



**Fam Groups  
Wisdom Books Study**

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# The Wisdom Books: Proverbs

Week 1

<b>Watch</b>	<b>Video 1</b> - <a href="#">'The Book of Proverbs - What it teaches us about being good at life'</a> <b>Video 2</b> - <a href="#">'Book of Proverbs Summary - A Complete Animated Overview'</a>
<b>Read together</b> <b>*optional</b>	<p><b>Proverbs answers the big question – How should I live?</b></p> <p>What is the purpose of Proverbs?</p> <p><i>Chapter 1:2-3 - “To know wisdom and instruction, to receive instruction in wise dealing, to understand words of insight, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth.”</i></p> <p>Proverbs is a generational book of wisdom with instructions on how to live as a wise follower of Jesus in the world.</p> <p>In I Kings 3 the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream with an incredible offer “<i>Ask what I shall give you.</i>” Solomon could have asked for wealth Solomon could have asked for victory in battle Solomon could have asked for a long life but Solomon asked for wisdom, and it pleased God.</p> <p><i>“The Lord said to him - “Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.”</i> This is where the book of Proverbs came from; the lifetime realization of that promise from God in a dream.</p> <p>The word “proverb” means a short pithy statement and Proverbs are not meant to be sat and read and then forgotten but rather to be taken daily like medicine.</p> <p>Proverbs are, in short, God’s mottos.</p> <p><b>The book can be divided into:</b></p> <p><b>Part 1</b> - Chapters 1-9 - The Difference between Wisdom and Folly</p> <p><b>Part 2</b> - Chapters 10-29 - Anthology of Proverbs</p> <p><b>Part 3</b> - Chapters 30-31 - Climax and Payoff</p> <p><b>Part 1:</b> This is a fatherly collection of letters, notes, wisdom, speeches and poems to a son. The father’s greatest desire was that the son would be wise. Whether Solomon wrote to Rehoboam his son or as a general father to all sons doesn’t really matter. What we have here is timeless wisdom.</p> <p><b>Part 2:</b> While chapters 1-9 are packed with Fatherly wisdom in beautiful poetry, Chapters 10-29 are the short pithy statements that most people think of when they think of Proverbs.</p>

	<p><b>Part 3:</b> Then the climax of the book. Chapter 30 contains the promise of Jesus through an oracle from a man named Agur. It says “I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One, Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the water in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know..” Of course, we do. This son’s name is Jesus. Jesus is the pinnacle and source of all wisdom.</p> <p>Finally, Chapter 31 contains the ultimate act of wisdom for a man, choosing a wise wife. Written from a mother to a son named Lemuel, who is said to be King.</p> <p>Many scholars think Lemuel is a nickname for Solomon and this would then be written from Bathsheba to her precious son, Solomon. <i>Verse 10 says “An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.” Verse 11 says “The heart of her husband trusts in her.” V. 17 says - she dresses herself with strength V. 20 says - she opens her hand to the poor V. 28 says - her children rise up and call her blessed</i></p> <p>We learn in I Kings 4 that Solomon wrote over 3,000 Proverbs. Depending on how you count, we have around 350 Proverbs. These are the ways to live as a wise follower of Jesus in the world. I wish we had all 3,000, but maybe when we get to heaven we can read the director’s cut. Maybe Solomon will read it with us.</p>
<p><b>Discuss</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. According to Proverbs what is the beginning of real wisdom and what does that actually mean?</li> <li>2. Solomon was the wisest man on earth and yet still made huge mistakes. How do you think this happens?</li> <li>3. How according to scripture can we get more wisdom?</li> <li>4. Do you have a favourite proverb or an example of a time a proverb really helped you in a specific situation?</li> <li>5. Can you share a time in your life when you had knowledge but not wisdom? What was the outcome?</li> <li>6. Do you have a specific area you really need greater wisdom in right now?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Dive deeper</b> <b>*optional</b></p>	<p>Proverbs uses many different poetic devices:</p> <p><b>Parallelism:</b> idea rhyming example: I went down to the bay I just may</p> <p><b>Synonymous Parallelism:</b> This is a feature where the second line repeats the thought of the first line but in different words. The repetition intensifies the thoughts and feelings being expressed. Example: “A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape” (Proverbs 19:5).</p>

**Antithetic Parallelism:** In this feature, the second line is the opposite of the first. In the book of Proverbs, this type of construction is the most common of the different types. Example: "He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, But he who is careless of his ways will die" (Proverbs 19:16).

**Synthetic Parallelism:** In this poetic style the second line advances the thought of the first. Each line is synonymous, but each additional line adds to the thought of the first making it more specific. Example: "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11).

Proverbs also make use of literary devices such as:

**Simile** - Comparison using the words like or as. "But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble" (Proverbs 4:18,19).

**Metaphor** - Comparison made not using like or as. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4; cf. Prov. 25).

**Synecdoche** - A part of something stands for the whole. "The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it" (Proverbs 30:17).

**Personification** - Inanimate things are given characteristics of living things. The most familiar of these sections is found in chapter eight where wisdom is personified. "Does not wisdom cry out, And understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, Beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, At the entrance of the doors: 'To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men'" (Proverbs 8:1-3).

**Mathematical Emphasis** - Numbers are used for emphasis and as an aid to memorization. "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him..." (Proverbs 6:16).

# The Wisdom Books: Ecclesiastes

## Week 2

<b>Watch</b>	<b>Video 1</b> - <a href="#">‘The Disturbing But Surprising Wisdom of Ecclesiastes’</a> <b>Video 2</b> - <a href="#">‘Book of Ecclesiastes Summary - A Complete Animated Overview’</a>
<b>Read together</b> <b>*optional</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes answers the question - What is my purpose?</b>  Ecclesiastes is about purpose; a quest that millions find themselves on today. What is my purpose? Why am I here? Why does life feel this way?  This book was written by a man who had everything, did everything, and who knew as much as a human could possibly know. Solomon knew God and was given more wisdom than any before or after. He was the wisest, richest and most famous person of his time, but he found out that it’s kind of just ‘empty’.  Unlike Psalms and Proverbs which are the peaks of Solomon’s writing, Ecclesiastes is the bottom of the bottom. Ecclesiastes is what happens when you find out that all you pursued wasn’t worth it, that life for life’s sake is empty, that money for money’s sake is empty, that it’s all just empty.  The word he uses is ‘vanity’. He uses it 38 times in this book. It means: vapour, breath, emptiness.  But at the very bottom of these poems, speeches, and ruminations on emptiness, there is the fullness.  <b>The book can be divided up into:</b> <b>Chapters 1-2</b> - Vanity Explained <b>Chapters 3-6</b> - Vanity Explored <b>Chapters 7-9</b> - Vanity Expanded <b>Chapters 10-12</b> - Vanity Exonerated  <b>Chapters 1-2- Vanity Explained</b> “Vanity of vanities” Solomon says to open the book, “All is vanity”. In Chapters 1 and 2, the old King explains what he means. Posing big questions, he begins with a poem about the cyclical nature of life, and then that poem becomes his style.  His point: there is nothing new, all is recycled and not remembered. He talks about having seen it all and enjoyed it all, and the emptiness that follows. He talks about the emptiness of pleasure, the pursuit of wisdom and of work.  <i>Verse 1:18 says, “For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”</i>

Verse 2:1 says, "I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself."; But behold, this also was vanity.

2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

3 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine — my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

5 I made myself gardens and parks and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

7 I bought male and female slaves and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man."

24 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God."

Man, sad stuff.

### **Chapters 3-6 – Vanity Explored** (The examples of vanity)

Eccl. 3:1-8 is a beautiful poem about the times for everything in the world.

Solomon goes on to give more examples of vanity in Chapters 3-6: the immutability of God, the inevitability of death, the oppression and evil of man, the forgetting of strong leaders, laziness, business failures, and working your whole life for money only to not take it with you when you die.

*Eccl. 6:10 Whatever has come to be, has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.*

*11 The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?*

*12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?*

In Solomon's opinion, everything is vanity.

### **Chapters 7-9 – Vanity Expanded**

These chapters contain language and format much more familiar to readers of Proverbs; shorter, pithier versions of the same content filtered through the style of the Proverbs. He talks about the difference between Wisdom and Folly, Advice in dealing with Kings, the rewards of fearing God, God's unknowability and more on the inevitability of death.

And some more saddening stuff. He gives an illustration of the chance of death; it could happen to anyone at any time. The chance of wealth; how it doesn't always go to the smartest or seemingly most deserving. He also gives a story. There was a city with only a few men living against it and the King came and surrounded the city to capture it. The King had a great army and things to siege the city, it was looking like death for everyone. Then a poor wise man came up with a plan and delivered the city. Good story, right? No, not for Ecclesiastes, for the people of the town soon forgot him, even though he saved their lives.

It may seem Ecclesiastes basically sees the negative in everything. But it's more complicated than that because, in the midst of all the darkness, the light begins to shine.

### **Chapters 10-12 – Vanity Exonerated**

*Chapter 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it in many days.*

This is a Proverb about not hoarding and about receiving back for generosity.

And more positive follows...

*11:7 Light is sweet and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.*

*8 So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; (but then Solomon finishes with) but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.*

This is the juxtaposition of Ecclesiastes - the things you think will make you happy make you empty. But in that, there is the hope of trust and remembrance of God. And when you look closer back at the book, there have been little flashes of light amid the vanity poems.

*2:13 - There is more gain in light than in darkness.*

*3:11 - God has put eternity into man's heart.*

*5:18 - What I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil.*

*9:7 - Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.*

The final chapter opens with a wonderful verse.

*Ecl. 12:1 Remember now your creator in the days of your youth...*

and the book ends with...

*Ecl. 12:13b Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil.*

	<p>And just as mysteriously as it begins on a down note, it ends on a harmonious chord of vision.</p> <p>The message of almost this entire book is Man fell. But Jesus is here too.</p> <p><i>Eccl.12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, (*goads are sharp implements used to get an ox walking in the right direction) and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.</i></p> <p>It's very out of place in the book, like most of the Messianic moments this one is like walking through a forest and finding a golden cross hidden in plain sight. The Hebrew word "Shepherd" used there is only used two other times in the Old Testament. Both are in Ezekiel in Chapters 34 and 37, talking about the Shepherd to come. He is called "David" in that passage, but David had already been dead for 400 years. It's not David; it's the "2 Samuel 7 David of the future" - the King who won't fail, the Shepherd who leaves the 99 to find the one... you.</p>
<p><b>Discuss</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How have you experienced "emptiness" in your life from pursuing things you thought would make you happy?</li> <li>2. Read Eccl. 3:1-8. What is the benefit of understanding there is a time for each of these? How are each a gift from God?</li> <li>3. In this lesson, we touched on the juxtaposition of Ecclesiastes: "Days of darkness" with "flashes of light". We have all experienced "days of darkness". Share a time when you have had "flashes of light" - the hope of trust and remembrance of God – in the middle of a dark time. What became most meaningful in your life in that darkness?</li> <li>4. One thing we learn from Ecclesiastes is that we cannot control everything in our lives. Discuss the response the writer tells us to have in Eccl.12:13. Is this easy or difficult to do? How does this verse settle and strengthen you?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Dive deeper</b> <b>*optional</b></p>	<p><b>Interesting to note:</b></p> <p>The book has been influential in developing culture and language. There are many English idioms and common sayings that originate here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Eat, Drink and Be Merry is from 8:15</li> <li>● A Fly in the Ointment is from 10:1</li> <li>● For Everything there is a Season is from 3:1</li> <li>● From dust to dust (which has been said at hundreds of thousands of funerals) is a form of 3:20</li> <li>● Nothing new under the sun is from 1:5</li> </ul>



# The Wisdom Books: Job

## Week 3

<b>Watch</b>	<b>Video 1</b> - <a href="#">‘The Book of Job’s Wisdom on How God Runs the World’</a> <b>Video 2</b> - <a href="#">‘Book of Job Summary - A Complete Animated Overview’</a>
<b>Read together</b> <b>*optional</b>	<p><b>Job answers the question - Why do bad things happen?</b></p> <p>Job (rhymes with robe) is a mysterious book set in Uz (ooze), far far away from Israel. We don’t know who wrote it when they wrote it or why it even takes place. This all seems intentional though, as if the author doesn’t want us to get distracted by historical questions, but rather focus on the story of Job and the questions brought up based on his suffering.</p> <p>The story of Job has a clear literary design. It opens and closes with a short narrative <b>prologue</b> (Chapters 1-2) and <b>epilogue</b> (Chapter 42). And then the central body of the book is dense Hebrew poetry, representing conversations between Job and four dialogue partners called, “<b>the friends</b>” (Chapters 3-37). These conversations are then concluded by a series of poetic speeches given by <b>God to Job</b> (Chapters 38-41).</p> <p><b>The Prologue</b></p> <p>Introduces us to Job. He had seven sons and three daughters. And like a trillion animals. He was rich. The Bible says he was the greatest of all the people of the East. He wasn’t great because of that though; Job was great because he LOVED God and was close to Him all the time.</p> <p>But what happens when that is tested? Therein lies the story of the book.</p> <p>As the first video illustrates very well God allows Satan to inflict suffering upon Job. And we start to sense three questions starting to permeate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What comes from God?</li><li>2. What comes from man?</li><li>3. And what comes from the enemy?</li></ol> <p>But in all this Job didn’t curse God - rather he said - <i>“I came into this world naked and I will leave it naked.”</i> Even Job’s wife tells him to curse God and die. (Yikes) But Job stays true to the God he loves. <i>“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”</i></p> <p><b>“The Friends”</b></p> <p>Job’s three best friends heard about all this disaster and came to him. Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Sounds like characters from the Lord of the Rings. When they showed up they cried, tore their robes and sat</p>

with Job for a week. Literally seven days and seven nights without saying anything. But then they do talk... a LOT.

The large bulk of the book of Job turns to a conversational exploration of God, His character and most of all, **His justice**. But the care Job's friends displayed over the past several days quickly washes away and we see a cascading tide of judgment.

#### Why do bad things happen?

- Eliphaz's view - Bad things happen to bad people..
- Bildad's view - Bad things happen because of the justice of God.
- Zophar's view - Bad things happen to bad people because of God's justice.

And Job responds - that he is innocent, that God is just either way and that they are bad friends. But there was another guy listening and he was mad. His name is Elihu and he burned with anger and spoke to Job and his three friends.

- Elihu's view - Bad people defend themselves, and a good God delivers people.

The three friends have been wrong—suffering is not proof of wickedness. And Job had been wrong— his suffering was not the proof of God's arbitrariness. Nor had God become his enemy. Elihu has come to put the argument on a new footing.

#### **God to Job**

Then the book just gets bonkers. God himself responds to Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Job. God comes in a whirlwind and speaks for several chapters giving dozens of examples of things only he understands - as if to say, you don't understand all of this but you can solve the problem of why bad things happen?

*"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"*

There are poetic looks into God's holy creation mechanisms:

*“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail” “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds?” “Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south?”*

God ends with this: *“Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.”*

Job replies and tells God he will be silent. God continues the same clear argumentation.

*Can you defeat Behemoth?* (probably a dinosaur) - No

*Can you fish out Leviathan with a hook?* (probably an extinct sea serpent) - No

God’s question: *Can you defeat these creatures?*

It is an ultimate point - Could man ever be as powerful as God? - No.

### **Epilogue**

The book could have ended there - God weighing people’s wisdom, seeing it lacking and showing His true power over top of everything. But rather, in His gracious way, God blesses Job. God blesses Job with twice as much of everything that he had before; animals, children, and Job lived to 140 years old - full of awesome days with God.

### **So what is the point?**

The question of Job: **Why do bad things happen?**

The answer of God: We may never know why bad things happen in this life but we can know God.

Knowing God in the midst of suffering

Knowing that God cares through the suffering

Knowing that God allows suffering for divine and holy purposes

Knowing God.

	<p>There's a ton we might not ever know in this life, but what we can know is better. We can know God, we can know Jesus.</p> <p>So why do bad things happen? We don't get to know, but we get to know God.</p>
<p><b>Discuss</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When in your life have you felt like Job? What did that feel like? What did you feel towards God in that season?</li> <li>2. Have you been Job's friends when others were struggling? How did you go back to build that relationship or do you still need to do so?</li> <li>3. In the end we realize that we will never know why bad things happen. How do you wrestle with this? How do you find peace in knowing God?</li> </ol> <p><u>Dive Deeper Question</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Have you had an Elihu in your life? Someone who has called you out in a Godly way? How can we be Elihu (with maybe a little less anger) to one another?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Dive deeper</b> <b>*optional</b></p>	<p><u>Five Reasons We Should Accept Elihu's Counsel:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>His Speech Is Presented as Something New</b></li> </ol> <p>The words of Elihu are introduced to us in chapter 32 not as a continuation or repetition of what the three friends had said, but as something new.</p> <p><i>Verses 1–3: So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became angry. He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God; he was angry also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong.</i></p> <p>In other words, Elihu disagrees with both sides of the argument. So he says in verse 14 to the three friends, "<i>He (i.e., Job) has not directed his words against me, and I will not answer him with your speeches.</i>"</p> <p>So Elihu has no intention of trying to settle the matter the way the three friends did. The writer wants us to listen to something new that takes us beyond the old argument.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Six Chapters Devoted to His Words</b></li> </ol>

The second reason that Elihu is more than a continuation of bad theology, is that the writer devotes six chapters to his words (32–37). The inadequacy of the theology of the three friends was demonstrated by the fact that their speeches got shorter near the end, and then died out completely. Bildad finishes with six verses (chapter 25), and Zophar can't even manage a closing comment. It would be very strange, then, if Elihu were given six chapters at this point to say all the inadequate things all over again and make no advance on the inadequate theology of these other three friends. Surely this large space given to his words signals that something crucial is being said here.

### **3. Job's Response to Elihu**

Job does not try to argue with Elihu. He had been successful in silencing Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, but he did not say one word against Elihu even though Elihu challenged him in 33:32, *"If you have anything to say, answer me."*

The easiest explanation for this silence is that Job agreed with him. In fact, in 42:6 Job does repent for some of the things he said, which shows that Elihu's rebukes are not all wide of the mark.

### **4. God's Response to Elihu**

In 42:7 God looks back over the period of suffering and rebukes Job's three friends, After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: *"My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."* But God does not rebuke Elihu. Why not? Probably because Elihu's words are not in the same class as the words of those three. Elihu's words are true and prepare the way for the final, decisive words of God. (He claims to be guided by the Spirit of God—32:8.)

### **5. He Offers Something New and Helpful**

Finally, Elihu really does offer a new understanding of the suffering of the righteous that Job and his three friends had not perceived. And his insight does indeed make sense out of the apparently arbitrary suffering that Job and other righteous people go through. Let's try to learn this morning what this young man has to say.

### Two Reasons Elihu's Anger Was Justified:

#### **1. He Shows Why Job's Three Friends Are Wrong**

He showed Job's three friends to be wrong. They said that the only way to explain Job's suffering was to say that God was punishing him for sin. Elihu shows that this is not the way to explain Job's suffering. The righteous do suffer. And their suffering is not a punishment for sin but a refinement of their righteousness. Suffering awakens their ear to new dimensions of God's reality and new depths of their own imperfection and need. Suffering deepens their faith and godliness. So the three friends of Job are wrong.

#### **2. He Shows Why Job Is Wrong**

But Job is wrong too. He had no better explanation for his suffering than his three friends did. His conception of God's justice was basically the same as theirs. Only Job insisted he was righteous, and so he could not make his suffering fit with the justice of God. He became so exasperated at times that he thought of God as his enemy. *How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin. Why dost thou hide thy face, and count me as thy enemy?* (13:23–24)

### Where is Jesus in Job?

He is in the shadows and speeches of this book. The best and clearest one is in Job 19:25 - *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth."* A clear and prescient representation of our hope. The REDEEMER. The one who will come and right every wrong. Job thinks he will potentially die from pain and even openly hopes so, but he knows that his redeemer lives. That's a present tense, he knows his redeemer and is boldly stating that his redeemer will come and stand on the earth. We don't know exactly when Job was written (some say around the time of Abraham in Genesis). Whenever it was written, this verse is a massive ARROW pointing forward. The good guy, earth's hero, Heaven's Son, will come and will redeem all who are willing.