


# THE WISDOM WRITINGS

*Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*



*Following Jesus through the Wisdom  
Writings*

## HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Wisdom literature instructs in many ways. Job shows us that God is active in areas and realms beyond our understanding. The high-highs of praise and low-lows of lament found in the Psalms demonstrate that we can respond to God's character and actions just as we are, even if that may be emotional. The Proverbs offer rich insight into how the world is ordered and how the wise ought to operate in a fallen world. Ecclesiastes forces us to ponder the purpose of life and concludes that meaning can't ultimately be found apart from God in things that are "under the sun." In the Song of Solomon's portrait of love between a man and woman, we see that human love is a gift and important for understanding God's love people as well.

## HOW DO WE READ THE WISDOM WRITINGS NORMALLY?

When reading wisdom literature, it is helpful to ask questions of genre (style of writing), context, and the author's intent as you read. For instance, you could ask:

- Is the passage giving a command to obey or an observation of how things are? Is that command universal or for a specific person or group of people?
- Is the biblical author relaying principles to live by or concrete promises to encourage?
- What is the genre and what can be accomplished with it? For instance, how might the symbolism and imagery of the Psalms lend itself to our imagination and memory?

## HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

As a better Job, Jesus suffered as a truly innocent person, yet walked faithfully with God (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus not only quoted many Psalms, He also embodied their spirit with His intimate and personal relationship with God the Father. Jesus was also wisdom personified, living a perfect life in order to redeem others and share His own resources of wisdom and ultimate flourishing (1 Corinthians 1:30). Since Christ offers opportunity to have relationship with our Creator (which is the only way we can live "above the sun," as it were), meaning, purpose, and direction in life

can be found in Him. Jesus embodied the sort self-giving love that seeks to overcome and obstacle to pursue and maintain robust relationship.

## **HOW DO THE WISDOM WRITINGS FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?**

The wisdom writings in the Old Testament help us answer this question, “How do I live wisely in God’s good world?” These texts assume that God is constant—accessible by faith; and yet these texts also assume and recognize human evil. Each book offers unique insight into what it means to live wisely. Consider Job, a man who God personally recognizes as “upright” and “blameless.” Nevertheless, Job undergoes tragic loss and unbearable heartache in one of the most complex and frustrating accounts in the Bible. But don’t forget this obvious truth: Job is in the Bible! The Bible does not shy away from human suffering but helps us see that our problems actually matter to God. Wisdom invites us to hear God’s words for all of His people in any and every season.