

## STUDY: The “Wisdom” of Repetition

PROVERBS 1:20-33

**Proverbs 1:20-33** <sup>20</sup> Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: <sup>21</sup> She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, <sup>22</sup> How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? <sup>23</sup> Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. <sup>24</sup> Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; <sup>25</sup> But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: <sup>26</sup> I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; <sup>27</sup> When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. <sup>28</sup> Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: <sup>29</sup> For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: <sup>30</sup> They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. <sup>31</sup> Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. <sup>32</sup> For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. <sup>33</sup> But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

- Verses 20-33 contain 239 words. There is an initial purposeful focus in word usage and placement of words or phrases whereby the first 5 verses **emphasize** (by frequency of use) and direct the reader/hearer **to** the “words of Wisdom”.
- References are then spread evenly through the remainder of the verses as **repetitive reminders**.
- This accounts for just under 16% of the entire narrative. 38 out of 239 words.
  - <NAME>, I need you to listen. Are you listening?



- Repetition is a literary device that involves using the same word and/or phrase over and over again in a piece of writing or speech.
- It can help to emphasize a point and make a speech easier to follow. It also adds to the powers of persuasion. Studies show that repetition of a phrase can convince people of its truth.
- Writers and speakers also use repetition to give words rhythm. As with other devices such as rhyme, consonance (*similar sounds*),<sup>1</sup> and assonance (*repetition of similar vowel sounds*),<sup>2</sup> repetition adds musicality to a piece of text and makes it more pleasing to listen to.

<sup>1</sup> the repetition of the same consonant sounds in a line of text. The focus, in the use of consonance, is on the sound made by consonants and not necessarily the letters themselves. In addition, alike consonant sounds can appear at the beginning, middle, or end of words, and consonance is created when these words appear in quick succession. (e.g., *pitter patter, odds and ends*).

<sup>2</sup> in poetry, the repetition of the sound of a vowel or diphthong in nonrhyming stressed syllables near enough to each other for the echo to be discernible (e.g., *penitence, reticence*).

# 7 Types of Repetition

There are many different types of repetition—and most have their own unique term, usually of Greek origin. Here are a few key types of repetition:

1. **Anaphora.** Anaphora is the **repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of several successive clauses that have different endings.** *A~naph'-o-ra*, from two Greek words, ἀνά (ana), *again*, and φέρω (pherō), *to bring or carry*. It means *a carrying back, reference, or repeating over again*. This is such a popular tactic in oration that it appears in two of history's most famous speeches—Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech and Winston Churchill's "We Shall Fight on These Beaches" address in June 1940 speech to the House of Commons following the Fall of France.

## EXAMPLE:

**Deuteronomy 28:1-6** And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

<sup>2</sup> And all these  **blessings**  shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

<sup>3</sup>  **Blessed**  shalt thou *be* in the city, and  **blessed**  shalt thou *be* in the field.

<sup>4</sup>  **Blessed**  shall *be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

<sup>5</sup>  **Blessed**  shall *be* thy basket and thy store.

<sup>6</sup>  **Blessed**  shalt thou *be* when thou comest in, and  **blessed**  shalt thou *be* when thou goest out. <sup>3</sup>

In the example from Deuteronomy that God wants His people to be blessed, and He used the Anaphora repetition to help them remember. This technique is also used by His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> It is quite clear that God's will for His people is to be  **blessed**  by Him. The Anaphora repetition is used to repeatedly draw the attention back to His desire for His people to be  **blessed**  by Him. We see too that it isn't simply the  **blessing**  that is repeated, but that it is His people, those who do His will, that are promised  **blessings** . The word  **Blessed**  is repeated, but so too is the word(s)  **shall**  (thou/thine)  **be** . More than a single word can be employed in the Anaphora repetition. Both the "what", (blessings), and the "to whom", (those who obey Him), are emphasized. By this form of repetition, the mind is drawn back to a central concept.

It isn't enough to think of repetitive figures as being used exclusively for emphasis. There are three qualities that are characteristic of repetitive figures; their  **form** , their  **function** , and their  **fulfillment**  of purpose. The form of Anaphora is the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of a new thought. Its function is to call the attention back to what is being emphasized. It fulfills the purpose of etching on the mind a central thought or idea, which later will be much less likely forgotten.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Matthew 5:1-11** And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 **Blessed** are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 **Blessed** are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 **Blessed** are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 **Blessed** are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 **Blessed** are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 **Blessed** are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 **Blessed** are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 **Blessed** are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 **Blessed** are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

- Like Father, Like Son

2. **Epistrophe.** The counterpart to anaphora, this involves repetition of the last word or phrase across successive phrases, clauses or sentences.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Psalm 118:10-12** <sup>10</sup> All nations compassed me about: but **in the name of the LORD** will I destroy them.

<sup>11</sup> They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but **in the name of the LORD** I will destroy them.

<sup>12</sup> They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for **in the name of the LORD** I will destroy them.

- The Epistrophe is God's emphasis that if we are going to win, we must do it in the name of the LORD.

3. **Symploce.** This is a combination of anaphora and epistrophe. That means one word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of a line and another at the end. One of the best-known examples is in Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address in which he speaks of government "of the people, by the people, for the people."

**EXAMPLE:**

**1 Corinthians 13:11** <sup>11</sup> When I was **a child**, I spake as **a child**, I understood as **a child**, I thought as **a child**: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

4. **Antanaclasis.** From the Greek for "bending back," this is the repetition of a word but using a different meaning each time, "word clashing". Benjamin Franklin used it once when he said: "Your argument is sound, nothing but sound." In the first instance, he implies the argument is solid; in the second, that it's just noise.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Jeremiah 34:17** <sup>17</sup> Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have **not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty**, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, **I proclaim a liberty for you**, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

- The word "liberty" is used in two different ways in this verse. The Jews would not set at "liberty" the slaves they illegally owned (using "liberty" in the sense of a legal release from slavery), so God will allow "liberty" to the sword, famine and disease (using "liberty" in the sense of freedom of movement).

5. **Antistasis.** When antanaclasis goes so far as to incorporate opposite meanings, it is antistasis. It's visible in another example attributed to Franklin: "We must, indeed, all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately." Here the two meanings—unity and victory on the one hand and defeat and death on the other—could not be more contrary.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Matthew 5:3** Blessed are the **poor** in spirit: for theirs is the **kingdom** of heaven.

6. **Negative-positive restatement.** Another useful formula for oratory, this involves making a similar statement twice—first negatively, then with a positive twist. A famous example comes from John F. Kennedy, who implored: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

**EXAMPLE:**

**Proverbs 27:6** <sup>6</sup> **Faithful** *are* the **wounds** of a **friend**; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

7. **Epizeuxis, a.k.a. “palilogia.”** This is the simple repetition of a single word or phrase in immediate succession. Epizeuxis comes from the Greek word *epizeugnumi*, which means “fastening together.” Take this example from **Winston Churchill**: “Never give in—never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.”

#### EXAMPLES:

**Isaiah 40:1** **Isaiah 40:1** **Comfort ye, comfort ye** my people, saith your God.

**John 1:51** <sup>51</sup> And he saith unto him, **Verily, verily**, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

**Isaiah 6:3** <sup>3</sup> And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

**Revelation 4:8** <sup>8</sup> And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy**, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.