

The Wisdom and Poetic Books

The Books of *Proverbs, Ecclesiastics and Song of Songs*

Wisdom and Poetical Books

<i>BOOK</i>	<i>THEME</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>
<i>Job</i>	The Problem of Suffering	Why do bad things happen to good people?
<i>Psalms</i>	Prayer and Worship	How to I approach God?
<i>Proverbs</i>	The Problem of Conduct	How shall I live?
<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	The Problem of Meaning in Life	Why am I here?
<i>Song of Solomon</i>	Love	How shall I love?

PROVERBS

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Living

Solomon

- Author of the Proverbs
- King of Israel
- Son of King David
- Built the temple
- Wisest man in the world
- Had his own sin problems

Outline of Book of Proverbs

- A Father counsels his son to seek wisdom (1-7)
- Wisdom's call (8-9)
- Solomon's proverbs (10-24)
- Solomon's proverbs copied by King Hezekiah's men (25-29)
- The words of Agur & King Lemuel (30-31)

Key Words

- Wisdom:

- *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Pr 9:10, 1:7)*
- *"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Pr 26:12)*

- Understanding:

- The revelation of truth
 - Occurs in the heart (*Is 6:10*)
 - We sometimes call it "accepting one word"
- It is **not** being like Nicodemus (*John 3:10*)

Themes in the Proverbs

Themes in Proverbs are practical wisdom about life e.g., “Don’t be lazy! Work hard!”. The themes can be summarized in:

- The way of Wisdom (Proverbs 4:11-23)
- Principles of Work (Proverbs 10:2-4, 5, 26)
 - Skilled work will lead to success
 - Diligent work will lead to success

Go to the ant, O sluggard observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief, Officer, or ruler; Prepares her food in the summer, And gathers her provisions in the harvest. (Proverbs 15:19)

- Principles of Business/Finance (Proverbs 3:27-28)
- Principles of Spiritual Speech (Proverbs 26:20)

Personalities and Characters

1) Poor character traits

- a. The simple
- b. The fool
- c. The sluggard

(also: the violent, the sexually immoral, the mocker, the divisive, the arrogant, and the drunkard)

2) The wise

Fear of the LORD is beginning of wisdom

3) The noble woman

1 a) The Simple

Some Simple people lack moral direction and are inclined to evil:

- + “I saw among the **simple**, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment” Proverbs 7:7
- + “A **simple** man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps” Proverbs 14:15
- + “The **simple** inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge” Proverbs 14:18
- + “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the **simple** keep going and suffer for it” Proverbs 27:12

The simple versus the fool

*For the waywardness of the **simple** will kill them,
and the complacency of **fools** will destroy
them; (Pr 1:32)*

Generally in Proverbs, the simple refers to those who lack moral judgment, where as the fool refers to someone who is morally deficient.

1 b) Fools in Proverbs

- “Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a **fool** invites ruin”
Proverbs 10:14
- “The lips of the righteous nourish many, but **fools** die for lack of judgment”
Proverbs 10:21
- “A **fool** finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom” Proverbs 10:23
- “The way of a **fool** seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” Proverbs 12:15
- “A **fool** shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult” Proverbs 12:16
- “Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a **fool** exposes his folly” Proverbs 13:16
- “A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but **fools** detest turning from evil” Proverbs 13:19
- “He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of **fools** suffers harm” Proverbs 13:20
- “A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a **fool** is hotheaded and reckless” Proverbs 14:16

1 c) The sluggard

*The **sluggard** buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth. (Proverbs 26:5)*

- “Go to the ant you **sluggard**; Consider its ways and be wise!”
Proverbs 6:6
- “How long will you lie there you **sluggard**? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man” Proverbs 6:9-11
- “He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son” Proverbs 10:5

2) The wise

- A catch-all phrase, representing the opposite of the various bad traits: upright, diligent, loving, humble, studies the Bible
- Again, wisdom has nothing to do with IQ, being intellectual, or worldly knowledge
- The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of wisdom
 - Mentioned 21 times in proverbs
 - *“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.” (Pr 3:7)*
 - *To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. (8:13)*
 - *He whose walk is upright fears the Lord, but he whose ways are devious despises him (14:2)*

Proverbs on the “Wise”

- “Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you” Proverbs 9:8
- “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise” Proverbs 10:19
- “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise” Proverbs 11:30
- “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” Proverbs 12:18
- “The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down” Proverbs 14:1
- “The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction” Proverbs 16:21
- “Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear” Proverbs 25:12
- “Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger” Proverbs 29:8

3) The noble woman

1. A wife of noble character is precious (31:10)
2. She is diligent (31:11-27)
3. She has a heart for the poor (31:20)
4. She speaks wisdom (26)
5. She deserves to be praised (31:28-31)

Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

“Many women do noble things but you surpass them all”

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate”

Proverbs 31:30-31

Lessons from the Proverbs

- The Universal need for Wisdom
- What is Wise is also what is Good
- Principles rather than Promises
- A real view of the real world

The Christ of the Proverbs

- In Proverbs 8, wisdom is personified and seen in its perfection; It is:
 - Divine (8:22-31),
 - source of biological and spiritual life (3:18, 8:35),
 - righteous and moral (8:8, 9).
- This Wisdom became incarnate in Christ:
 - “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3)
 - “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1Cor 1:30)

Ecclesiastes

Christ is the answer

Purpose of Ecclesiastes

- Reveals the emptiness of trying to be happy apart from God.
- Ecclesiastes (like Job) must be interpreted as a whole with the ultimate answer coming at the very end.
- The book is full of satire, sarcasm, and cynicism.
- The “Teacher” or “Preacher” declares that a strictly rational search for meaning is “meaningless.”
- At the end of the book, the Teacher comes to his conclusion: “Fear God and keep his commandments.”
- Apart from God, not even wisdom can give life meaning.

Key Verses

- All is Vanity:

'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity'" (Eccl 1:2).

- Life is a gift from God:

"Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God." (Eccl 2:24)

- Fear God:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (12:13, 14).

Ecclesiastes in brief

- All is vanity (1:1-11)
- The proof that “All is vanity”:
 - From Experience (1:12-2:26)
 - From Observation (3:1-6:12)
- Living with vanity:
 - Coping in a wicked world (7:1-9:18)
 - Uncertainties of life (10:1-12:8)
 - Conclusion: “Fear God and keep His commandments (12:9-14)

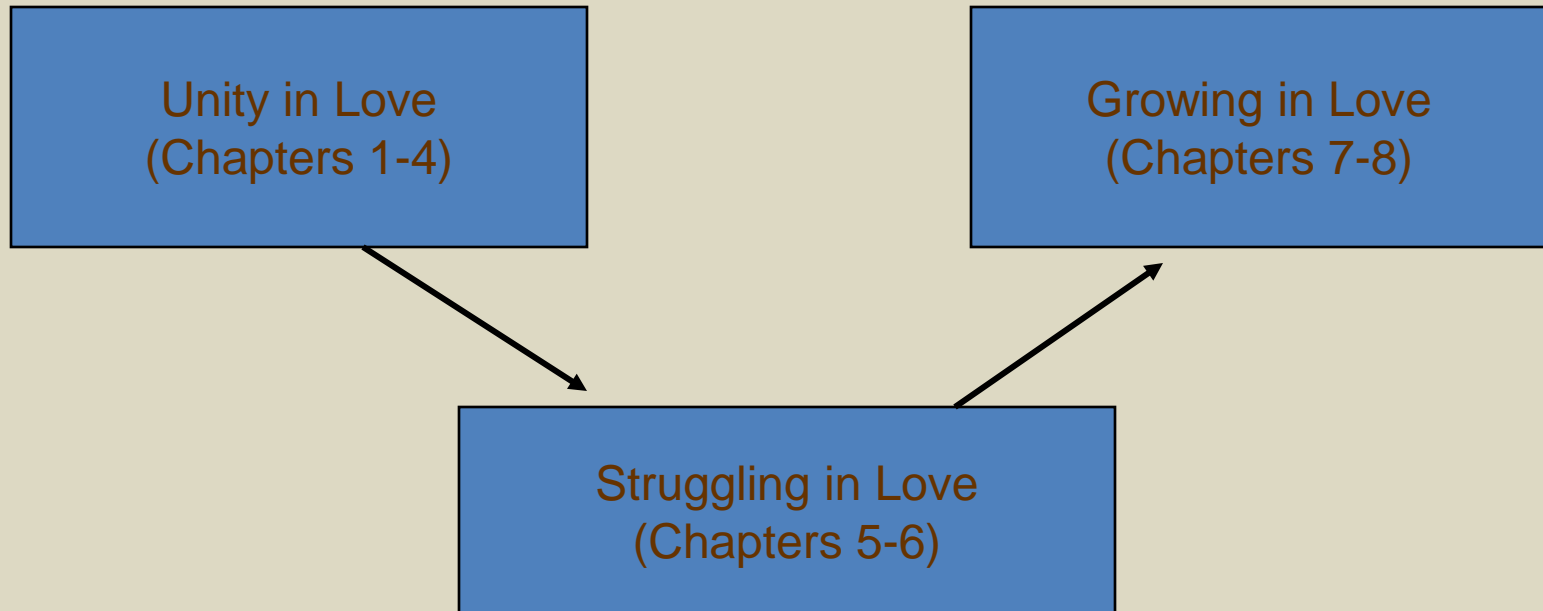
The Christ of Ecclesiastes

- Each person has eternity in his heart (3:11)
 - Christ, ONLY, can provide the eternal life:
“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)
- Vanity is the emptiness of trying to be happy apart from God (1:2)
 - Christ, ONLY, fills the heart with full joy and satisfaction:
“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ... I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ” Philippians 3:7-8

SONG OF SONGS

The Love Song of the Scriptures

Outline of the Book



Outline of the Song of Songs

- The beginning of love:
 - Falling in love (1:1-3:5)
 - United in love (3:6-5:1)

- Broadening of love:
 - Struggling in love (5:2-7:10)
 - Growing in love (7:11-8:14)

Song of Songs 1:5-7

*"I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Like the tents of Kedar, Like the curtains of Solomon.*

*"Do not stare at me because I am swarthy,
For the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me;
They made me caretaker of the vineyards, But I have not taken
care of my own vineyard."*

*Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your
flock, Where do you make it lie down at noon?*

*For why should I be like one who veils herself
Beside the flocks of your companions?*

The Story behind the Song

- **The story begins**
- **Solomon meets Shulamith**
- **He promises to return**
- **He returns, not as a shepherd, but as the reigning king**
- **Solomon takes his bride to Jerusalem**
- **A temporary separation (Chapters 5-6)**

Lessons from the Song of Songs

- **God is concerned with all of our life**
- **All of life reflects our relationship with God**
- **We are a part of a sacred love**

The Christ of Song of Songs

- In the Old Testament, it pictures Israel as God's espoused bride:

"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy. I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19, 20)

- In the New Testament, the church is seen as the bride of Christ:

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" 2 Corinthians 11:2