

## Parallelism in Proverbs

### *Four Main Types of Parallelism in Proverbs*

*Parallelism: when literature repeats words or ideas in successive sentences for rhetorical effect*

#### **SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM**

Synonymous parallelism is a poetic literary device which involves the repetition of one idea in successive lines. The first half of a verse will make a statement, and the second half will essentially say the same thing in different words.<sup>1</sup>

##### **Proverbs 16:18**

Pride goes before destruction,  
a haughty spirit before a fall.

##### **Proverbs 1:15**

My son, do not go along with them,  
do not set foot on their paths.

#### **SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM**

Synthetic parallelism is when the second line not merely reinforces the thought of the first but actually adds to its meaning content.<sup>2</sup>

##### **Proverbs 14:26**

He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress,  
and for his children it will be a refuge.

##### **Proverbs 17:23**

A friend loves at all times,  
and a brother is born for adversity.

#### **ANTITHETICAL PARALLELISM**

In antithetic parallelism, two lines are contrasted with one another in order to make a point.<sup>3</sup> The first line makes a statement; and then the second line provides the opposite. You'll usually see the conjunction "but". Each line can be interpreted by viewing the meaning of the other.

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<sup>1</sup> [GotQuestions.Org https://www.gotquestions.org/synonymous-parallelism.html](https://www.gotquestions.org/synonymous-parallelism.html)

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter Commentary Series, "Types of Parallelism". Dec. 14, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Ligonier Ministries, "Parallelisms". Jan. 26, 2005

**Proverbs 10:4**

Lazy hands make for poverty,  
but diligent hands bring wealth.

**Proverbs 15:1**

A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

**EMBLEMATIC PARALLELISM**

Emblematic parallelism uses an illustration or example from daily life (an emblem). You'll often find metaphors or similes "like" or "as". Many times emblematic parallelism will explain, clarify or state the proverb more plainly.

**Proverbs 25:13**

Like a snow-cooled drink at harvest time  
is a trustworthy messenger to the one who sends him;  
he refreshes the spirit of his master.

**Proverbs 25:28**

Like a city whose walls are broken through  
is a person who lacks self-control.