



Getting started with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs

How to live well in God's world.

That's the theme and the aim of these three books, as part of the Bible's "wisdom literature" (which also includes Job & Psalms).

Wisdom is more than just KNOWING the right stuff – it's DOING the right stuff. Wisdom is applied knowledge, knowledge in action.

Wisdom is the way to live well in God's world.

Wisdom flows from the fear of God & is seen in obedience to God. When we have an awe of God in His right place, and see ourselves in our place, it allows us to navigate the minefield of life in a way that honours Him and others.

King Solomon is a key figure in wisdom literature. In 1 Kings 3 we see God granting Solomon his desire for wisdom. His insight, understanding and knowledge made him a fount of wisdom and a major contributor in these books.

Proverbs

Proverbs is a passing down of accumulated wisdom from one person to others. We hear speeches, poems and sayings from a father, a mother and even from wisdom personified – "Lady Wisdom", who calls people to choose her instead of "Lady Folly".

Proverbs covers a wide range of topics in all areas of life; it's worth remembering that they are general sayings about what is normally true, not guaranteed formulas for success. Proverbs is describing probabilities not making promises.

Proverbs describes what life is normally like, and therefore how to live well in God's world – but remember, there are always exceptions to the rule.

Ecclesiastes

The point of Ecclesiastes is that there is no point.

Ecclesiastes reflects on life with the help of “the Teacher” – possibly Solomon himself, or maybe someone speaking in the style and tradition of Solomon.

And life without reference to God is pointless.

The word “meaningless” is used 38 times in this book. The Teacher takes a look at the stuff that most often occupies our time and passion and compares it to smoke – temporary and impossible to get a grip on.

Life is confusing; not straight forward; trying to make sense of it and live life well seems about as useful as chasing after the wind.

It’s a wonderfully honest description of how we often feel about life! And the lesson is to enjoy God’s good gifts when they come along, and to totally trust God, even when life doesn’t make sense.

Rather than wasting our energies chasing wind, this realistic perspective will help us to live well in God’s world.

Song of Songs

This book focusses on one of life’s great topics – and one of its greatest mysteries.

Song of Songs is a love poem – possibly written by Solomon, but more likely “of Solomon” means “in the wisdom tradition of Solomon”.

This song flows and pulsates with all the energy and passion of lovers who are enthralled with each other; it’s a celebration of God’s good gift of love.

Each chapter is filled with wonderful pictures and descriptions, though I wouldn’t recommend using direct quotes to compliment your partner! Some of the imagery seems odd to us, but it all combines into a beautiful picture of life and love and joy.

It’s open to debate whether this is supposed to be a picture of God’s loving relationship with His people or not. Either way, Song of Songs is a celebration of love and so it certainly teaches us about the God who is love, and about His untainted love for us.

Jesus in the wisdom literature

In these books there are lots of little ways that point us forward to Jesus – we come across little phrases or big truths that find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus' character and life events.

But perhaps the biggest way we see Jesus in the wisdom literature is as the one who fulfils the big theme.

1 Corinthians 1v30 says that Christ *“has become for us wisdom from God – that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”*

Jesus is wisdom personified. He lived well in God's world.

In the ups and downs of his life he trusted God, even when it didn't make sense. He always correctly put knowledge into practice by choosing the right course of action – a life that was honouring to God and others. He displayed the purest form of love by going to the cross for us.

Christ seems like foolishness to others, but we recognise him as the wisdom of God.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom – we will only be able to navigate life correctly when we have Jesus in His rightful place – and when we are found IN Him.

And if we want to live wisely, we need to walk in His footsteps by His Spirit.

Jesus is the source of wisdom, the model of wisdom and the power for wise living. If we want to live well in God's world, we need to pay attention to Jesus!



RBT Grow Group is on Tuesday 8th January

Bring along some things from your reading of
the these books to share with others.

Some RBT reading ideas:

- Meet up once a week to read it with a friend.
- Listen online at Biblegateway.com
- Write down a verse that struck you that day.
- Encourage someone by texting them a thought from what you've read.

Grow 1:1 questions to unlock the passage:

What does this teach me about God?

How does this point me to the Lord Jesus and His cross?

What does this teach me about myself?

How does this help me to pray?

What difference will this make to my week?