



In Pursuit of Organizational Wisdom: An Exegesis of Proverbs 22:17 - 24:22

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Proverbs 22:17- 24:22 comprises a collection of ancient wisdom sayings which the text self-identifies as “thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge” (Proverbs 22:20, English Standard Version). These 30 sayings are particularly interesting for analysis because, although they are part of the Hebrew Scriptures, scholars have established that this collection was influenced significantly by the Egyptian wisdom collection known as the Instructions of Amenemope. For this reason, it is argued that this collection of wisdom sayings is not linked to a single religious tradition and may be more readily accepted in a pluralistic context. As such, using a hybrid of historical-grammatical analysis, social-rhetorical analysis, and qualitative coding, the text was analyzed with the intent of identifying principles of ancient wisdom applicable to the modern study of organizational spirituality. In all, four major themes emerged from the analysis: the value of wisdom, wisdom for dealing with people, wisdom for dealing with injustice, and wisdom for dealing with temptation. The analysis also produced an outline intended for use in introducing concepts of ancient wisdom to an organization. Furthermore, the analysis confirmed two previously published models of organizational spirituality. Finally, the results contribute to practice by emphasizing organizational justice; specifically, the results suggest that organizations should employ wisdom to avoid strategies which, even if they are legal, involve either (a) taking advantage of the poor or (b) obtaining generationally owned land against the current owner’s will.

Ashforth and Pratt (2010) describe three dimensions of organizational spirituality: “transcendence of self, holism and harmony, and growth” (pp. 44-45). Similarly, Parboteeah and Cullen (2010) assert that spirituality consists of three factors: “conditions for community, meaning at work, and inner life” (p. 100). The present paper was intended to simultaneously address Ashforth and Pratt’s (2010) dimension of growth and Parboteeah and Cullen’s (2010) inner life factor by conducting an exegetical study of a collection of 30 wisdom sayings in the Book of Proverbs. The underlying logic was that, although the study of organizational spirituality is new, the study of spirituality is not (Dandona, 2013). Therefore, it was reasoned that there may be value

in studying ancient wisdom writings to rediscover what the sages of the past knew about spirituality. The collection of 30 wisdom sayings is particularly appropriate in a context which differentiates organizational spirituality from religion because, although the collection currently resides in the Hebrew Scriptures, the origin of collection has been shown to trace to an Egyptian wisdom collection known as the Instructions of Amenemope (Waltke, 2005). Hence, this collection may be able to overcome objections regarding the study of a collection of wisdom tied to a single religious tradition.

Although intended to explore only growth and inner life, the exegesis of the passage provided insights relevant to all three of Ashforth and Pratt's (2010) dimensions and all three of Parboteeah and Cullen's (2010) factors. The results of the study are described in five parts. First, background information critical to the exegesis is provided to (a) define the nature of a proverb, (b) define the nature of the Book of Proverbs, and (c) elaborate on the claim that the collection traces to a wide wisdom tradition. Second, the exegetical methodology employed is briefly described. Third, an exegesis of each of the 30 wisdom sayings is provided. Fourth, using qualitative coding (Saldaña, 2016) the 30 sayings are synthesized into four key findings. Fifth, the four key findings are compared against the models from Ashforth and Pratt (2010) and Parboteeah and Cullen (2010) Sixth, implications for practice are presented in the form of both (a) an outline for teaching wisdom in an organizational context, and (b) specific guidance regarding injustice. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research.

Background

Prior to beginning the exegesis of the selected passage, the answers to three relevant questions are provided. First, what does the term *proverb* mean? Second, what is the nature of the literary work in which the selected passage is located; in other words, what is the book of Proverbs? And third, why was this passage selected?

What is a Proverb?

According to Merriam-Webster (2003), a *proverb* is a "brief epigram or maxim" (p. 1001) and an *epigram* is a short poem characterized as "sage, witty and often paradoxical" (p. 420). Waltke (2004) adds that, in English, proverbs typically are short, pithy, and possess "popular currency" (p. 56). In his commentary on the book of Proverbs, Buzzell (1985) notes that Hebrew proverbs typically consist of two or three lines and draw upon common experiences. In their description of wisdom literature, Duvall and Hays (2005) emphasize that Hebrew Proverbs are a type of poem designed to cause their readers to "listen, look, think, reflect" (p. 390) as a means of internalizing wisdom. As such, Murphy (1999) notes that proverbs typically employ significant symbolism. Some authors, such as Van Leeuwen (2015) have attempted to differentiate between proverbs and sayings based upon their poetic and stylistic qualities; however, no consensus exists

regarding the distinction (Waltke, 2004). For this reason, in the present analysis, the terms proverb and saying are used interchangeably.

Plummer (2010) describes the phenomenon of the proverb as universal, noting that proverbs occur in every language and every culture (p. 236). Hildebrandt (2008) makes a similar claim, citing the usage of proverbs in every context ranging from Sumerian clay tablets dating to 2500 BC to modern social media. Furthermore, collections of proverbs have been found in Egyptian, Aramaic, Sumerian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, European, and Russian literature (Hildebrandt, 2008; Longman, Enns, & Straus, 2013). As such, it appears that proverbs are a familiar and effective means of communicating wisdom to every generation.

What is The Book of Proverbs?

The Old Testament books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, all written in Hebrew, comprise a biblical genre known as “wisdom literature” (Osborne, 2006, p. 242). According to Fee and Stuart (2014), wisdom literature teaches its readers to make good choices in life, in other words, to be wise. Structurally, the first nine chapters of Proverbs form an “extended discourse on wisdom” (Longman, 2008, p. 548) written by Solomon, the third king of Israel. These nine chapters were written as a father encouraging his son to love wisdom and flee from folly. Furthermore, Van Leeuwen (2015) notes that the rest of the book must be interpreted “in light of the first nine chapters” (p. 1310). The remainder of Proverbs, chapters 10 through 31, divides into six distinct collections of short Proverbs (Fee & Stuart, 2002). Furthermore, the Hebrew text explicitly identifies and delineates each collection, and either describes or suggests its author. The first collection, Proverbs 10:1-22:16, consists of an assortment of proverbs written by Solomon. The second collection, Proverbs 22:17-24:22, also consists of assorted short proverbs, but its style is unmistakably dissimilar to the first collection; this second collection is the subject of the present analysis. Likewise, the third collection, Proverbs 24:23-34, is also identified in the text (24:23) as a distinct, albeit short, collection from the sage who wrote the second collection. The fourth collection, Proverbs 25-29, contains more proverbs of Solomon, but the text identifies these proverbs as recorded by “the men of Hezekiah king of Judah” (Proverbs 25:1, English Standard Version); hence the fourth collection was not written by Solomon but records Proverbs attributed to him. The text ascribes the fifth collection, Proverbs 30, to “Agur son of Jakeh” (Proverbs 30:1). Likewise, the text ascribes the sixth section, Proverbs 31, to “King Lemuel” (Proverbs 31:1) and describes the collection as lessons learned from his mother; it is a combination of a few short proverbs and a lengthy poem describing a virtuous wife. As such, the book of Proverbs is not just a collection of proverbs, but rather a collection of collections of Proverbs.

In describing the six collections in Proverbs, respected conservative evangelical scholar Bruce Waltke (2004) says the linguistic evidence suggests that only the opening

discourse and the first collection were actually written by Solomon. However, the evidence also suggests that Solomon edited the second and third collections and then appended to his original collection (Waltke, 2004). At a later date, an unknown “final editor” (Waltke, 2004, p. 36) appended the fifth, sixth, and seventh collections to create the book as included in the Hebrew Scriptures. The collections, their authors, and their editors are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The Structure and Sources of the Book of Proverbs

Collection	Range	Description	Author	Editor
--	Ch. 1-9	Discourse on Wisdom	Solomon	Solomon
1	10:1-22:16	Solomon’s Proverbs	Solomon	Solomon
2	22:17-24:22	The Sage’s 30 Sayings	Unknown	Solomon
3	24:23-34	The Sage’s 6 Sayings	Unknown	Solomon
4	Ch. 25-29	Solomon’s Proverbs	Hezekiah’s Men	Unknown
5	Ch. 30	Agur’s Proverbs	Agur	Unknown
6	Ch. 31	Lemuel’s Proverbs/Poem	Lemuel	Unknown

Why Study the Second Collection of Proverbs?

Perhaps the most curious aspect of the second collection of proverbs is its influence by an Egyptian collection of proverbs known as *The Instructions of Amenemope* (Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, 2000). Waltke (2004) notes that the two collections have several nearly identical sayings and he describes the two collections overall as “strikingly similar” (p. 22). Furthermore, Waltke notes that Amenemope pre-dated Solomon by over two hundred years, which eliminates any argument that Amenemope was influenced by Solomon. Moreover, there are enough differences between the two collections to also refute the claim that the second collection is merely a Hebrew translation of Amenemope (Kitchen, 2008). Taking a different approach, Ross (1991) proposed viewing Amenemope’s 30 sayings as important background for studying the second collection. Fortunately, Waltke (2005) reported that a consensus was eventually reached and the majority of biblical scholars now agree that the second collection of Proverbs is a “creative use of Amenemope” (p. 217). According to this view, Solomon edited Amenemope’s sayings and appended them to his own. And, as many evangelical scholars are quick to point out, this view in no way undermines the divine inspiration of any part of Proverbs (Buzzell, 1985). As such, it is still quite correct to view Solomon as the “fountainhead of the book of Proverbs” (Longmann et al., 2013, p. 1369) and to view every verse within Proverbs as the inspired words of God (Plummer, 2010).

Regarding the style of the second collection, even casual readers can notice profound differences between this collection and the rest of Proverbs. For example, Proverbs 14:30, from the first collection, reads: “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot” whereas Proverbs 23:15, from the second collection, also addresses *envy* but lacks Solomon’s vivid language and cadence: “do not let your heart envy sinners.” As such, the most noticeable feature of the first collection is their poetry, whereas the most noticeable feature of the second collection is their style of straightforward admonition.

Having established these facts concerning the second collection, one might wonder why it was selected for analysis. Admittedly, (a) the suggestion of Egyptian influence may make some Christ-followers uncomfortable and (b) the text has far less literary beauty. However, I argue that these two aspects of the second collection make it ideal for teaching in a pluralistic work environment. Its Egyptian influence can be used to argue that it contains wisdom from many cultures, and its straightforward style allows it to be accurately interpreted without extensive exegetical training. In other words, I argue that the second collection of Proverbs is an ideal platform for teaching principles of wisdom in a pluralistic workplace without making the participants feel as if they are embracing a specific religion.

Methodology

The text of each saying was analyzed using the historical-grammatical method described by scholars such as Fee and Stuart (2014), Plummer (2010), and Duvall and Hays (2005). This method emphasizes interpreting the text in light of both the historical setting and a comprehensive understanding of the language in which the text was originally written. As such, the historical-grammatical method centers on determining *authorial intent*, that is, to determine what the author was trying to say (Fee & Stuart, 2014). Obviously, this is a daunting task because the author is separated from the modern reader by time, language, and culture (Duvall & Hays, 2005). As such, use of the historical-grammatical method requires the use of both Hebrew language tools and reference materials describing the history and culture at the time of writing. Because these traditional historical-grammatical tools address social and cultural issues, the difference between the historical-grammatical method and Robbins’ (1996) social-rhetorical analysis is not profound. As such, one could describe the methodology used as a hybrid of the historical-grammatical method and the methods of social-rhetorical analysis used to analyze inner texture.

Once each saying was analyzed, Saldaña’s (2016) qualitative coding method was used to synthesize the sayings into themes. As such, each saying, as a whole, was assigned a “descriptive code” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 102). The descriptive codes were then entered into Microsoft Excel, and grouped using “pattern coding” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236). Following

Saldaña's recommendation, an iterative approach was used to drive toward consistency between the text, the first cycle codes, and the second cycle codes.

Exegesis

The text clearly states that this collection consists of 30 sayings: "Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge" (Proverbs 22:20). Furthermore, as reflected in most English translations, the Hebrew text divides the collection into 70 verses. However, the text provides no indication as to which verses comprise each of the 30 sayings and scholars hold many differing views (Kitchen, 2008). In this analysis, the section breaks proposed by Waltke (2005) are used. Following is an analysis for each of the 30 sayings.

Saying 1 (Proverbs 22:17-21)

Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you if all of them are ready on your lips. That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you. Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you? (Proverbs 22:17-21)

This first saying serves as an introduction to the entire collection of 30 sayings. It does so by first calling its reader to incline his/her ear and hear what is being said. The Hebrew word translated as *incline* carries the idea of extending and stretching (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 727) and thereby portrays a genuine desire to hear. The sage also calls his reader to apply his heart to the matter of gaining wisdom. The Hebrew word translated as *apply* has the idea of placing something upon (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 1134), and hence the picture is not just to hear, but to internalize wisdom. In this regard, Buzzell (1985) asserts that such internalization of wisdom involves memorization.

According to Waltke (2005), the centerline of the saying is 22:19 with its explanation that the point of wisdom is to increase one's trust in God. Hence, in this first proverb, the sage establishes a positive link between possessing wisdom and having confidence in God. In addition to that core motivation, the proverb also notes that possessing wisdom is pleasant to store within your heart and pleasant to share with those who seek it.

Saying 2 (Proverbs 22:22-23)

Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them. (Proverbs 22:22-23)

This proverb concerns the poor and afflicted. According to Baker and Carpenter (2003), the Hebrew word translated as *poor* carries the idea of being weak, helpless, and oppressed (p. 237). Hence robbing the poor “because he is poor” (Proverbs 22:22) seems to describe a bully who sees the ability to get away with something as justification for doing it. The other adjective used here, translated as *afflicted*, describes one who is poor and miserable (p. 853). Furthermore, the idea here of crushing the poor, involves forcing them into a state in which they cannot pay, and, therefore, become dependent (Waltke, 2005, pp. 230-231). As such, this proverb speaks to the defense of the poor, miserable, and powerless. Mention of the city gate is significant because in that context, the gate was where legal judgments were rendered (Murphy, 1999, p. 114), which is why some translations (e.g., New International Version) translate that Hebrew word as *court*. In total, this proverb sets a standard far higher than mere legality as it speaks to behavior within the legal system. As such, this proverb describes actions which, although legal, are morally reprehensible (Ross, 1991) and which invite retribution by the God who created both the poor and the wealthy. It is wise, therefore, to view the poor as those to be protected rather than those to be taken advantage of.

Saying 3 (Proverbs 22:24-25)

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. (Proverbs 22:24-25)

The subject of this proverb is anger. The Hebrew word translated here as *anger* refers to the nostrils and paints the picture of anger so intense that it causes contortions of the face (van Groningen, 1980, p. 58), whereas the word translated as *wrathful* means literally *heat* and carries the idea of anger burning inside as rage and fury (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 349). The proverb describes two risks, learning and entanglement. The Hebrew word translated as *learn* refers to becoming accustomed to (Baker, Rake, & Kemp, 1994, p. 2301) while the word translated as *entangle* describes a trap used by a hunter (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 585). Together, these verses describe a two-step process which inevitably follows befriending angry men and women. First, we begin to view their behavior as acceptable, and second, we adopt their behavior as our own. It is wise, therefore, to avoid those given to anger.

Saying 4 (Proverbs 22:26-27)

Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you? (Proverbs 22:26-27)

This proverb speaks to stewardship (Waltke, 2005, p. 233) and in some ways, it creates a counter-balance to the second saying. According to Youngblood (1980), the Hebrew phrase translated as “give pledges” (Proverbs 22:26) is literally “striking hands” (p. 979)

and is similar to the Western custom of shaking hands. Delitzsch (1866, p. 334) clarifies that the Hebrew text here is unmistakably referring to putting up security for someone else's debt. Murphy (1999) agrees with this interpretation and notes that the same admonition occurs three times in Solomon's collection of Proverbs, specifically 11:15, 17:18, and 20:16. The reason given for this advice is potential loss of everything, here symbolized by creditors taking one's bed "from under you" (Proverbs 22:27). It seems then, that whereas the second saying advocates defending the poor, this saying clarifies limits to this; wisdom dictates not becoming poor ourselves in our defense of the poor.

Saying 5 (Proverbs 22:28)

Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set. (Proverbs 22:28)

This proverb returns to the subject of poor and defenseless. The *landmarks* or *boundary stones* as in other translations, refer to stones used in the ancient Near East to indicate the extent of plots of land (Walton et al., 2000, p. 567). By night, dishonest landowners would steal their neighbors' land by moving the markers (Mac Donald, 1995, p. 849). In some cases, the markers would be moved by less than an inch per year, which made it hard to detect, but over generations would amount to significant amounts of land (Waltke, 2005, p. 235). The reference to their fathers seems to reference land which had been in the family for generations. Unlike the previous sayings, this saying lacks a "motivational clause" (Murphy, 1999, p. 115) to make the motivation for compliance explicit. However, this saying is one of the sayings appearing in both Proverbs and the *Instructions of Amenemope* (Walton, et al., 2000, p. 560), and Waltke (2005) notes that ancient Near East people generally understood moving boundary stones as evil. Hence, it may be a motivation clause was deemed unnecessary for such a commonly understood norm. Generalizing, this saying recognizes generational ownership, making business practices such as foreclosing on the family farm unthinkable.

Saying 6 (Proverbs 22:29)

Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men. (Proverbs 22:29)

This proverb stands unique in its context because it presents no prohibitions (Waltke, 2005, p. 235). Instead, it advocates developing skill in one's work. The Hebrew word translated *skillful* indicates "extraordinary expertise" (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 577) and the word translated *work* refers to an occupation at which one labors (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 614). The results of developing such expertise, according to this proverb, is the worker standing before kings, in contrast to workers known only by minor officials. Furthermore, the implication seems to be that obscure men do not have such skill, otherwise they would not be obscure. Hence, it is wisdom to focus on

developing true skill rather than joining with the minor officials in their strivings to get ahead.

Saying 7 (Proverbs 23:1-3)

When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food. (Proverbs 23:1-3)

This proverb speaks primarily to table manners when dining with a leader (Murphy, 1999), and is related to the previous saying by virtue that both speak to interactions with rulers. In this seventh saying, the reader is advised to exert great self-control in the situation because overindulgence could ruin his chances for advancement (Ross, 1991). Accordingly, the sage offers three pieces of advice. First, the guest is instructed to carefully observe the situation. The Hebrew word translated *observe* connotes not only gathering information, but incorporating wisdom as one does so (Baker et al., 1994). As such, the first risk is for the guest to fail to grasp what is at stake when dining with a powerful person. Second, the guest is advised to slit his/her own throat if he/she is "given to appetite" (Proverbs 23:2). The call to slitting one's own throat is hyperbole intended to communicate the importance of the advice. (Waltke, 2005, p. 239) and the phrase translated "given to appetite" refers to a person's cravings (Buzzell, 1985). Hence, the second risk is failing to recognize and account for one's weaknesses. Third, the guest is advised against adopting the appetites of the ruler. The Hebrew word translated *delicacies* describes specially prepared gourmet food (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 601) which are deceptive (Baker et al., 1994, p. 2325). In total, the wisdom here suggests that a guest exercise great self-control when dining with a ruler by looking beyond the obvious, accounting for his/her own weaknesses, and resisting the temptation to be drawn into the ruler's desires.

Saying 8 (Proverbs 23:4-5)

Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven. (Proverbs 23:4-5)

This proverb does not denounce hard work, but rather work driven by a greedy obsession (Buzzell, 1985). Alexander (1980) describes the Hebrew word translated *work* as working until one is weary (pp. 361-362). Hence, the sage advises his reader to avoid becoming preoccupied with striving unceasingly for more money. As a reason, the sage offers a vivid work picture of money growing wings and flying off to heaven when its owner looks at it. This word picture seems to communicate that money should be a means to an end, but never the final intent and focus of a worker's labor.

Saying 9 (Proverbs 23:6-8)

Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies, for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten, and waste your pleasant words. (Proverbs 23:6-8)

Waltke (2005) argues that sayings 7 and 9 form a chiasm around saying 8 as an admonition against greed (p. 239). While it is true that sayings 7 and 9 both relate to eating another man's food, they do not appear to be form a chiasm because the greed in saying 9 is that of the host, not the reader for whom this proverb is written. Furthermore, saying 9 addresses a wider range of food than saying 7, by advising its reader to eat neither the bread nor the delicacies of the stingy host. Buzzell (1985) likewise distinguished between the two by noting that saying 7 relates to eating with a "generous ruler" (p. 956) whereas saying 9 relates to eating with a "stingy man" (p. 956). Hence, saying 9 seems to be concerned with instructing its reader on how to deal with a stingy host.

The Hebrew phrase translated *stingy* is literally "evil eye" (Murphy, 1999, p. 115) and connotes stingy to the point of evil (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 1063). As such, this stingy host tells his guest to eat, while resenting him doing so. In such a situation, the sage notes that pleasant, appreciative words are wasted and the guest is likely to leave wanting to vomit due to the social stress of the mealtime. Accordingly, wisdom declines offers of hospitality from a stingy man.

Saying 10 (Proverbs 23:9)

Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words. (Proverbs 23:9)

Having given advice for dealing with a stingy host in saying 9, the sage offers advice for dealing with a fool in saying 10. Buzzell (1985) describes the Hebrew word translated here as *fool* as referring to a "dull, thickheaded, stubborn fool" (p. 956). Richards (1991) notes that not only does a fool lack wisdom, but he/she cannot even recognize wisdom. Ross (1991) adds that the intensity with which a fool despises wise words is usually in direct proportion to the truth and applicability of the words (p. 1069). The obvious wisdom here is to avoid offering wisdom to a fool; however, the wisdom here is also to recognize in oneself disproportionately negative responses to the advice offered by others. That is, this saying enables detection of folly in others and in ourselves.

Saying 11 (Proverbs 23:10-11)

Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you. (Proverbs 23:10-11)

This saying has obvious similarities with saying 5, but it also has significant differences. Saying 5 speaks to “the ancient landmarks that *your fathers have set*” (Proverbs 22:28) whereas saying 11 lacks the definite article preceding “ancient landmark” (Proverbs 23:10) and omits the qualification “that your fathers have set” (Proverbs 22:28), instead mentioning “the fatherless” (Proverbs 23:10). Hence the subtle difference is that saying 5 speaks to honoring boundaries passed down from your own fathers, while saying 11 moves beyond ancestral agreements and simply focuses on the rights of others.

The word translated here as *fields* indicates land usable for pasture lands and vineyards and represents a means for the fatherless to provide for themselves. (Waltke, 2005, p. 244). As a motivation clause, the sage speaks of a strong redeemer ready to stand against those who would take advantage of the helpless. Wisdom, then, suggests that one make no attempt to take advantage of the helpless.

Saying 12 (Proverbs 23:12)

Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge. (Proverbs 23:12)

In contrast to the surrounding proverbs, this saying contains no negative admonition. Instead, it simply encourages its reader to pursue wisdom. In this proverb, two metaphors are used, ear and heart. The Hebrew word translated *ear* is usually a metaphor for an “instrument of obedience” (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 31) and the word translated *heart* is the “richest biblical term for the totality of man’s inner or immaterial nature” (Bowling, 1980, p. 466). Hence, the pursuit of discipline and knowledge is portrayed as received dutifully and allowed to penetrate to the core of our beings. As such, wisdom involves being teachable and open to inner transformation.

Saying 13 (Proverbs 23:13-14)

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol. (Proverbs 23:13-14)

In our current American context of hyper-sensitivity to child abuse, the thirteenth saying may strike some as old-fashioned or even unhealthy. Nonetheless, it stands as part of the ancient wisdom. As such, it begins with a simple admonition to provide disobedient children with appropriate discipline, which in some cases involves corporal punishment. The Hebrew word translated *discipline* carries the idea of discipline which

results in education, and can refer to either oral or corporal discipline (Baker et al., 1994) whereas the word translated as *strike* refers specifically to corporal punishment (Brown, Driver, Briggs & Gesenius, 1979, p. 645). In context, this punishment is for education, not venting of parental emotion, and there is no room here for abusers of children to hide behind this verse (Waltke, 2005, p. 252). The word translated *Sheol* refers to the “world of the dead” (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 1083) and is part of a poetic way of expressing the idea of saving the child from death. Hence, the sage explains that appropriately administering corporal punishment will not kill the child, but failure to administer corporal punishment may well end in the death of the child (Richards, 1991). Simply put, the sage sees failure to discipline as having far more serious consequences than the discipline itself (Waltke, 2005, p. 252). Of course, for an organizational context, corporal punishment is inappropriate, but the transferrable concept is education through feedback. A wise manager provides honest feedback to poorly performing employees.

Saying 14 (Proverbs 23:15-16)

My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right. (Proverbs 23:15-16)

This proverb touches on the mentoring inherent to the process of learning wisdom. As such, it seems to speak to one who heeded the call to wisdom in saying 12, and who accepted the disciplines prescribed in saying 13 (Waltke, 2005, p. 253). The word translated twice here as *heart* is the same word as in saying 12 and refers to the very core and entirety of one’s inner being (Bowling, 1980, p. 466). The word translated *lips* refers to the physical lips and is used as a metonym for what is spoken from the heart. In total, the picture is that of the pure and wise heart of a mentor rejoicing as he/she sees the words of his/her protégé revealing a similarly pure and wise heart committed to teaching others with those words. The implication seems to be that because the student is wise, the student will be filled with joy also in hearing he/she has brought joy to the teacher. This is to say that wise men and women rejoice when they see those they mentored mentoring others.

Saying 15 (Proverbs 23:17-18)

Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off. (Proverbs 23:17-18)

This proverb completes the thought of the previous saying in that becoming wise involves both pursuing wisdom, as in the previous proverb, and not pursuing its opposite, as in this proverb (Waltke, 2005, p. 255). As such, desiring wisdom is honorable and envy of folly is a disease (Ross, 1991, p. 1070). The admonition to not envy fools, is immediately followed by an admonition which clarifies what it means not

to envy fools; wise men and women go about their day aware (a) of God, the all-wise and all-pure, and (b) the glorious future a wise life brings (Ross, 1991, p. 1070). Murphy (1999) argues that the metaphor “will not be cut off” (Proverbs 23:18) refers to a full and happy life that is not cut short by folly. As such, this seems to again refer back to the previous proverb in that the wise man was saved from Sheol.

Saying 16 (Proverbs 23:19-21)

Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags. (Proverbs 23:19-21)

Whereas the previous two proverbs were general in nature (pursue wisdom, do not envy fools), the sixteenth saying specifically addresses drunkenness and gluttony. The first line of the saying establishes the relationship between wisdom, drunkenness, and gluttony; drunkenness and gluttony have no place in the life of the wise. The third line explains the reason the wise avoid them: both drunkenness and gluttony end in drowsiness, laziness, and, ultimately, poverty (Buzzell, 1985, p. 957). The Hebrew word translated as gluttonous describes a despicable and morally corrupt person given to the pursuit of food, frivolity, and vile living (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 293). Mac Donald (1995) describes gluttony as another kind of drunkenness (p. 851) and Ross (1991) describes both drunkenness and gluttony as “symptoms of deeper problems” (p. 1071). Curiously, this proverb makes no mention of intoxication or its consequence; as such, this proverb seems primarily concerned with character issues related to over-indulgence, which may also explain why gluttony and drunkenness are treated on equal footing. The heart of the proverb is an admonition to not even associate with gluttons and drunkards. For the wise, there is nothing to be gained by drunkenness and gluttony, nothing to be gained by the company of drunkards and gluttons, and everything to be lost by their company.

Saying 17 (Proverbs 23:22-25)

Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice. (Proverbs 23:22-25)

This proverb concerns retention of the wisdom learned from your parents. As such, the proverb seems to assume wise parents are able and inclined to give wise advice. For example, this proverb would not pertain to parents who are drunkards and gluttons. The proverb begins with an admonition to listen to your parents and ends by describing the joy that will bring the parents. The centerline of the proverb admonishes the child to

pursue wisdom, instruction, and understanding, where the Hebrew word translated here as *wisdom* connotes the ability to think clearly about the issues of life (Goldberg, 1980, p. 282), the word translated as *instruction* pertains to an openness to correction (Baker et al., 1994, p. 2330), and the word translated as *understanding* refers to the ability to understand and comprehend (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 130). Together, these three words seem to depict individuals who use his/her intellect morally, humbly, and precisely.

Regarding the curious expression, “buy truth, and do not sell it” (Proverbs 17:23), it seems that the admonition to “buy truth” (Proverbs 17:23) is a metaphor to continue on the path taught by the wise parents. As an adult, wisdom is no longer given to you; it must be sought on your own. In contrast, selling wisdom appears to be a metaphor for the opposite; an adult who not only abandons the path of gaining wisdom, but rejects the wisdom learned as a child, hence selling it. Perhaps the core issue is an inclination by the grown child to believe that he received discipline as a child only because he was a child; that is, the grown child does not accept that the discipline was because he/she was a fool. With this foolish mindset, wisdom and the discipline required to gain it is viewed as something for children.

Saying 18 (Proverbs 23:26-28)

My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well. She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind. (Proverbs 23:26-28)

Whereas saying 16 addressed the bad influence of drunkards and gluttons, this proverb addresses the bad influence of the sexually immoral. Because the proverb is addressed to a son, the illustration naturally becomes a female temptress, but there is nothing here to suggest that only women are the temptation; a daughter is to be equally weary of sexually immoral men. The Hebrew word translated *prostitute* connotes fornication, not necessarily with a prostitute (Baker et al., 1994, p. 2313), hence the admonition here relates to illicit sex with either married or unmarried women. Although some (e.g., Waltke, 2005) view the references to a “deep pit” and a “narrow well” as allusions to the female anatomy, the word pictures here are spoken by a sage with a pure heart, and seem more likely meant to simply convey images of things one cannot escape from; the pit cannot be escaped by virtue of its depth and the well cannot be escaped by virtue of its narrowness which prevents using one’s arms. In summary, this proverb teaches that sexual immorality is a moral trap as is drunkenness and gluttony. The wise flee sexual immorality.

Saying 19 (Proverbs 23:29-35)

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink." (Proverbs 23:29-35)

Immediately following the proverb concerning the allure of sexual immorality is this proverb concerning the allure of deep, red wine sparkling in its cup (Waltke, 2005). The most obvious features of this proverb are its long length and extensive use of satire to portray a drunken man. The proverb begins with a poetic use of six questions which Buzzell (1985) notes draw attention to three kinds of trouble caused by intoxication: emotional ("Who has woe? Who has sorrow"), social ("Who has strife? Who has complaining?"), and physical ("Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?"). Likewise, the proverb ends with poetic descriptions of wine (a) biting the drunkard like a viper (23:32), (b) causing hallucinations (23:33), (c) creating dizziness (23:34), and (d) raving like a fool (23:35). As the central admonition, the proverb instructs its reader to not even look at the wine in the cup (23:31). Waltke (2005) interprets this instruction to hyperbole similar to the English expression "don't even think about it" (p. 265). However, it may be that the sage recognizes that temptation begins with a glance and hence the most effective means of dealing with temptation is not to allow it to happen. The wisdom here, then, recognizes the folly of drunkenness and the value of not only keeping oneself from foolish behavior, but from situations which create the temptation to behave foolishly.

Saying 20 (Proverbs 24:1-2)

Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them, for their hearts devise violence and their lips talk of trouble. (Proverbs 24:1-2)

This proverb admonishes its reader to envy neither evil men nor their company. In this proverb, the evil men are described as men who "devise violence" (Proverbs 24:2) and "talk of trouble" (Proverbs 24:2). The word translated *violence* carries the idea of "violence, havoc, as social sin" (Brown et al., p. 994) and the phrase "their lips talk of trouble" seems to portray a willingness to discuss their schemes with other evil men. As such, these men's hearts are factories of evil. It seems, then, that the purpose of this proverb is to show what evil men are like, with the intent of painting a picture of evil

men which is detestable to the reader. The wise, then, see evil men as men they do not wish to be like.

Saying 21 (Proverbs 24:3-4)

By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. (Proverbs 24:3-4)

This proverb describes a house with rooms filled with “precious and pleasant riches” (Proverbs 24:4). The Hebrew word translated *precious* carries the idea of being both rare and valuable (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 453) whereas the word translated *pleasant* connotes delightful and joyful (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 739). According to Murphy (1999), the word translated as *house* can refer to either house or home. As such, the word picture here is a beautiful picture of the happy home desired by so many, yet rare. And the key to such a rare treasure is wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

Saying 22 (Proverbs 24:5-6)

A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory. (Proverbs 24:5-6)

Whereas the previous proverb spoke to how one succeeds in family, this proverb speaks to how one succeeds in war. Remarkably, the answer is nearly identical: wisdom, knowledge, and good counsel. Ross (1991) summarizes the proverb by noting that “strategy is more important than strength” (p. 1073). While it is hard to argue with Ross’ conclusion, it remains unclear that merely identifying strategy fully captures the contribution of good counsel because one can formulate a strategy without heeding the advice of others. Furthermore, the Hebrew word translated as *guidance* is an interesting word picture of ropes used to pull, direct, and guide a ship (Brown et al., 1979, p. 287). Hence the picture does not seem to be simply a matter of hearing good advice and following it, but rather of wrestling with ideas. This seems especially likely with an “abundance of counselors” (Proverbs 24:6). With one counselor, there will be one opinion, whereas with five there may be five differing opinions. In his/her pursuit of knowledge, the wise recognize the need of counsel.

Saying 23 (Proverbs 24:7)

Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth. (Proverbs 24:7)

As does the second saying, this saying refers to the city gates which were where important legal decisions were made (Buzzell, 1985, p. 958). According to Ross (1991),

there are some textual difficulties in this verse which make the translation “too high” (Proverbs 24:7) uncertain; the text may refer to corals, which were regarded as unattainable treasures. In either case, the point appears to be that the fool does not possess the wisdom needed to be taken seriously in important matters. Whether he tries to speak or not, the fool effectively has no voice. The wise recognize that wisdom is what causes people to take them seriously.

Saying 24 (Proverbs 24:8-9)

Whoever plans to do evil will be called a schemer. The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind. (Proverbs 24:8-9)

This proverb returns to a theme from saying 20, the schemer. However, in contrast to that saying, which intended to show the ugly nature of evil men, this proverb presents the risk of earning a reputation and being changed by sin. The Hebrew word translated *called* carries the idea of being given a name (Baker et al., 1994, p. 2362). Hence, this proverb teaches that one of the problems with allowing yourself to scheme for evil, is that you will become known as a schemer, and hence as an “abomination to mankind” (Proverbs 24:9). The wise, then, recognize that they cannot engage in sinful acts without becoming sinful. That is, the wise resists the temptation to scheme for evil because he/she does not want to become that kind of person.

Saying 25 (Proverbs 24:10-12)

If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work? (Proverbs 24:10-12)

This proverb differs in size and structure from most of the other 30 sayings. In terms of size, only the seventeenth and nineteenth sayings are longer. In terms of structure, this proverb has a central admonition to rescue men and women in mortal danger (24:11) and a motivation clause assuring judgment for those who fail to do so (24:12b). However, it also has two conditional clauses (Waltke, 2005), one pertaining to lack of strength (24:10) and the other pertaining to claimed ignorance (24:12a). As noted by Murphy (1999), it is unclear who is being dragged off to their deaths. It seems from the context that perhaps these are the victims of the schemers in the previous saying. Nonetheless, this suggests the principle that the wise come to the defense of those in mortal danger. And, by virtue of the refutation of ignorance as a valid excuse, the principle here seems to imply the need for the wise to seek to discover those in mortal danger. As such, not only do the wise not afflict the defenseless as noted in previous sayings, they actively come to their defense.

Saying 26 (Proverbs 24:13-14)

My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off. (Proverbs 24:13-14)

This proverb begins with the analogy of honey for wisdom because honey is sweet, good for nourishment and health, and has the curious property of never spoiling (Ross, 1991; Mac Donald, 1995). Furthermore, there may be one additional comparison. According to Walton et al. (2000), there is “no evidence of bee domestication in Israel” (p. 568), hence the honey in the imagery was probably from wild bees. However, one has to go looking for honey produced in wild honeycombs; likewise, men and women must actively search for wisdom. In the second line the sage makes the comparison between honey and wisdom explicit. Specifically, finding wisdom gives one hope for the future. Consequently, the wise are given yet another reason to cherish wisdom.

Saying 27 (Proverbs 24:15-16)

Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the dwelling of the righteous; do no violence to his home; for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity. (Proverbs 24:15-16)

This proverb returns to the theme of avoiding injustice. What is unique, however, is that the motivational clause does not refer to God as their protector. Instead, the motivation is the resilient nature of the righteous; they seem to rebound after every setback. For this reason, Ross (1991) describes attempts to mistreat the righteous as “futile and self-defeating” (p. 1075). The wise, then, recognize the inherent strength of righteousness. It may be that this quality explains why in the previous proverb wisdom gives hope; the strength and resilience which naturally arise from righteousness logically must create confidence.

Saying 28 (Proverbs 24:17-18)

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him. (Proverbs 24:17-18)

Having established that the unrighteous will certainly fall, the sage offers this proverb to instruct the wise in how to behave when the unrighteous eventually do fall. The Hebrew word translated *rejoice* carries the idea of joy that lights up the eyes (Cohen, 1980, p. 879) and the word translated *be glad* is a more generic word for rejoicing (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 299). Although a reason is not explicitly stated, such a response displeases the LORD to the point that He might rather allow the unrighteous to go

unpunished than see a wise man act so unbecomingly. Richards (1991) surmises that such an attitude causes the one gloating to join with the enemy in wishing evil upon another man. Buzzell (1985) suggests that “God is disgusted” (p. 958) by such gloating. The wise take notice, then, that the demise of no man or woman is reason for joy.

Saying 29 (Proverbs 24:19-20)

Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out. (Proverbs 24:19-20)

This saying is the third saying which condemns envying sinners (Buzzell, 1991, p. 959). The Hebrew phrase translated *do not fret* connotes “not getting burned up emotionally” (Waltke, 2005, pp. 285-286) and the word translated *envious* indicates strong emotions of jealousy (Baker & Carpenter, 2003, p. 1000). The motivational clause here is the assurance of the destruction of the wicked. Because the ideas in this saying have already been expressed in sayings 15 and 20, it seems likely that this saying is placed here to reassure the righteous after the previous proverb warned them against rejoicing over the destruction of the wicked. Although rejoicing over the fall of the wicked is inappropriate, the wise man may have confidence that God will indeed deal with the wicked.

Saying 30 (Proverbs 24:21-22)

My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both? (Proverbs 24:21-22)

This final proverb instructs the wise to (a) have a healthy fear of both God and the king, and (b) distance oneself from those who lack this fear because both God and the king have the power to punish those they perceive as lacking such fear (Ross, 1991). Importantly, the Hebrew word translated here as *fear* carries the dual notion of both dread and reverence (Baker et al., 2023) and hence it would be ill advised to view this admonition as merely calling for reverence. Consistent with a call to fear, the motivation clause is the threat of disaster and ruin. The wise, then, recognize that there are appropriate times to fear those in authority over them.

Synthesis of the 30 Sayings

Using the coding process described in the methodology section, four patterns emerged. The first pattern, which incorporated sayings 1, 6, 12, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23, and 26 concerns the value of wisdom. From a spiritual perspective, the sage taught that the ultimate value of wisdom resides in its tendency to increase trust in God (Saying 1), create a

beautiful life (Saying 21) and sustain the soul (Saying 26). From a more practical perspective, the sage taught that wisdom enables one to recognize the value of skill (Saying 6), bring joy to mentors and parents (Sayings 14 & 17), and earn the right to speak among the decision makers (Saying 23). As such, there is great power in wisdom (Saying 22), but obtaining wisdom is not automatic; wisdom must be pursued relentlessly (Saying 12).

The second pattern, which emerged from sayings 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 28, and 29, concerns dealing wisely with other people through discipline and perspective. With regard to discipline, the wise possess the self-control to show restraint when dining with superiors (Saying 7) and to decline a meal from a stingy host (Saying 9). With regard to perspective, the wise recognize that (a) offering collateral for another's debt is foolish, (b) fools tend to mock wisdom (Saying 10) but nonetheless need feedback (Saying 13), and (c) the wise should neither gloat over their enemy's destruction (Saying 28), envy their success (Saying 15), nor fret over their success (Saying 29).

The third pattern, which incorporates sayings 2, 5, 11, 15, 25, and 27, deals with injustice and the defenseless, the righteous, and the evil. Regarding the defenseless, the wise take no action, legal or otherwise, to oppress the poor (Saying 2), take no advantage of orphans (Saying 11), and do not seize generationally owned property (Saying 5). Regarding the righteous, the wise recognize the folly of scheming against the righteous (Saying 27). And regarding the evil, the wise see a responsibility to defend the defenseless against evil men and women.

The fourth pattern, based upon sayings 3, 8, 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, and 30, deals with temptation from the perspectives of both addiction and corrupting influences. Regarding addiction, wisdom recognizes the danger of becoming addicted to an unbridled pursuit of wealth (Saying 8), cheap sex (Saying 18), and alcohol (Saying 19), all three of which lead to destruction. Regarding corrupting influences, the sage speaks of the risk of both embracing their evil and being associated with their evil. As for embracing their evil, the wise recognize that (a) by spending time with the angry, we are likely to become angry (Saying 3), (b) by spending time with drunkards and gluttons we are likely to become drunkards and gluttons (Saying 16), and (c) by spending time with devious people, we are likely to become devious ourselves (Saying 20). Regarding being associated with evil people, the wise recognize that we can earn a reputation for evil (Saying 24) and suffer the punishment intended for the evil (Saying 30).

Integration of the 30 Sayings with the Literature

The patterns identified in the text align with the organizational spirituality literature while also adding to our understanding of organizational spirituality. Prior to the exegesis of the text, it was anticipated that the study would yield further insight into

only one dimension (growth) of Ashforth and Pratt's (2010) model of organizational spirituality and only one factor (inner life) of Parboteeah and Cullen's (2010) model. This is because the 30 sayings state their purpose of teaching wisdom, and so it was reasoned that the teaching of wisdom would extend to growth and inner life. However, the results of the analysis confirmed and provided additional insight related to all three of Ashforth and Pratt's (2010) dimensions and all three of Parboteeah and Cullen's (2010) factors.

Confirmation of Ashforth and Pratt's (2010) Model

The model of organizational spirituality offered by Ashforth and Pratt (2010) includes three dimensions: "transcendence of self" (p. 44), which they describe as coming to a point of believing in something greater than self, "holism and harmony" (p. 44), which they describe as living an authentic and non-compartmentalized life, and "growth" (p. 45), which they define as a sense of "self-development or self-actualization" (p. 45). Regarding transcendence, this analysis found that the centerline of Saying 1 suggests that the ultimate value of wisdom is its ability to foster trust in God. Furthermore, the motivational clauses found in the five sayings related to injustice all rely on recognizing God as defender of the helpless. Additionally, Ashforth and Pratt (2010) recognize transcendence may involve commitment to a cause; the sayings related to injustice affirm this concept. As for holism and harmony, the proverb related to envying the wicked (Saying 15) affirms Ashforth and Pratt's dimension in that it admonishes the reader to walk rightly while not wishing for the benefits of evil; that is, it admonishes the wise to be internally consistent. Likewise, all of the proverbs associated with the theme of temptation are related to holism and harmony in that they instruct the wise in how to avoid the temptation to do and be what is contrary to what they know is right. Finally, regarding self-development, the whole of the 30 sayings are aimed at teaching wisdom. And through its counsel regarding dealing with people, dealing with injustice, and dealing with temptation, the 30 sayings provide specific advice for becoming the best version of oneself. As such, this analysis fully confirmed Ashforth and Pratt's three-dimensional model.

Confirmation of Parboteeah and Cullen's (2010) Model

The model proposed by Parboteeah and Cullen (2010) includes three factors: "conditions for community, meaning at work, and inner life" (p. 100). Regarding conditions for community, the theme of dealing wisely with other people directly correlates; the analysis demonstrates that eight of the 30 sayings addressed relating to others. As for meaning at work, saying 6 addresses the value of skill at work and thereby confers meaning and value upon skillful workers. The analysis of saying 23 suggests that through wisdom, men and women earn the right to be heard and participate in critical decision making. Furthermore, saying 26 describes wisdom as sustaining the soul. And beyond the individual sayings, the theme of wisdom's value

speaks of a meaningful life; wisdom itself gives life meaning. And finally, regarding inner life, the themes of the value of wisdom and resisting temptation both seem directly related. A life of wisdom is a whole, pure, and vibrant life. Furthermore, the theme of dealing with temptations provides the remedy for the opposite of a healthy inner life: a life of slavery to addictions and bad influences. In total, it appears that the present analysis also confirms and adds insight into the three factors of organizational spirituality proposed by Parboteeah and Cullen.

Implications for Practice

In the first saying, the sage asks his reader: "Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?" (Proverbs 22:20-21). As such, the 30 sayings were intended to teach wisdom. Accordingly, it is argued that the themes identified by this analysis could naturally form the structure of training on wisdom in organizations. As such, a four-fold training agenda is proposed using the sayings for discussion points. The outline of the training is as follows:

1. The Value of Wisdom
 - a. A. The Spiritual Aspects of Wisdom (Sayings 1, 21, 26)
 - b. B. The Practical Benefits of Wisdom (Sayings 6, 14, 17, 22, 23)
 - c. C. The Pursuit of Wisdom (Saying 12)
2. Wisdom for Dealing with People
 - a. A. Using Discipline to Deal with People (Sayings 7, 9)
 - b. B. Keeping Perspective when Dealing with People (Sayings 4, 10, 13)
 - c. C. Avoiding Envy when Dealing with People (Sayings 15, 28, 29)
3. Wisdom for Dealing with Injustice
 - a. A. Injustice and the Defenseless (Sayings 2, 5, 11)
 - b. B. Injustice and the Righteous (Saying 27)
 - c. C. Standing Against Injustice (Saying 25)
4. Wisdom for Dealing with Temptation
 - a. A. The Risk of Becoming Like Them (Sayings 3, 16, 20)
 - b. B. The Risk of Being Associated with Them (Sayings 24, 30)
 - c. C. The Risk of Addiction (Sayings 8, 18, 19)

Of the four themes identified, the theme of *dealing with injustice* may be most relevant to multinational corporations which operate in developing countries. The analysis of these wisdom sayings suggests that such organizations should be particularly mindful of the poor and defenseless. Specifically, wisdom dictates that special care should be taken when dealing with the poor and defenseless. Regardless of the legality of its actions, an organization should engage in no conduct which either (a) adds to the plight of the poor

or (b) results in obtaining generationally owned land against the will of the current owner.

Conclusion

A hybrid of the historical-grammatical method and the social-rhetorical analysis methods was used to analyze the 30 wisdom sayings in Proverbs 22:17-24:22. Next, qualitative coding was used to synthesize the 30 sayings into four key findings. These findings were then compared with two different models of organizational spirituality. Finally, the results of the analysis were used to (a) generate an outline for teaching wisdom as part of an organizational spirituality curriculum, and (b) provide guidance to multinational corporations as they operate in developing nations. In doing so, the approach of going to ancient wisdom literature as a source of wisdom relevant to modern organizations was shown to be both insightful and of practical use. As this study was concerned with only one of the six collections of wisdom located within the book of Proverbs, I recommended future research aimed at studying the other five collections as well as the extended discourse which comprises the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs.

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