

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

# THE BIBLICAL WILD

[www.thebiblicawild.org](http://www.thebiblicawild.org)

but it's also a conceptual form that contains elements of knowledge, of instruction, of moral instruction, of piety, and of imagination. It's presented in short, pithy little phrases. The kind of thing that can be easily memorized. Far from being a list of do's and don'ts, Proverbs is also a collection of statements that invites different perspectives, gives wisdom in one area and then may actually build upon that and enhance it or it may give a perspective that provides a different point of view. Alternative choices that are perhaps both true, but true in different contexts. Let's think of some Proverbial sayings that we know: "A penny saved is a penny earned," "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," "A rolling stone gathers no moss." All of those say something beyond the actual words. But, we've also got Proverbs like this: "Look before you leap," and "He who hesitates is lost." But which is it going to be? They contradict one another, yet offer truth and wisdom, depending upon the circumstances. Proverbs, biblical and otherwise, are ways of capturing the community knowledge and community self-understanding, or family self-understanding and passing on that knowledge from one generation to the next. It's a way of continuing the shape and ensuring the future of a particular people, a nation, or a family. In my own family, I recall my grandfather repeatedly using the phrase "If you can't say something nice about someone, don't anything at all." I also remember my grandmother never said that. So we had a Proverb from one grandparent and a silent Proverb from another. It said something about them and their understanding of human nature and approach to other people, and also something about the wisdom that they wanted to pass along to new generations. Let's center ourselves into that kind of thinking. As you read through the book of Proverbs this week, think about which you're drawn to the most. Which Proverb is most consistent with your own self-understanding? If you're studying and exploring these books of the Bible with another person, or with a group, I invite you to do some sharing about why you have picked those Proverbs. If you're doing it alone, invite a friend to join in. I've got not questions this week, but an exercise for you to consider. Having read through Proverbs, and picked out those one, two, or three that are of most interest to you, share those with your friends. Have them do the same, and share back. Explain why you picked those, and what meaning they have for you. And then take it a step further, pick a Proverb for your partner or your friend, and have them do the same for you, and explain why they think that it is reflective of your character, and why you think the one you chose is reflective of their character. Have some fun with this, and get ready to be a part of the ongoing Christian tradition of passing along, from one generation to the next, the collected wisdom of our faith.

May God bless you, and I will look forward to seeing you next week on the Biblical Wild.

WEEK XIX: Proverbs 4-22/ Psalms 11-16

From Psalm 16. Let us pray.

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is the Biblical Wild, pioneers in the Christian wilderness. This week we turn to a very different kind of literature in the Bible.

Wisdom literature is not just a literary form,