

Course: BI229D/ND Proverbs (blended*)
Credit: 2 Semester Hours
Semester: Spring 2026 (Session 1)
Time: 9:30–10:50 A.M. Tuesday and Thursday, January 13–March 5
Location: Calvary University, CABRE 100 and online classroom
Instructor: Joel T. Williamson, Jr., Th.M.
Office: Madison Hall 1218; Ext. 1347
Home Phone: 816-258-1726 (text only, please—except in emergencies)
E-mail: joel.williamson@calvary.edu

I. DESCRIPTION

A study of Proverbs, concentrating on the structure of individual proverbs while emphasizing the moral and theological principles contained in the book. (Prerequisite: BI115)

* This is a blended class, meaning that both on-campus and online students take the class together. Campus students attend the classes in person, online students attend the classes via the online classroom. All interaction and assignments for both on-campus and online students are done in the online classroom.

II. OBJECTIVES

- A. The basic goal of this course is not knowledge, but knowhow. “Knowledge is not knowhow until you understand the underlying principles at work and can fit them together into a structure larger than the sum of its parts. Knowhow is learning that enables you to *go do*.”¹ When you have knowhow, you are ready to explore the implications of the book of Proverbs for yourself. Of course, growth in knowhow is a lifelong process and thus beyond the scope of this course. In it, however, you will take your first steps by learning to do the following:
1. **Basic Facts.** You can’t distinguish what’s relevant from what’s not unless you know the basic facts associated with the book. To help you achieve this awareness, you are expected to be able to identify all the following by the end of the semester:
 - a. Basic Facts about the Book (its author, recipients, date, occasion, theme, purpose, and structure). (PLO’s: 1, 2) (Assignments: Readings, Term Project)
 - b. Basic Facts within the Book (its major topics and themes). (PLO’s: 1, 2, 3, 4) (Assignments: Readings, Interpretive Papers, Term Project)
 2. **Solving Knotty Problems.** Only a reliable procedure can consistently provide reliable solutions when you confront an interpretive problem. Toward this end, you will be expected to do all the following by the end of the semester:
 - a. Interpret individual proverbs using a consistent, “literal” hermeneutic. (PLO’s: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Assignments: Interpretive Papers, Term Project)

¹ Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 2014), 158. (The emphasis comes from the authors themselves.)

- b. Identify basic figures of speech within the proverbs and interpret them using a consistent, “literal” hermeneutic. (PLO’s: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Assignments: Interpretive Papers, Term Project)
3. ***Insight into the Overall Message/Theology.*** You don’t really understand a book until you see how all its parts work together to make a point. (The whole really is greater than the sum of its parts.) To show that you have made progress toward this level of understanding, you should be able to do all the following:
- a. Identify and collate the book’s teaching on key topics. (PLO’s: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Assignments: Readings, Interpretive Papers, Term Project)
 - b. Identify the overall structure of the book’s argument. (PLO’s: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Assignments: Readings, Interpretive Papers, Term Project)
 - c. Propose practical—and interpretively sound—applications of the book. (PLO’s: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Assignments: Readings, Interpretive Papers, Term Project)

III. TEXTBOOKS

- A. ***Holy Bible.*** The Bible is a required textbook in every course at Calvary University. To facilitate academic level study, students are required to use for assignments and research an English translation or version of the Bible based on formal equivalence (meaning that the translation is generally word-for-word from the original languages), including any of the following: New American Standard (NASB, English Standard Version (ESV), New King James (NKJV), or King James (KJV). Other translations and versions based on dynamic equivalence (paraphrases and thought-for-thought translations like NLT and NIV) may be used as supplemental sources. Please ask me if you have questions about a particular translation or version
- B. ***Other Textbooks.***
- 1. Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014). [ISBN: 978-0830842179; \$18.00]
 - 2. Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Proverbs* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002). [ISBN: 978-0-87784-942-1; \$18.00]

IV. ASSIGNMENTS

It is my conviction that most of the learning and the best learning that you will gain from this class will come through the assignments you do. Although they will be used to calculate your course grade, the primary purpose of these assignments is to help you develop knowhow, the ability to extract insight from the Bible. Of course, knowhow doesn’t just happen; you must cultivate it, so take out your spade; it’s time to start digging.

- A. **Reading (300 points).** Knowhow cannot develop without facts. Therefore, your first responsibility is to fill your mind with the fundamental facts found in Proverbs. Focused reading is the most efficient way for you to gain this information. Therefore, you will perform two types of reading this semester: the reading of the Book of Proverbs itself and the reading of the two course textbooks. You will report this reading in three reading reports. Each of these reports is designed to help you prepare your term project. You will receive no credit for partial readings, but you will get half credit for readings completed late.
1. ***Reading #1. Familiarity.*** Your first reading report should include all the following:
- a. You will report that you have read the book of Proverbs through and identify ten significant themes that you noticed during your reading.

- b. You will report that you have read the portions in Kidner’s commentary on Introduction and his comments on Proverbs 1–9. (I recommend that you read these comments as you are reading the book of Proverbs itself.)
 - c. You will report that you have read the Appendices and Part 1 (chapters 1–5) in Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*.
 - d. In no more than one double-spaced page, you will explain the nature of biblical proverbs and describe how they function.
2. **Reading #2. Analysis.** Your second reading report should include all the following:
- a. You will report that you have read the book of Proverbs through and complete a “topic form” on each of the five themes I have gleaned from your original list.
 - b. You will report that you have read Kidner’s comments on Proverbs 10–20. (I recommend that you read these comments as you are reading the book of Proverbs itself.)
 - c. You will report that you have read Part 2 (chapters 6–9) in Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*.
 - d. In no more than one double-spaced page, you will evaluate Longman’s comparison of biblical proverbs with other literature both inside and outside of the Bible.
3. **Reading #3. Synthesis.** Your report on this reading should include all the following:
- a. You will report that you have read the book of Proverbs through.
 - b. You will report that you have read the “Subject-Studies” portion in Kidner’s commentary as well as his comments on Proverbs 21–31. (I recommend that you read these comments as you are reading the book of Proverbs itself.)
 - c. You will report that you have read Part 3 (chapters 10–Final Word) in Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*.
 - d. In no more than one double-spaced page, you will summarize the overall message of Proverbs—as you see it.

I will grade each reading according to the following scale: reading of the biblical text (33 points), reading of the assigned portions of the commentaries (34 points/17 points for each), and your written response to the final question in each reading assignment (33 points).

- B. Analysis of Individual Proverbs (300 points).** For each class session during Weeks 2–7, you will submit a brief paper (maximum of 4 pages) that analyzes, interprets, and applies four verses (proverbs) assigned by the professor. We will discuss those proverbs in class on that day; therefore, late or incomplete papers will receive no credit. The papers are intended to help you develop skill as an interpreter—in particular, as an interpreter of biblical proverbs. Each paper will be graded based on your ability to identify which issues are important (20 points), make them clear (15 points), and suggest viable interpretations and/or applications of the passage (15 points).
- C. Term Project (400 points).** On the last day of the course, you will submit your synthesis of a topic found in the book of Proverbs. It should be ten to fifteen double-spaced pages in Turabian format and include a bibliography of at least five books or articles. With my approval, you will choose the topic for your paper from the five themes for which you prepared a “topic form” in your second reading assignment. In it you will demonstrate your ability to interpret, collate, and apply teaching from the book of Proverbs. Your paper will consist of the following sections:
1. **Introduction.** In this section, you will provide any background information that the reader will need to understand, apply, or appreciate your topic. In short, this section will show why this topic should matter to the reader.

2. **Outline.** In this brief section, you will summarize the categories (principles) into which you have classified the facts about your topic.
3. **Exposition.** In this, the main portion of your paper, you will justify your categories by showing that the facts, properly interpreted, do lead to the principles you have found. In other words, it is here that you prove your case. (It is not enough to *say* it; you must *show* it.)
4. **Conclusion.** You will conclude your paper by summarizing your basic findings and proposing at least one way in which they contribute to theology or to daily life.
5. **Bibliography.** As previously mentioned, you should indicate the breadth and depth of your research in a bibliography containing at least five references.

You will prepare your final project in four stages over the last five or six weeks of the course:

- 1) **Topic.** In Week 3, when you submit your second reading assignment, you will indicate which of the five themes for which you prepared “topic forms” you wish to write your paper on. When I grade and return your forms, I will approve your choice—or offer an alternative theme if I believe you have bitten off more than you can chew.
- 2) **Rough Draft.** In Week 6, you will post your complete rough draft, for which other students will provide constructive feedback (this time including spelling and grammar). You, in turn, will offer constructive feedback to the rough drafts of at least two other students. I will not grade your draft nor evaluate its content, but I will deduct up to 50 points from your grade if you do not post a rough draft on time.
- 3) **Online Interaction.** During Week 7, you will read the drafts of at least two other students and offer helpful comments to help them clarify their ideas and sharpen their approach. The interaction should be an assessment of their ideas and approach, not of their spelling, grammar, or the like. (Each student is responsible to proofread his or her own paper.) I will not evaluate your comments, but I will deduct up to 50 points if you do not offer any.
- 4) **Final Draft.** Finally, in Week 8, you will post your final draft, which I will grade for content and form, as well as for technical matters (i.e., spelling, grammar, and proper form).

The grade for your project will be based on the following four criteria: accuracy (100 points), adequacy (100 points), clarity (100 points), and mechanics (100 points). In other words, to get the best possible grade, get your facts straight, have enough of them to justify your conclusions, express your thoughts clearly, and use proper spelling, grammar, and form. Any final project submitted later than the Sunday following the last class session will be considered late and receive a grade no higher than 200 points.

Specific Assignments Due Each Week

Week 1. Introduction to Wisdom and Proverbs (0 points)

Week 2. Proverbs 1–2; 18:1–4 (150 points)

Reading #1 100 points

Analysis #1 50 points

Week 3. Proverbs 3–6; 18:5–8 (150 points)

Reading #2 100 points

Analysis #2 50 points

Project: Topic 0 points

Week 4. Proverbs 7–9; 18:9–12 (50 points)

Analysis #3	50 points
Week 5. Proverbs 10; 18:13–16 (150 points)	
Reading #3	100 points
Analysis #4	50 points
Week 6. Proverbs 16; 18:17–20 (50 points)	
Analysis #5	50 points
Project: Draft	0 points (but up to 50 points off)
Week 7. Proverbs 30–31; 18:21–24 (50 points)	
Analysis #6	50 points
Project: Interaction	0 points (but up to 50 points off)
Week 8. Theology of Proverbs (400 points)	
Project: Final Draft	400 points

V. METHODS

A. Teaching

1. **Lecture.** I will use lecture to introduce and explain new material—and there will a substantial amount, especially early in the course. Therefore, come to class prepared to take notes and ask questions.
2. **Practical Exercise.** No one ever gained any practical understanding of Proverbs by just taking and reciting lecture notes. Therefore, we will spend most of the later class sessions in discussion and practical exercises.

B. Grading

1. Reading Assignments. 300 points
 2. Interpretive Papers 300 points
 3. Term Project 400 points
- Total 1000 points

C. Calculating the Final Grade

930–1000 points	A	730–769 points	C
900–929 points	A-	700–729 points	C-
870–899 points	B+	670–699 points	D+
800–829 points	B-	630–669 points	D
770–799 points	C+	0–559 points	F

D. Academic Issues and Support

1. **Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is defined as copying any content without identifying the source. This also includes taking another person’s or AI entity’s ideas or constructs and presenting them as your own. The use of AI generated content in student work is prohibited (even if cited) as it does not represent original work created by the student and is an unreliable aggregate of ideas from other sources. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated.

2. **Style.** All class papers must follow the Turabian style according to *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition and the latest Calvary Style Guide.
3. **Assistance.** The Clark Academic Center (learning@calvary.edu), located in the library building, is dedicated to providing free academic assistance for all students. Student tutors aid with all facets of the writing process, tutor in various subject areas, prepare students for exams, and facilitate tests. Please take advantage of this service.
4. **Disabilities.** Students with disabilities have the responsibility of informing the Accommodations Support Coordinator (aso@calvary.edu) of any disabling condition that may require support.