 13.32).



How does John 15.2 sum up the story of Job?

John 15.2: He [lifts up] every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.



What was the ultimate answer to all Job’s questions about the tragedies that had befallen him? (See Job 13.15; 42.5-6.)



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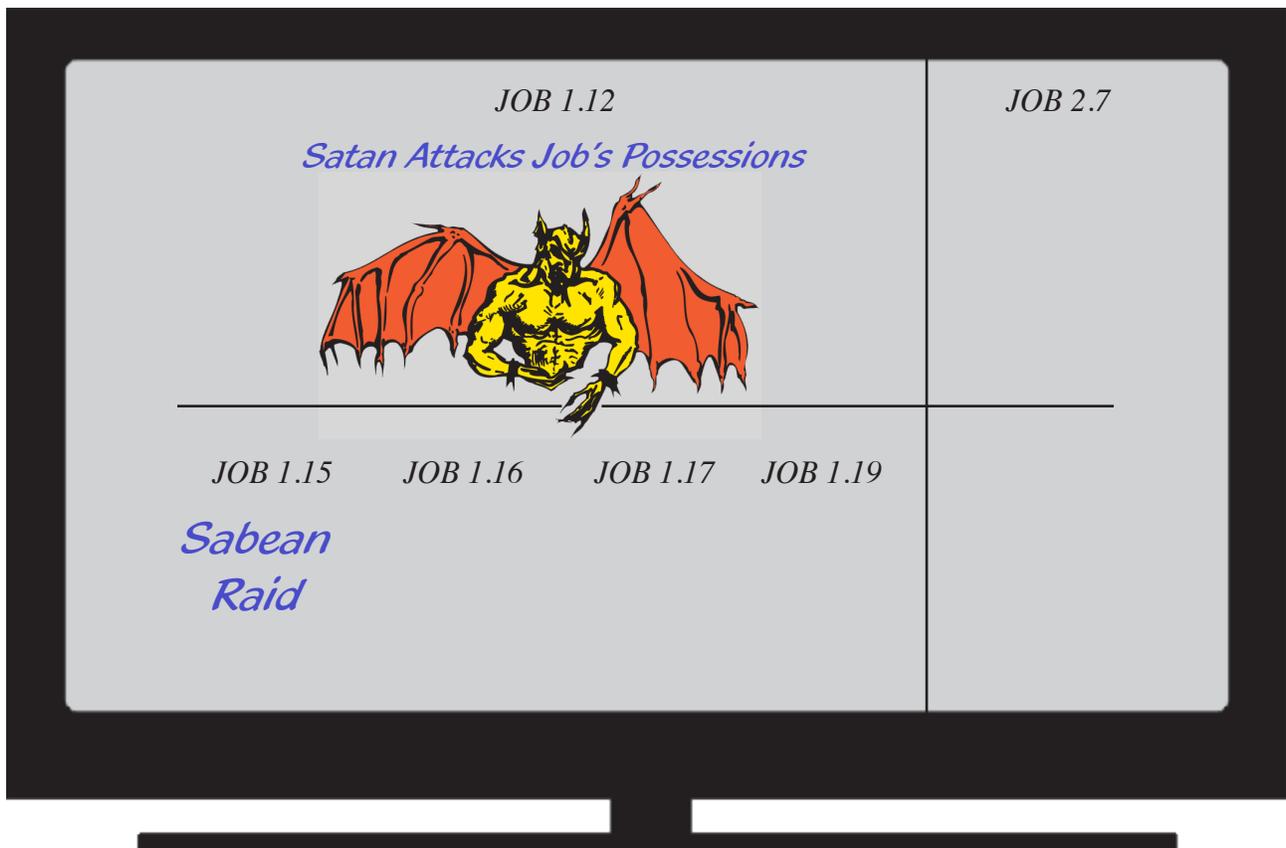
THE SPLIT-SCREEN PHENOMENON

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

The Bible sometimes allows us to glimpse the connection between occurrences in the heavens and the events they set in motion on earth. In effect, Scripture allows us to view some events on a split screen: in the top window we see an event or situation in the heavenly/spiritual realm, and in the bottom window we see its effect in the earthly/material realm. In 2 Kings 6.15-18, for example, we glimpse the fiery chariots of God in the heavens (top window) and the blinding of the Aramean army on earth (bottom window). The soldiers of Aram had no idea how the blindness had come upon them; perhaps they suspected a disease, or something in the water. Thanks to Elisha's prayer for his servant, however, we get the split-screen view and see the connection between the heavenly host and the earthly blindness.

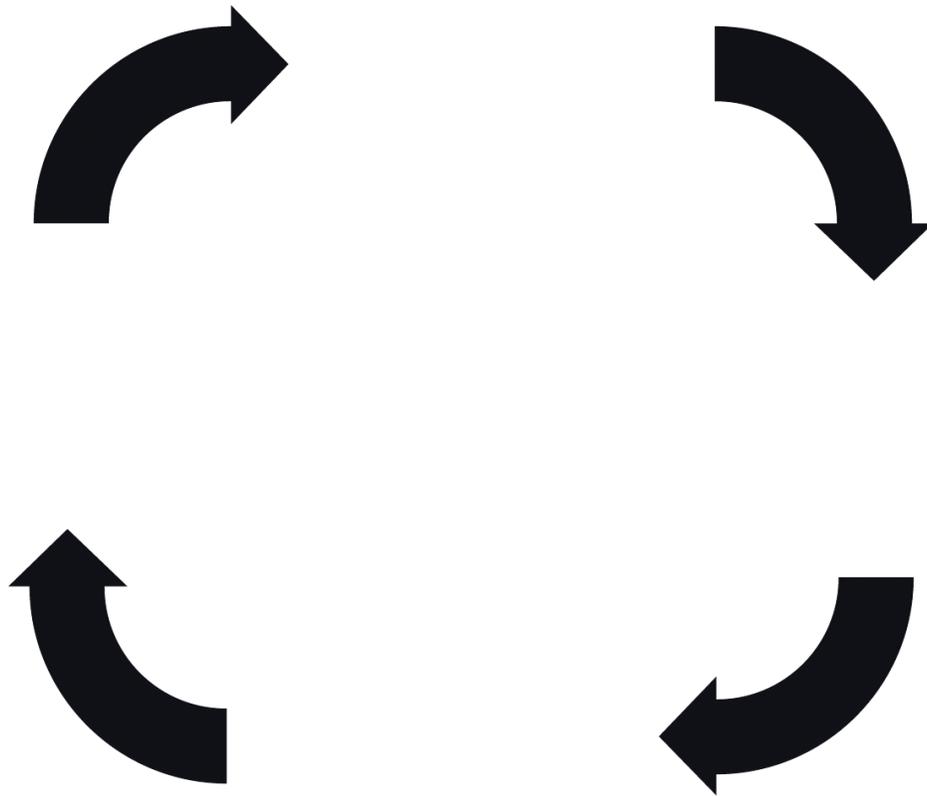
Here's an important thing to observe, though: the biblical text does not always warn us when a change of setting occurs. It is up to the reader to discern whether a passage is describing a top-screen or bottom-screen phenomenon.

One of the most dramatic split-screen views in the Bible is in Job, chapters 1 and 2. Complete the diagram below that shows the connection between heavenly (spiritual, demonic) events and earthly (material, human) events:



THE SANCTIFICATION CYCLE

THE PURPOSE OF APOCALYPSE



Graphic by Rodenok Graziano © 2008

The result of this cycle is:



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PSALMS

PRAYING WITH PASSION

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

VOCABULARY

13 HEBREW SYNONYMS FOR SONG:

<i>Chedoh</i>	An enigma or riddle
<i>Kinah</i>	Dirge, song of mourning
<i>Mascil</i>	Instructive or skillful song
<i>Mashal</i>	Proverb-song or parable
<i>Melitsa</i>	Satire or taunt song
<i>Michtom</i>	Mysterious or precious song
<i>Mismor</i>	Song accompanied by music
<i>Neginoh</i>	Melody for strings
<i>Shiggayon</i>	Dithyrambic* song or ballad
<i>Shir</i>	General word for song
<i>Shir-yediduth</i>	A love lyric
<i>Tehillah</i>	Psalm or praise song
<i>Tephilah</i>	Prayer song

Chiasm, Chiastic (See Psalm 8)
Parallelism, Thought Rhyme

* Wild, passionate.

- Does biblical poetry rhyme?
- What's the difference between a psalm and a song (see Psa 30)?
- Why are poetry books difficult to translate?
- Why do we believe the Psalms are inspired?
 1. The Psalms contain prophecies that have been fulfilled: Psa 22.1 (Mat 27.46); Psa 22.18 (John 19.24); Psa 35.19; 69.4 (John 15.25).
 2. Jesus and the apostles quoted the Psalms as authoritative: Mat 21.16 (Psa 8.2); Mar 12.36 (Psa 110.1); Act 1.20 (Psa 109.8); Rev 2.26,27 (Psa 2.9).
- What principle provides the power to biblical prayers? (1Jo 5.14-15)

KINDS OF HEBREW PARALLELISM

Semantic Parallelism (based on stich meaning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synonymous: Psa 2.3 • Antithetical: Psa 1.6
Progressive Parallelism (based on thought development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause and Effect: Psa 7.14; 28.7 • Temporal Sequence: Psa 3.4-5 • Logical Sequence: Psa 4.3 • Amplification: Psa 4.7 • Petition and Argument: Psa 5.10b, 11b
Syntactic Parallelism (based on word arrangement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallel parts of speech: Psa 18.4-5 • Word order (e.g., Reverse): Psa 2.5 (Heb.) • Ellipsis: Psa 18.41



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PSALM ASSIGNMENT

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

Compose an original psalm.

Step 1: Choose a psalm from the Bible.

Step 2: Analyze the elements of the biblical psalm verse by verse.

The elements of a psalm are the specific kinds of communication it contains.

Step 3: Choose a personal spiritual topic.

The biblical psalm could be about the Good Shepherd; your topic could be something like, “The Divine Gardener.”

Step 4: Write a new psalm about your topic, but with the same number of verses and using the same communication elements as the biblical psalm.

Here’s how I would analyze the communication elements in Psalm 4:

Psa. 4.1 Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer. 2 How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Selah 3 Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him. 4 In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah 5 Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD. 6 Many are asking, “Who can show us any good?” Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. 7 You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. 8 I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

(1) Plea

(2) Question (to enemies)

(3) Declaration (about God)

(4,5) Exhortation

(6) Plea

(7,8a) Confession (of what God has done for me)

(8b) Observation (about God)

Elements Toolbox

- A confession
- A declaration
- A plea
- A praise
- A prediction
- A promise
- A question
- A quotation
- A story
- A testimony
- A warning
- An accusation
- An exhortation
- An invitation
- An observation

•••••
 • Don't just paraphrase the biblical Psalm. Write about a completely different topic, personal to you, but use the same elements, such as "plea," "confession," etc., from the biblical Psalm.
 •••••

A New Psalm

Based on the elements of Psalm 4, by Roderick Graciano (2006)

A Tephilah for the Transformation of Tacoma

1 Visit the Pacific Northwest, O mighty God. Cause your people to rise up; let the Church fulfill its destiny. 2 How long, O secularists, will you worship the creation rather than the Creator? How long will you Pagans invite false gods to inhabit our cities and parks? (Not much longer!)	(1) Plea
3 Know that the LORD weeps over cities; the LORD will intervene in our region. 4 In your consternation, don't give up hope; intercede for your city and don't be silent. (It's a strategic time!)	(2) Question (to enemies)
5 Prepare to make sacrifices; to yield what is necessary. 6 We have prayed all our lives, "Your kingdom come"; Make your rule manifest in our cities now, O LORD. 7 You have filled my heart with vision, with strategies for advancing your cause. 8 I awake each day with anticipation, for you, O LORD, will make my city a habitation of joy.	(3) Declaration (about God)
	(4,5) Exhortation
	(6) Plea
	(7,8a) Confession (of what God has done/will do for me)
	(8b) Observation (about God)

A New Psalm

Based on the elements of Psalm 95, by Tom Bender (2006)

1 Come, join the army of the LORD; Let us unite in vast numbers to engage the pre-saved. 2 "Join me," the LORD says, "to fight our enemies, to expose Satan and all his evil." 3 The LORD our God is a warrior, strong and mighty is the LORD. 4 He leads us into battles hidden from our eyes. He is my fortress and in him alone I conquer. 5 Trustworthy is my God. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him. 6 "Come follow me," says the LORD, "and my peace will dwell within you; 7 You will experience Me like the heat of the sun on your face or the coolness of snow on your feet." 8 If you do not know Me and exist in my army, My ways will be hidden in the fog from you. 9 If you have seen the glory of the LORD, I have revealed it to you. 10 If you love the LORD, I will love you. 11 Give me your life and I will be with you all the days of your life.	(1,2) Invitation
	(3,4,5) Declaration
	(6) Invitation
	(7) Declaration
	(8) Warning/Exhortation
	(9,10) Story
	(11) Promise



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NUPTIAL MOTIFS IN THE PSALMS

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

VOCABULARY

Cleave
Epithalamium or -on
 e-pə-thə-'lā-mē-am\
Imagery
Motif
Nuptial
Selah

The nuptial relationship between the Lord and His people is mentioned in Scripture more than we realize. One reason we have lost sight of this biblical thread is because scholars often hesitate to see the truly prophetic in the Scriptures and are too intent upon limiting the inspired text to a purely human context. Thus, some interpret Psalm 45 as about Solomon and the daughter of Pharaoh. However, the Psalms were composed and collected *for worship*, and it would have been blasphemous indeed to worship Solomon or David in the temple services!

PSALM

45

Furthermore Psalm 45 is addressed to the king who is **doubly beautiful** (according to the Hebrew text), and whom “God has blessed ... **forever**” (v. 2), who rides “for the cause of truth ... and righteousness (v. 4), who is addressed as God whose throne “is forever and ever” (v. 6), and whom “nations will praise forever and ever” (v. 17). This is not Solomon who was anointed by Zadok the priest (1Ki 1.39), but Messiah who was anointed by God (Psa 45.7). Who then is the queen at the “right hand” of this majestic King (v. 9)? She is “**all** glorious,” and herself a princess, a daughter of a king (v. 13).

Another reason we have missed the wedding theme in Scripture is that we are unfamiliar with the Bible’s nuptial motifs; we’re unaware of the many words that evoked nuptial images for the Hebrew. In Psalm 23, for example, the imagery shifts from the pastoral to the nuptial in verse 5. The banqueting table, the anointing of the head with oil, the promise of steadfast love (**חֶסֶד**), and the privilege of living forever after in the lover’s house, all would make the Israelite think of aspects of a wedding.

PSALM

23

There are, of course, more explicit references to the divine wedding idea in the Scriptures. Psalm 19, for example, teaches us that “the heavens declare the glory of



pixabay

God,” and one of the ways the heavens do this is by providing us with enduring picture of a joyful bridegroom! Every time we see the sun we should think of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal 4.2) emerging from his wedding chamber filled with joy (Psa 19.4-5). As the sun constantly brings life-giving light and heat to everyone, so our heavenly Bridegroom will unflinchingly bring light and life to all when He finally reigns over the earth with His bride.

PSALM

19

Throughout the Psalms there are also expressions of passionate love toward God that do not occur in an overtly nuptial context. These expressions become all the more meaningful to the reader who has the “theology of the Bride” in mind. For example, the psalmist in Psa 73 says to God, “Whom have I in heaven *but You?* And besides You, I desire nothing on earth” (v. 25). This devoted love of the psalmist is immediately contrasted with those of an adulterous bent: “You have destroyed those who are **unfaithful** to You.” Then the Psalmist expresses his heart again, “But as for me, the **nearness** of God is my good” (v. 28). What an expression of wedded love!

PSALM

73

David also uses words of profound intimacy to describe His love for God. He said to the Lord, “Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you” (Psa 63.3). He went on to say, “in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul **clings** to you; your right hand upholds me” (v. 8). In this verse David used the Hebrew word (**דָּבַק**) the occurs first in Genesis 2.24: “a man shall ... **cleave** to his wife” We see that though David was a “man’s man,” he nevertheless set an example for the Bride of Christ, illustrating the sentiment toward the heavenly Bridegroom that she should emulate. Like David, our heart’s desire should be that we “may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of [our] life, To behold the beauty of the Lord” (Psa 27.4). Like Him we should long to behold our heavenly Bridegroom’s face in righteousness, and look forward to being satisfied by seeing Him when we awake (Psa 17.15).

PSALM

63





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PROVERBS HOW TO MAKE EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

VOCABULARY

- Acrostic
- Bicolon = Couplet
- Colon = Hemistich
- Discernment
- Gyrovague
- Mashal*
- Probability
- Promise
- Proverb
- Sentence = Stich
- Strophe = Stanza
- Wisdom

WHAT IS WISDOM?

1. Insight translated into effective _____ (Pro 8.15-21),
2. Based upon God's perfect and total understanding of how _____ works (Pro 8.22-31), which...
3. Allows us to make decisions with a "big picture" _____ (Pro 8.32-36).

WHAT IS A PROVERB?

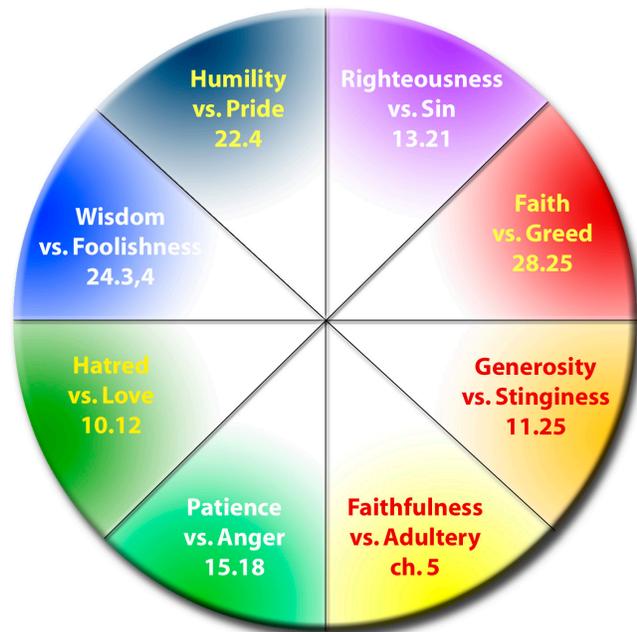
The word proverb (*mashal*), connotes the following:
Similarity, likeness, pair, twin, mirror, example, comparison, analogy, illustration.

EVERY PROVERB PRESENTS A CHOICE

THE MASHAL TWIN SOPHIA & CASSIA



Proverbs
22.6



A SPECTRUM OF LIFE CHOICES RATHER THAN PROMISES

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Example 1: The Supernatural Result of Heeding Older Parents

Pro. 23.22 Listen to your father, who gave you life,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.

CHOICE:

Example 2: The Practical Value of Pursuing Godly Counsel

Pro. 15.22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

CHOICE:

Example 3: The Joy of Recognizing God's Sovereignty

Pro 16.1 To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue.
...4 The LORD works out everything for his own ends — even the wicked for a day of disaster.
...9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.
...33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

CHOICE:



A Proverb Is Like:

- A Walnut; the saying is the shell, the principle is the meat.
- A Suitcase; the principle inside is what's important.
- A Chocolate; both the exterior and the interior are sweet.

Key Question:

What's the difference between a proverb and a promise?

Pro 22.6 Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.



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THE NUPTIAL WARNINGS OF PROVERBS AND ECCLESIASTES

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

The first quality we associate with the idea of a wedding or a marriage is *love*. In biblical wisdom, the more fundamental quality is *intimacy*. Without intimacy, the expression, growth and fruitfulness of love is limited. Now, the key OT terms relating to intimacy are the verb **to know** (יָדַע) and its cognate noun **knowledge** (יְדָעָה). Recognizing this allows us to see that in the OT the call *to know something* is often a call to pursue deeper intimacy with our heavenly Bridegroom by appropriating some aspect of His character.

The book of Proverbs begins with the call to know wisdom (Pro 1.2) and to fear the LORD (Pro 1.7), and ends with praise for the ideal wife who “opens her mouth in wisdom” (Pro 31.26) and “fears the LORD” (Pro 31.30). We see, therefore, that the book of Proverbs can be understood as a manual for becoming a suitable counterpart — *in character* — to the Person in whom wisdom has resided from eternity (Pro 8.12-31).

As in the book of Revelation, where MYSTERY BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS (Rev 17.3-6) is juxtaposed with the Bride of the Lamb (Rev 19.7-8), in Proverbs the adulterous woman (Pro 5; 6.20 to 7.27; 30.20) is the antithesis of both the lady Wisdom (Pro 8) and the excellent wife (Pro 31.10-31). There are also individual proverbs that contrast the ideal wife with an unworthy one:

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
But she who shames him is like rotteness in his bones. (12.4)

The wise woman builds her house,
But the foolish tears it down with her own hands. (14.1)

In the same vein, some proverbs deplore the woman of faulty character:

As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout
So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion. (11.22)

It is better to live in a desert land
Than with a contentious and vexing woman. (21.19)

For men, the book of Proverbs repeatedly sounds the warning to flee the deadly phenomena of the “strange woman” (2.16-19; 6.23-35; 23.26-28) and acts of adultery (ch. 7), adding encouragement to remain faithful to “the wife of your youth” (ch. 5). In fact, Pro 22.14 teaches that God punishes a man by allowing him to get involved with an adulteress, implying that there is a serious sin problem that *precedes* adultery!



Of particular interest is Pro 2.17, which describes the strange woman as one who
...leaves the companion of her youth
And forgets the covenant of her God

There is ambiguity in this verse that is pregnant with meaning. Who is the companion (אֶלְיוּנָהּ) of her youth? The parallel with Pro 5.18 implies that a spouse is in view, but so far as the meaning of the Hebrew word goes, it could also refer to God, with whom she once professed to have a relationship. This latter interpretation is reinforced by the parallelism of the next line, “covenant of her God.” However, some interpreters have understood the word translated “her God” (אֱלֹהֵיהָ) as referring to “her husband”! So, we could paraphrase this verse two different ways:

...leaves behind her childhood faith
And forgets the spiritual commitment to her God

Or,

...leaves behind the husband whom she married in her youth
And forgets her marriage covenant sanctioned by God

The very ambiguity serves to remind the reader that the marriage covenant points to a higher relationship with God to which we are all called (cf. Eph 5.31-32).

In the book of Proverbs, the warnings against adultery, and against choosing a spouse lacking in character, have their ultimate application in teaching people to not attach themselves to the wrong spiritual spouse (e.g., Baal = husband). The proverbs remind us that if the wise woman is the ideal wife, then the all-wise YHVH (Pro 8.22) is the ideal Husband. The ultimate goal of wisdom is to “discover the knowledge of God” (Pro 2.1). If a person will unwaveringly pursue God as the true desire of their heart, they will grow in wisdom and understanding (Pro 2.6-10), and that wisdom will deliver them from all kinds of evil (Pro 2.11-22).

The book of Ecclesiastes reiterates the wisdom intended to warn a man against choosing a spouse unwisely:

I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her (Ecc 7.26).

At the same time, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes recognizes a happy marriage as one of the chief goods “under the sun”:

Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun (Ecc 9.9).

If temporal things are all you have, you may as well enjoy one of life’s best rewards: intimacy with a life-long companion. Of course, this blessing should drive us to seek intimacy with One who will outlive the sun, and intimacy that will last forever.



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PROVERBS ASSIGNMENT

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Compose an original quadruplet proverb.

Step 1: Think of a wisdom topic.

Your topic could be something like, “Making friends,” or “Succeeding at work.”

Step 2: Think of the most important thing you know pertaining to your topic.

If your topic is “Making friends,” your important bit of wisdom might be something like, “Be a giver not a taker.”

Step 3: Think of three other wise principles pertaining to your topic.

Sticking with the topic of “Friendship,” we might come up with additional thoughts like, “Be real, not a faker,” “Learn to listen,” “Share your heart.”

Step 4: Write the introductory couplet for your quadruplet.

I call this “The Columbo Intro”:
*There are three qualities of a true friend,
Indeed, four things a friend should do.*

Notice that the quadruplet introductions are examples of *progressive parallelism*, specifically of the kind we call *amplification*.

Step 5: List your four points after the intro, with your most important idea appearing either first or last.



You can do better than this example!

*There are three qualities important in friendship,
Indeed, four things a friend should do:*

*Learn to listen,
Be real not a faker,
Share your heart,
Be a giver not a taker.*

Try to use humor, mystery, a startling thought, rhythm, rhyme, or a clever turn of phrase.

EXAMPLES FROM STUDENTS:

Two eyes can see many things.
There are three things you can't see;
Four that are invisible:
The wind that moves among trees,
Love that moves among hearts,
One billion dollars,
And the Holy Spirit whom you can't see — but lives inside you.

— Jessica Owen, March 21, 2006

There are four things a boyfriend should never
say to his girlfriend:
Are you feeling okay? You look tired.
I only date fat chicks.
Its not you, its me.
Let's just be friends.

— Amber Green, March 2006

There are seven things that
are good in a baseball game:
A good grip
A strong arm
An accurate eye
A good bat
A powerful swing
A home run
An experienced Coach.

— Stephen Kosinski, 2006



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ECCLESIASTES HOW TO LIVE A FULFILLED LIFE

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

VOCABULARY

- Contingent
- Money
- Qohelet*
- Shalom*
- Temporal
- Vain, Vanity (*hevel*)
- Work

What is Vanity?

Hebrew = הֶבֶל (*hevel*), vanity, breath (Isa. 57.13), worthless (2 Ki. 17.15), short-lived, transitory. Also, proper name *Abel*, probably based on Akkadian *aplu* = son.

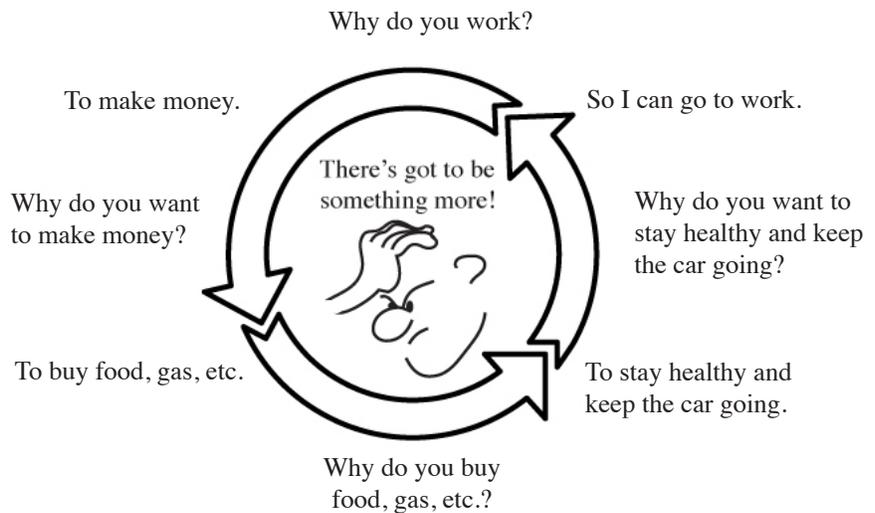
What Kinds of Things Are Vain?

- Things that are _____
- Everything that is _____
- Things that are _____

Vanity is trying to find purpose in the _____ rather than in the _____. You can never know about the _____ unless you know _____.

- • • • •
- Please Note: This teaching from Ecclesiastes can be obtained in narrative form and without charge from our web site. Go to < <http://tmin.org/tminpages/archive.html> > and select the file: "*The Teacher...*"
- • • • •

The Vain Work Circle



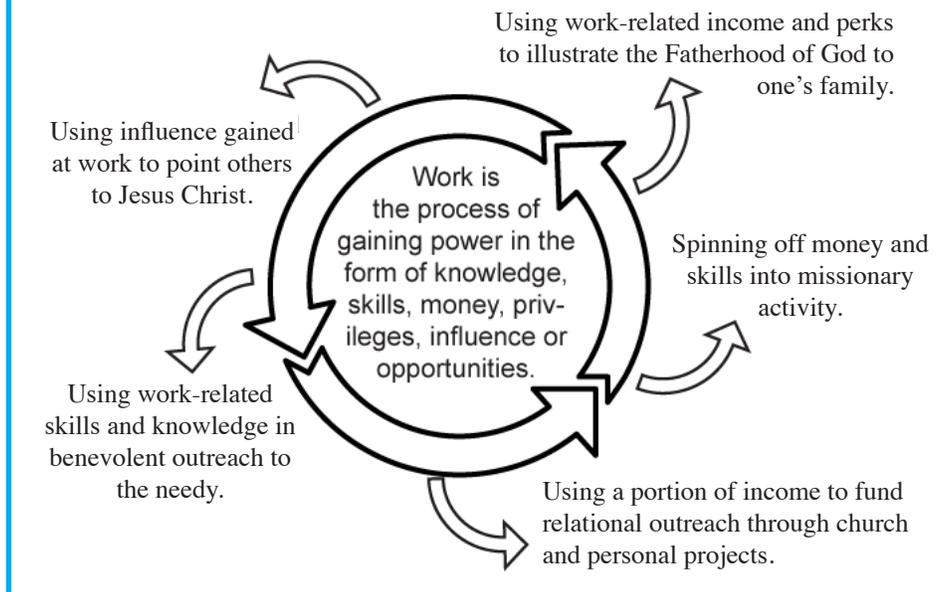
“Life is what happens while we’re busy making other plans.” — *John Lennon*



How Then Can We Find Something Lasting In Life?

NIV Ecclesiastes 12.13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. (Compare the New King James version.)

The Fruitful Work Circle



THE “SOMETHING MORE”

The “something more” that we seek is *everything that isn't vain*, in other words, those things that are neither contingent, temporal nor partial. Is there anything that fits this description besides God Himself? Yes, there are three things that remain: faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13.13). These things are not God Himself, but they are solid, real and enduring because they are aspects of God's eternal character. They are relevant to us because they are the three essentials of *relationship*. (Any relationship of true value must have trust in transactions, the expectation of blessing and the assurance of acceptance: faith, hope and love.) Relationship is the one thing we can take with us beyond the grave, assuming it is relationship that includes Jesus. Any relationship pursued by God's grace and for Christ's sake has ultimate value because we will be able to enjoy it and deepen it for eternity.

The Teacher sums up his message in Ecclesiastes 12.13 (NKJ): “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For *this is man's all*.” Many Bible versions translate this last phrase of Ecclesiastes 12.13 differently, but **the underlying Hebrew text simply says, “for this is all-of-the-man.”** The New King James Version seems to have captured the sense well, as have Arnold and Beyer in their Old Testament survey where they write, “To obey [God] is to be truly human and to reach our greatest potential as part of his creation.” **And how does God intend that we obey Him and reach our greatest potential? By loving Him and loving our neighbor, i.e., by investing in eternal relationships.** This is the Teacher's philosophy and the Christian's worldview: The Triune God is the *most real entity*, and relationship with Him is our *summum bonum*, i.e., our highest good from which all other good proceeds. Prioritizing relationship with God allows Him to integrate all the parts of our lives—parts which would be *vanity* by themselves—into a meaningful, fruitful whole. It's this integration that gives us true fulfillment and puts the unpleasant issue of death in its proper perspective. This is the Teacher's secret to a life of lasting value.



POETRY BOOKS

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SONG OF SONGS

A SONG ABOUT FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIPS

THE INTIMATE BRIDE — RELATIONAL FOUNDATION STONES

VOCABULARY

Allegory, allegorical
Intimacy
Shalom
Shulammitte
Solomon



"The entire history of the world from its beginning to this very day does not outshine that day on which this book was given to Israel. All the Scriptures, indeed, are holy...; but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies."

—Rabbi Akiba,
Mishnah, Yadaim 3.5

Key Passage: Song 4.16 to 5.1

"Awake, O north wind, And come, wind of the south; Make my garden breathe out fragrance, Let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden And eat its choice fruits!"

"I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.

"Eat, friends; Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers."

What three things remain?

In Ecclesiastes we learned that vain things are unworthy of our devotion because they are temporal, i.e., they pass away. In contrast, what three things "remain" and why does Paul group them together (1Co 13.13)? _____

Together these are the three keys of fruitful **relationship**:

- TRUST vs. unproductiveness, paralysis
- EXPECTATION vs. giving up on a "dead-end relationship"
- SACRIFICE vs. self-centered laziness

1Th 1.3: "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by **faith**, your labor prompted by **love**, and your endurance inspired by **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ." (Cf. Heb 10.22-24)

What is your *Summum Bonum*?

Ecclesiastes tells us that life is about relationship with God. Song of Songs typifies that relationship in metaphors of married love. But life is not essentially about married love; it is about _____.

What does the Song teach about intimate love?

- It embraces the marred, rejected and unfruitful (1.6)
- It does not wish to be intruded upon (2.7; 3.5; 8.4)
- It expands our horizons (2.8-14)
- It thrives on communication (2.14)
- It requires vigilance against destructive influences (2.15)
- It is not common, it must be sought after (3.1-3)
- Is it blind? Or does it see more deeply (4.7)
- It yields a variety of good fruit (4.12-5.1)
- It requires effort and help from others to maintain (5.2-8; 6.1)
- It recognizes personal complexity (6.4), as well as uniqueness (6.9)
- It is as strong as death! (8.6,7; cf. 5.8)
- It builds up and enables fruitfulness in others (8.8-12 vs. 1.6)

THE SONG OF SONGS

An Introduction By Roderick Graciano

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Though the debate continues as to how we should understand the Song of Songs, probably the most coherent approach is to read it as a poetic drama celebrating Solomon's relationship with a shepherdess bride. This love poem then provides a typological lesson about the present and eschatological intimacy between our heavenly Bridegroom and His people. The message is typological, not allegorical, and therefore the reader should not get bogged down attempting to find symbolic meaning in every detail (though the author's metaphors are carefully chosen), but rather should seek to understand the progression of thoughts and events in the narrative.

The main characters of this drama are King Solomon (King *Shlomo*, i.e. King of Peace) and the Shulammitte (The feminine form of "Solomon," pronounced Shoe-la-meet). The "Daughters of Jerusalem" and apparently the brothers of Shulammitte appear briefly. It seems that King Solomon, in the mountain regions on a hunting trip or other business, meets and begins to court the Shulammitte in the orchard of her family home, possibly in Shunem, a village on the southwest slope of the Hill of Moreh in southern Galilee (consider the directional description in ch. 8. 5) . Solomon brings the Shulammitte to Jerusalem and introduces her to the life of the palace. The Song opens with her yearning for his intimacies as she reclines in the banqueting hall of the women, and exhorting the Daughters of Jerusalem who turn and stare not to be taken aback by her suntanned skin (ch. 1. 2-7). Solomon then enters from the banquet-hall of the men and the two proceed to exchange words of affection (ch. 1.9 to 2.7), the account of which closes with the Shulammitte's appeal that she not be awakened from this love "dream" by the others. (This adjuration, along with that of ch. 5.8-9, forms the refrain of the song and is repeated at ch. 3.5 and, with slight variation, at 8.4.)

The next scene pictures the Shulammitte back at her mountain home, rejoicing in the arrival of Solomon, who has come in the traditional fetching-of-the-Bride to escort her to the royal wedding. He invites her to come out and enjoy with him the splendor of spring in the countryside (ch. 2. 8-13), which invitation she gladly accepts, glorying in their mutual love-possession of one another (ch. 2.16). Then in the night, as perhaps related later to the Daughters of Jerusalem, the Shulammitte dreams of a breach in their soon to be consummated intimacy, and discovers that the preservation of that intimacy will require vigilance and no little effort (ch. 3.1-5). Finally, the Daughters of Jerusalem, or others, see the magnificent wedding procession coming up from the wilderness—the day of Solomon's wedding has come (ch. 3.6-11). The marriage takes place, Solomon now calls Shulammitte his "Bride" (4.8-12; 5.1), and as he praises her beauty with renewed fervency, she prays to be a fruitful garden that he may find pleasure in her (ch. 4.16),¹ to which he answers that he has already found satisfaction in her (ch. 5.1a).

Shulammitte dreams again the nightmare of broken intimacy, but this time as a consequence of her own lethargy. After painful seeking, the relationship is restored as she once again lifts up praise to her lover. He reassures her that their relationship is not one of obligation like his numerous political marriages in which expressions of intimacy are only short-lived. Their relationship is as unique as she is (ch. 5.2-6.9).

As the Shulammitte settles into palace life, she delights in visiting the groves and gardens. On one such outing, the Daughter's of Jerusalem recognize her and plead that they may gaze upon her beauty, to which petition she makes humble reply (ch. 6.10-13). As she returns to the palace, Solomon himself takes up her praise. She responds by reaffirming her joy in belonging to him, and asks that they might together return to the country. She desires even greater and more unrestrained intimacy with him (ch. 7.10 to 8.14).

The Song's final scene opens with the Shulammitte's brothers or countrymen remarking at the approach of the two lovers. As the royal pair arrive at the family orchard, Solomon (in Delitzsch's opinion) recalls the beginning of their love. The Shulammitte responds that though their love had a beginning, she could not bear to have it end, for it is by far her most valuable treasure (ch. 8. 5-7). This couple's love is so great that it overflows to others: Shulammitte expresses concern for her younger sister, wishing for her a blissful espousal like her own. The brothers promise to care for the sister to that end, upon which Shulammitte appeals to Solomon to reward them. These brothers were the very ones who had tended Shulammitte in her virginity so as to be able to present her to the King as an unspoiled garden. Solomon responds, "let me hear your voice!" He delights to hear the Shulammitte's voice even when it asks for favors, implying that he would gladly grant her anything within his power. With this encouragement she sings out, "Come away, my lover!" Her final request is to be alone with him in the country once more (ch. 8. 8-14).

¹ If there is a chiasmic structure to the Song, then the climax is here at 4.16, the bride's prayer that the wind (Spirit?) will make her fruitful for her kingly bridegroom.