

Wisdom for Living

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

*“Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting,
Get understanding”*

Proverbs 4:7

By Rhodes Davis

Introduction

Welcome to this study of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The wisdom literature consists of the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Song of Solomon will be discussed in a separate study. These books give great insight into the suffering of man, finding meaning in a meaningless world, love between a husband and wife, love for God, and practical advice for living and working. When we consider that these books were inspired by God, our Creator, we should seek to know all they teach and live according to the wisdom revealed.

Each lesson has reading assignments for five days of the week. I would suggest reading the daily assignment and answer any questions pertaining to that section. There will be considerable reading in preparation for some classes so breaking up your reading time is advisable. The average reading should not take more than 15-20 minutes on the longest assignments. These are profound books and so the reading assignments allows you to read a small section and reflect on the important lessons for living.

I hope you enjoy the study. Remember to pray to God for wisdom for He gives it "liberally and without reproach," James 1:5.

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Lesson 1: Job I

Daily Reading

Thursday	Job 1-3
Friday	Job 4-6
Saturday	Job 7-9
Monday	Job 10-12
Tuesday	Job 13-14

The story of Job is a profound lesson about the suffering of man. Job suffered great loss at the hands of Satan but within the bounds that God had set. Job's friends, who seek to comfort Job, enter into a discussion of God's judgment and man's suffering.

Questions

1. Why did Satan want to attack Job?
2. What happened to Job's children and possessions? How quickly did it happen?
3. What happened to Job's health?
4. What did Job's wife tell him to do? What was his response? Explain his response.
5. Fill in the table below. Use back of page for additional observations

Chap.	Speaker	Subject
4-5		
6-7		
8		
9-10		
11		
12-14		

Lesson 2: Job II

Daily Reading

Thursday	Job 15-16
Friday	Job 17-18
Saturday	Job 19-20
Monday	Job 21-22
Tuesday	Job 23-25

Throughout the discussion between Job and his friends, one must remember that each is speaking from his earthly perspective. Some of the comments do not truly reflect God's judgment, a point made clear at the end of the book and elsewhere in scripture. Sadly, some of these attitudes prevail in our day.

Questions

1. Why does Job call his friends "miserable comforters?"
2. Fill in the table below. Use back of page for additional observations

Chap.	Speaker	Subject
15		
16-17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23-24		
25		

Lesson 3: Job III

Daily Reading

Thursday	Job 26-27
Friday	Job 28-29
Saturday	Job 30-31
Monday	Job 32-34
Tuesday	Job 35-37

Job makes a final plea to his friends and ends his arguments with them. After the discussion between Job and his friends concluded, the young Elihu, who had been disgusted with what he heard, began to rebuke Job in an arrogant tone. Yet there is much truth to consider in his words.

Questions

1. What is Elihu's attitude towards the older men?
2. How does Elihu characterize Job?
3. Consider Job 33:22-28. What parallels to salvation through the gospel do you see here?
4. What is Elihu's argument in Job 35:6-7 concerning the wickedness and righteousness of a man compared to the greatness of God?
5. On who's behalf does Elihu presume to speak? What danger is there in this? How can we do the same thing?
6. Who does Elihu say God does not regard?

Lesson 4: Job IV

Daily Reading

Thursday	Job 38
Friday	Job 39
Saturday	Job 40
Monday	Job 41
Tuesday	Job 42

After the discussion between Job and his friends God then answered Job and rebuked His friends. At the end of the book, Job acknowledged his finite knowledge and God restored Job's health, wealth, and family. Many things are revealed in this section that were only discovered by science in the modern era.

Questions

1. What is the main argument of God's challenge to Job?
2. What description of God's power described in this section most impresses you and why?
3. How does Job reply to God in 40 and 42? Why do you think he answered in this way?
4. What was God's response to Job's friends?
5. How did God bless Job in the end?
6. Did God ever tell Job why he was afflicted? What can we learn from this?

Lesson 5: Psalms of Praise

Daily Reading

Thursday	Psalm 8
Friday	Psalm 92
Saturday	Psalm 145
Monday	Psalm 146
Tuesday	Psalm 148

When we think of the Psalms, we often immediately think of praise to God. The Psalms can teach us much about how to praise God. Though we may feel inadequate in our own adoration of God, the Psalms can show us how to open our hearts in praise and devotion and enrich our relationship with Him.

Questions

1. For what things is God praised in these psalms?
2. According to the psalmists, how does man compare to God?
3. How do the psalmists compare the good and the wicked?
4. What care would the children of God receive?
5. Why does the name of the Lord receive so much praise?

Lesson 6: Psalms of Wisdom

Daily Reading

Thursday	Psalm 1
Friday	Psalm 34
Saturday	Psalm 37
Monday	Psalm 49
Tuesday	Psalm 52

The book of Psalms contains lessons of wisdom to guide God's people in His service. They remind the listener to trust in God and that the wicked may prosper on the earth but will be punished by God. A central theme of these psalms is not to rely on one's own strength but stand in the power of God.

Questions

1. What is the progression towards error in Psalm 1?
2. In these psalms, how is the fate of the wicked and righteous compared?
3. How do these psalms urge man to dedicate himself to God?
4. In what should man not trust? Why?
5. What does Psalm 34:8 mean?

Lesson 7: Psalms of Comfort

Daily Reading

Thursday	Psalm 23
Friday	Psalm 25
Saturday	Psalm 27
Monday	Psalm 51
Tuesday	Psalm 77

We often turn to the book of Psalms during times of grief or despair. Whether we read of David on the run from Saul or the good who mourn when they are persecuted by the wicked, we find psalms that can comfort us and teach us of God's loving care. Though dangers abound, "The Lord is our shepherd."

Questions

1. What is the central message of Psalm 23? Compare our strength and God's.
2. According to Psalm 25, what things does David ask God to do?
3. According to Psalm 27, why does David have courage?
4. What prompted the writing of Psalm 51? What does it teach about repentance?
5. According to Psalm 77, how does the past provide comfort for the present?

Lesson 8: Psalms of the Messiah

Daily Reading

Thursday	Psalm 2
Friday	Psalm 16
Saturday	Psalm 22
Monday	Psalm 45
Tuesday	Psalm 89

Some psalms point to the coming of the anointed deliver of Israel, the Messiah, who would rule the world. Jesus applied these psalms to Himself. Jesus did establish His kingdom, a spiritual kingdom that encompasses the world, and He will reign from heaven until He resurrects all men and conquers death.

Questions

1. How did the kings plot against Jesus? How does Jesus rule with a rod of iron?
2. What application does Peter make of Psalm 16 in Acts 2?
3. According to Psalm 22, what would be the result of the Messiah's suffering?
4. Who is the royal daughter of Psalm 45:13? (See Ephesians 5, Revelation 19:7-9)
5. According to Psalm 89, how would the Messiah be blessed?

Lesson 9: Proverbs—Pursue Wisdom

Daily Reading

Thursday	Pr. 1-2
Friday	Pr. 3-4
Saturday	Pr. 5-6
Monday	Pr. 7
Tuesday	Pr. 8-9

The introduction to the book of Proverbs is in the form of a father preparing his son for life. He urges him to pursue wisdom and to let it guide his life. He warns him of the dangers of immoral women, laziness, wicked friends, and foolish choices. The father's warnings should ring in the ears of our children today.

Questions

1. Why is the fear of the Lord the foundation of wisdom?
2. How is wisdom personified? How is her invitation received?
3. How would you define wisdom as used in this lesson? Why do many not seek it?
4. What passages in this lesson relate to adultery? What warnings are given?
5. List the positive commands in chapters 3 and 4 for the son to practice.

Lesson 10: Proverbs—Practical Wisdom

Daily Reading

Thursday	Pr. 10-13
Friday	Pr. 14-17
Saturday	Pr. 18-21
Monday	Pr. 22-25
Tuesday	Pr. 26-30

Proverbs is a book of practical knowledge. It is a source of wisdom for dealing with everyday problems and building up one's character. The proverbs can teach us how to be better neighbors and friends, as well as practical business and personal financial advice. The wise will meditate on these sayings.

Questions

1. What are some practical business lessons taught in Proverbs?
2. What are some personal financial lessons taught in Proverbs?
3. What does Proverbs teach us about using our tongue for good and evil?
4. What does Proverbs teach about diligence and slothfulness?
5. What lessons of humility are taught in Proverbs?

Lesson 11: Proverbs—Family

Daily Reading

Thursday	Pr. 19:13-27
Friday	Pr. 21:9,19 27:15-16
Saturday	Pr. 22:6,15 23:13-14
Monday	Pr. 29:15-17
Tuesday	Pr. 31:10-31

The book of Proverbs contains valuable lessons for family living. From the warnings about contentious women and lazy men to the virtues of a godly woman, the book of Proverbs is invaluable to single people who will one day seek a spouse, and married couples who want practical lessons for family living.

Questions

1. Does the book of Proverbs advocate child abuse? Explain.
2. According to Proverbs, what is the purpose of corporal punishment? What is the destiny of the unpunished, or poorly punished, child?
3. What is meant by a contentious wife? To what is she compared? How could a husband fit into this category?
4. Why is a good wife considered a gift from the Lord? How should that affect the husband's attitude?
5. List the general categories of the worthy woman's praise. Explain Proverbs 31:30.

Lesson 12: Ecclesiastes—The Vanity of Life

Daily Reading

Thursday	Eccl. 1
Friday	Eccl. 2
Saturday	Eccl. 3
Monday	Eccl. 4-5
Tuesday	Eccl. 6

The book of Ecclesiastes is a realistic, some might say pessimistic, view of life. In the book, the Preacher shows that, through his own experience, nothing gives value to life; "all is vanity." The lesson is applicable for people in our day who seek to find meaning in life without God.

Questions

1. How does the Preacher compare the cycles of life with the lifetime of man? Why does that lead to despair?
2. What things did the Preacher pursue to find meaning in life? Why were each of these things considered vanity?
3. What is the end of the wise and the fool? Why is it absurd?
4. What are some things that the Preacher believes will enhance one's life, though it will not give life meaning?

Lesson 13: Ecclesiastes—The Conclusion

Daily Reading

Thursday	Eccl. 7
Friday	Eccl. 8
Saturday	Eccl. 9
Monday	Eccl. 10-11
Tuesday	Eccl. 12

In the conclusion of the book of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher determines that there is but one thing that gives life meaning and that is service to God. The pleasures of life will not completely satisfy, but man will find completeness in God. Yet for all his wisdom, Solomon would not dedicate himself wholly to God.

Questions

1. How does Ecclesiastes 9:9-10 relate to the emptiness of life?
2. If the fool and the wise are equal at death, why does the Preacher urge the reader to pursue wisdom instead of folly?
3. What does Ecclesiastes 11 teach us about the works of God?
4. What is portrayed in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7? Explain.
5. Why is serving God the whole duty of man? How does it give life meaning?