

Survey of the Old Testament

Poetic Books: Book of Job

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Introduction

Author: The Book of Job does not specifically name its author. The most likely candidates are Job, Elihu, Moses, and Solomon. The book of Job, an ancient book of wisdom, remains relevant to many modern readers grappling with the question of God's sovereignty over suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent. Its wisdom-laden content enhances its enduring relevance. Job presents a hard reality of living in this world—sometimes, the righteous suffer for no apparent cause.

The book of Job is often considered the earliest written book in the Bible, but that would depend largely on the authorship. The text does not explicitly mention the author, and attributing it to Job himself is challenging, given the account of his death in the final chapter (Job 42:17) and the initial praise of Job's uprightness, seemingly from a third-party observer (1:1). Job might have contributed portions of the text—his speeches can certainly be attributed to him.

Jewish tradition attributes the book to Moses. Other narratives set in the time of the patriarchs were written by Moses, so it is reasonable to assume Moses wrote Job, too. Another suggestion is King Solomon, who is credited with a large portion of other wisdom literature. Then there's Elihu, a character in the text of Job. Elihu was the only one of Job's friends who truly emphasized God and His greatness rather than focus on the human response to Job's problems (Job 32—37). And he's the only one who is not rebuked by the Lord at the end of the book. Some scholars suggest Elihu, an eyewitness to the events of Job, could have been the author of the book.

Ultimately, we have to conclude that the author of Job remains anonymous.

Date of Writing: The date of the authorship of the Book of Job will be determined by the author of the Book of Job. If Moses was the author, the date would be around 1440 B.C. If Solomon was the author, the date would be around 950 B.C. Because we don't know the author, we can't know the date of writing.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Job helps us to understand the following: Satan cannot bring financial and physical destruction upon us unless it is by God's permission. God has power over what Satan can and cannot do. It is beyond our human ability to understand the "why's" behind all the suffering in the world. The wicked will receive their just dues. We cannot always blame suffering and sin on our lifestyles. Suffering may sometimes be allowed in our lives to purify, test, teach, or strengthen the soul. God remains enough, and He deserves and requests our love and praise in all circumstances of life.

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Key Verses

Job 1:1, "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."

Job 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

Job 38:1-2, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said, 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?'"

Job 42:5-6, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Brief Summary: At the beginning of the book of Job is a scene in heaven where Satan stands before God. God asks Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?" (Job 1:8), and Satan immediately accuses Job, a righteous man, of fearing God only because God had prospered him. "Strike everything, he has," Satan says, "and he will surely curse you to your face" (Job 1:11). God grants Satan limited permission to put Job to the test. Why do the righteous suffer? This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health. Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, come to "comfort" him and to discuss his crushing series of tragedies. They insist his suffering is punishment for sin in his life. Job, though, remains devoted to God through all of this and contends that his life has not been one of sin. A fourth man, Elihu, tells Job he needs to humble himself and submit to God's use of trials to purify his life. Finally, Job questions God Himself and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God and his need to totally trust in the Lord. Job is then restored to health, happiness, and prosperity beyond his earlier state.

Foreshadowings: As Job was pondering the cause of his misery, three questions came to his mind, all of which are answered only in our Lord Jesus Christ. These questions occur in chapter 14. First, in verse 4, Job asks, "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!?" Job's question comes from a heart that recognizes it cannot possibly please God or become justified in His sight. God is holy; we are not. Therefore, a great gulf exists between man and God, caused by sin. But the answer to Job's anguished question is found in Jesus Christ. He has paid the penalty for our sin and has exchanged it for His righteousness, thereby making us acceptable in God's sight (Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

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Job's second question, "But man dies and lies prostrate; Man expires, and where is he?" (vs. 10), is another question about eternity and life and death that is answered only in Christ. With Christ, the answer to 'where is he?' is eternal life in heaven. Without Christ, the answer is an eternity in "outer darkness" where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Job's third question, found in verse 14, is "If a man dies, will he live again?" Once again, the answer is found in Christ. We do indeed live again if we are in Him. "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Practical Application: The Book of Job reminds us that there is a "cosmic conflict" going on behind the scenes that we usually know nothing about. Often, we wonder why God allows something, and we question or doubt God's goodness, without seeing the full picture. The Book of Job teaches us to trust God under all circumstances. We must trust God, not only WHEN we do not understand, but BECAUSE we do not understand. The psalmist tells us, "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). If God's ways are "perfect," then we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. This may not seem possible to us, but our minds are not God's mind. It is true that we can't expect to understand His mind perfectly, as He reminds us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Nevertheless, our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him, and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

Understanding Wisdom Literature

Wisdom literature was a category of literature in many cultures in the time of the Old Testament. Wisdom literature deals with the way the world "works." It can deal with the big philosophical problems and the smaller things that may be addressed with common sense. Modern philosophical writings might be in the same vein as ancient wisdom literature. Modern philosophers write about such lofty issues as the problem of evil, while others address more mundane matters from a practical standpoint. A modern example of the more practical wisdom might be Benjamin Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanac," source of the wise saying "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." This is not lofty, academic philosophy, but it is philosophy of sorts.

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The wisdom literature of ancient Israel was unique in that God was recognized as the fountainhead of all wisdom. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). Through common grace, people can gain a certain amount of wisdom about how to live in the world. There are unbelievers who know how to manage their money well, respond positively to difficult situations, and even respond to tragedy with strength and dignity. However, it is the Lord who created the world, and only He can give true insight into the way the world works, because His wisdom is seen in the light of eternity. In the Old Testament, there are five books that are classified as wisdom literature:

Job

The book of Job deals with the problem of evil and the justice of God. Job is a faithful man who loses everything. He has friends who tell him that he must be guilty of some great sin and that he should confess it and perhaps God will restore him (Job 11:13–15). In their worldview, this kind of thing only happens to the wicked. Job, however, maintains his innocence but does come quite close to questioning God’s justice because in Job’s world, too, things like this should only happen to the wicked. In the end, God appears to Job and emphasizes the fact that what He is doing is bigger than any simple formula that people may concoct (chapters 38–41). In the end, the book does not answer the question of why the righteous suffer, but it does turn the focus to God who is in control.

Psalms

There are 150 psalms, all examples of wisdom literature and generally prayers and/or songs of worship. Many of them deal with the difficult problems of life such as “why do the wicked prosper?” and “if God loves me, why is this happening to me?” Psalm 73 is an example of a “philosophical” psalm. The writer looks around at how the wicked are prospering and is tempted to envy them because they seem to have it so good. “My feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:2–3). But then he remembers that their prosperity is only for a limited period. He considers what will happen to them in the end: “Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds” (verses 27–28). Indeed, the whole book of Psalms may be seen as addressing the issue of why God has allowed Israel to suffer when it is the “chosen nation.” The answer is that, even as Israel suffers God’s chastisement, He will never abandon them.

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Proverbs

Most of the book of Proverbs is made up of short, pithy sayings about how the world works. Some of these bits of wisdom literature address simple, common-sense solutions to life's problems. Proverbs 27:14 is almost comical but true: "If anyone loudly blesses their neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse." In other words, let your neighbor sleep if he wants to! This proverb is also very practical: "Don't visit your neighbors too often, or you will wear out your welcome" (Proverbs 25:17). Another is sad but true: "Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife" (Proverbs 17:1).

The truth of many of the proverbs can be readily apprehended without any special spiritual insight, but others will make more sense when viewed from God's perspective: "For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword" (Proverbs 5:3–4). And some will only make sense when viewed from the perspective of eternity: "The Lord works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster" (Proverbs 16:4).

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes may be one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Some things in the book seem to be flatly at odds with everything else in the Bible. For example, Ecclesiastes 3:19–21 says, "Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?" However, when one understands that the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is "Life without God," the book begins to make sense. Ecclesiastes reveals the inner thinking of a person who has lost hope in the God of the Bible. If God is not a good, loving, faithful God, then the above passage is completely logical. The point of Ecclesiastes is that life "under the sun" (a phrase the author uses to describe life on a completely horizontal level) is meaningless. The only sensible conclusion is to stop looking for meaning "under the sun" and to "remember your Creator" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs)

Song of Solomon is also an example of wisdom literature. The book is a poetic picture of marriage written by or about Solomon and a woman he loves. Scholars disagree on exactly how it should be understood and exactly who is saying what. But the bottom line seems to be that Solomon loves the woman and this book gives some practical ways that he can express his love.

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Book of Job, a true story or a parable/allegory?"

The book of Job is one of the world's oldest, most influential, and most powerfully written works of literature. Because it is very old and the book does not identify the author, there is no way to be entirely sure who wrote Job or exactly when it was written. Some theorize that the story of Job was recorded by Samuel, Moses, or an even earlier Hebrew author. The setting for the story itself is ancient, making no reference to the priesthood or temple sacrifices. The book is also written mostly in poetic form. As a result, some wonder if the book of Job is, in fact, a parable or allegory. Jesus often told parables, and in such stories the characters and situations are not assumed to be actual, but simply a means to make a point. Could the book of Job be non-literal, too?

In the case of Job, there are several good reasons to interpret the book as historical rather than allegorical. These include the way in which Job is introduced, references to Job in the book of Ezekiel, and references to Job in the book of James.

In the first chapter of the book of Job, Job is introduced as a man from a specific location: the country of Uz. The book also goes into detail about Job's finances and family. While it is possible that these might simply be vivid details of a parable, such particulars were not common in ancient allegorical literature. The general way that Job, the man, is described suggests that this was a real person.

The Old Testament consistently refers to Job as though he were a real, historical person. In Ezekiel 14:14 and 20, God mentions Noah, Daniel, and Job as examples of righteousness. The context of this statement would not make sense if Job were merely a literary figure. The assumption of this text is that Job was as real as Noah and Daniel.

The New Testament makes a similar reference to Job. In James 5:11 Job is mentioned as an example of spiritual endurance. Every other figure mentioned in the book of James is an actual, historical person, including Abraham, Rahab, and Elijah. As with Ezekiel's reference to Job, James' allusion makes the most sense if Job is an actual person whom we are to emulate.

All in all, there is more evidence suggesting Job to be an account of history than a parable or allegory. Based on current information, we can't say for sure when it was written or by whom. However, both internal and external evidence seem to suggest that Job is meant to be read as fact, not fiction.

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According to the Bible, who is Job?

The life of Job demonstrates that humans are often unaware of the many ways God is at work in the life of each believer. Job's life is also one that prompts the common question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" It is the age-old question, and difficult to answer, but believers know that God is always in control, and, no matter what happens, there are no coincidences—nothing happens by chance. Job was a believer; he knew that God was on the throne and in total control, though he had no way of knowing why so many terrible tragedies were occurring in his life.

Job was "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). He had ten children and was a man of great wealth. The Bible tells us that one day Satan presented himself before God and God asked Satan what he thought of Job. Satan accused Job of honoring God only because God had blessed him. So, God allowed Satan to take away Job's wealth and his children. Later, God allowed Satan to afflict Job physically. Job grieved deeply but did not charge God with wrongdoing (Job 1:22; 42:7–8).

Job's friends were certain that Job must have sinned to deserve punishment and argued with him about it. But Job maintained his innocence, though he confessed that he wanted to die and did ask questions of God. A younger man, Elihu, attempted to speak on God's behalf before God, Himself, answered Job. Job 38–42 contains some of the most stunning poetry about the magnitude and might of God. Job responded to God's discourse in humility and repentance, saying he had spoken of things he did not know (Job 40:3–5; 42:1–6). God told Job's friends that He was angry with them for speaking falsehoods about Him, unlike Job who had spoken truth (Job 42:7–8). God told them to offer sacrifices, and that Job would pray on their behalf and God would accept Job's prayer. Job did so, likely forgiving his friends for their harshness himself. God restored Job's fortunes two-fold (Job 42:10) and "blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part" (Job 42:12). Job lived 140 years after his suffering.

Job never lost his faith in God, even under the most heartbreaking circumstances that tested him to his core. It's hard to imagine losing everything we own in one day—property, possessions, and even children. Though depressed enough to curse the day of his birth (Job 3:1–26), Job never cursed God (Job 2:9–10) nor did he waver in his understanding that God was still in control. Job's three friends, on the other hand, instead of comforting him, gave him bad advice and even accused him of committing sins so grievous that God was punishing him with misery. Job knew God well enough to know that He did not work that way; in fact, he had such an intimate, personal relationship with Him that he was able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face" (Job 13:15). When Job's wife suggested he curse God and die, Job replied "You are talking like a foolish woman.

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Job's plight, from the death of his children and loss of his property to the physical torment he endured, plus the harangue of his so-called friends, never caused his faith to waver. He knew who his Redeemer was, he knew that He was a living Savior, and he knew that someday He would physically stand on the earth (Job 19:25). He understood that man's days are ordained (numbered) and they cannot be changed (Job 14:5). The spiritual depth of Job is shown throughout the book. James refers to Job as an example of perseverance, writing, "Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:10–11).

The book of Job gives us a glimpse behind the veil that separates earthly life from the heavenly. In the beginning of the book, we see that Satan and his fallen angels are still allowed access to heaven, going in and out to the prescribed meetings that take place there. What is obvious from these accounts is that Satan is busy working his evil on earth, as recorded in Job 1:6–7. Also, this account shows how Satan is "the accuser of the brethren," which corresponds to Revelation 12:10, and it shows his arrogance and pride, as written in Isaiah 14:13–14. It is amazing to see how Satan challenges God; he has no scruples about confronting the Most High. The account in Job shows Satan as he truly is—haughty and evil to the core.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we learn from the book of Job is that God does not have to answer to anyone for what He does or does not do. Job's experience teaches us that we may never know the specific reason for suffering, but we must trust in our sovereign, holy, righteous God. His ways are perfect (Psalm 18:30). Since God's ways are perfect, we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. We can't expect to understand God's mind perfectly, as He reminds us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him, and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not. When we do, we will find God amid our trials—possibly even because of our trials. We will see more clearly the magnificence of our God, and we will say, with Job, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5).

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Lesson 01 – Job Part 1

OPEN IT

1. Do you remember a time when you were suffering, and no one seemed to show compassion or care?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean that Job was blameless and upright? (1:1)
3. What is a hedge of protection? (1:8-10)
4. Does Satan need permission to test Job? Why? (1:8-12)
5. What does it mean that the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away? (Job 1:21)
6. Why did Job's wife tell him to curse God and die? (Job 2:9)
7. Why did Job refer to his friends as miserable comforters? (Job 2:11, 16:2)
8. Who were Job's friends? (Job 2:11-13) How long was Job suffering according to these verses?
9. Did Job curse God for his suffering? (Job 3)

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Lesson 01 – Job Part 1

10. What was Eliphaz the Temanite's message to Job? (Job 4,5, 15, 22) (Job 5:8)

11. What was Job's response to his friend, Eliphaz? (Job 6:29)

12. What was Bildad the Shuhite's message to Job? (Job 8, 18, 25) (Job 8:2)

13. What was Job's response to his friend, Bildad? (Job 10:2)

14. What is the importance of the land of Uz? (Job 1)

GET IT

15. Was it unfair for God to allow Job to suffer over what was an argument between God and Satan?

16. Why did God allow Job to suffer?

APPLY IT

17. This week, encourage someone that is suffering and share the encouragement of the Lord.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

1.

2.

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Lesson 01 – Notes

Structure of the Book

Job is in five parts, the first and last of which are in prose, as we have seen.

- I. Prologue (**Job 1–2**)
- II. The Controversy of Job with His Three Friends (**Job 3–31**)
- III. The Words of Elihu (**Job 32–37**)
- IV. The Answer of the Lord (**Job 38–41**)
- V. Epilogue (**Job 42**)

3. Prologue: What Took Place in Heaven (Job 1–2)

This book shows the reality of Satan, proving he is “the accuser of our brothers” (**Revelation 12:10**). Satan accused Job of serving God only because God had blessed him and had given him many gifts. There is comfort for the child of God in knowing that Satan cannot get at him or her without God’s express permission. For once, strangely enough, the devil, the “father of lies,” tells the truth when he says to God concerning Job, “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands ...” (**Job 1:10**).

Two tests are permitted by God. In the first, Job loses his possessions and his children. In the second, Job is afflicted with a painful and loathsome disease. In each case God says that Job did not sin with his lips (**Job 1:22; 2:10**). This is the background. The prologue ends when Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, arrive to come “sympathize with him and comfort him” (**Job 2:11**).

4. The Controversy of Job with His Three Friends (Job 3–31)

In this lengthy section there are three cycles of discussion: Job speaks and then each of the friends speaks in turn, being answered each time by Job.

- a. The First Cycle (**Job 3–14**)
- b. The Second Cycle (**Job 15–21**)
- c. The Third Cycle (**Job 22–31**)

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Lesson 01 – Notes

While the three friends emphasize different points, their basic premise is the same: Job is suffering because he is a great sinner. As the discussion progresses, the friends become more severe in their condemnation of Job. Bildad speaks more sternly than Eliphaz, and Zophar even more sternly. In the second round of the discussion the intensity of their condemnation increases. This time Zophar speaks only briefly. In the third round, which is the harshest of all, Bildad cuts his words short, and Zophar does not even speak, apparently considering Job to be beyond help.

Much that the friends say is true, as Job gladly acknowledges, concerning the great principles of sin and retribution. It is true that sin brings punishment, which, of course, entails suffering. The mistake of the friends, however, is in thinking that all suffering is the result of personal sin. The only explanation to their limited understanding is that sin brings suffering; therefore, a man who is suffering as much as Job must be a great sinner.

Although Job is perplexed and complains bitterly that he cannot understand the *why* of his suffering, he does not claim to be sinless. He protests, however, that his friends do not have the true explanation. Bildad, in his first speech, plainly states that he considers Job a hypocrite (see **Job 8:13**). Zophar goes even further and calls Job a liar (**Job 11:3**). In his answer to the friends in this first cycle, Job uses sarcasm (**Job 12:2**) and points out that the things that they have said about sin and suffering are common knowledge but are not the answer to his problem.

After Eliphaz has spoken the second time, Job calls his friends “miserable comforters” (**Job 16:2**). Although he is troubled and perplexed and is constantly asking why, nevertheless Job’s faith is authentic and powerful, reaching its height in the wonderful words, “I know that my Redeemer lives” (**Job 19:25**).

To the statement that suffering always is the result of sin, Job poses the counter problem of the wicked man who seemingly enjoys prosperity throughout of his life. The friends can only maintain their original theory that suffering is a punishment. Eliphaz accuses Job of “endless sins” and great wickedness (**Job 22:5**).

5. The Words of Elihu (Job 32–37)

Elihu, a young man who had stood by listening to the controversy of Job and his three friends, can no longer restrain himself. He does not approve either of what the friends have said or of what Job has said. Elihu is much closer to the solution of the problem than were the three friends. His premise throughout his speech is that suffering is remedial. Through it, God is disciplining and teaching. He believes that Job has accused God unjustly.

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Lesson 01 – Notes

Scripture makes it plain that some suffering is penal and that some suffering is remedial. Much of what Job's three friends have said is true; much that Elihu said is true; but even Elihu does not have the final answer to the problem of the book. God has given us, by inspiration, exactly what each of these persons has said. However, this does *not* mean that their words express God's thought upon the matter of suffering. In fact, in the epilogue, God clearly states that the friends have not spoken that which is right. Hence, we must be very careful, in quoting from the book of Job, that we do not take a quotation from its context and misapply it. Every word recorded in the book is inspired of God. This is true even of the words of Satan; yet we would not quote these words as though they were what God had to say.

6. The Answer of the Lord (Job 38–41)

Scripture plainly says that the Lord answered Job (**Job 38:1**). The most unique aspect of this answer is that it consists of a series of questions. Not once does God explain to Job the reason for his suffering. Instead, He asks Job questions concerning his knowledge of the natural world, with the clear implication that, since Job cannot even answer these questions, he clearly cannot understand questions about the spiritual realm. As the Lord's answer continues, Job realizes his own unworthiness (**Job 40:4**), and finally in the closing chapter he comes to despise himself and repents (**Job 42:6**). Job finally discovers that he does not need to know *why* if he knows God. A true vision of God gave to him a true vision of himself.

Some maintain this proves the point of the three friends that Job really was a sinner, but we must not overlook the words spoken by God Himself in the prologue. The truth is presented that those who know God best are most conscious of their own worthlessness—the greatest saints are those who know best their own innate sinfulness. So, it was with Isaiah when he saw the Lord (**Isaiah 6**), with Daniel by the Tigris River (**Daniel 10**), and with John on the Island of Patmos (**Revelation 1:9**). After he was a Christian for many years, Paul testified, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (**Romans 7:18**).

7. Epilogue (Job 42)

God is fully justified and glorified against the slander of Satan. Some suffering is for punishment; some is for teaching and discipline; but there is a higher purpose in some suffering. It is for the glory of God, which is the most important consideration in the universe. James tells us, “You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the LORD finally brought about. The LORD is full of compassion and mercy” (**James 5:11**). In the closing section of the book, God, who always delights to give to His own, gives to Job twice as much as he had before (**Job 42:10**). God is glorified in a human life, and the implication is that Job's experience is not unique. Satan has similarly accused others and God has been justified in the lives of many of His children.

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Lesson 01 – Notes

What is the importance of the land of Uz?

The land of Uz in the Bible is the homeland of Job, the righteous man whose faith was tested through great suffering: “In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East” (Job 1:1–3).

The exact location of the land of Uz is uncertain. Besides the reference to Uz in the opening verse of the book of Job as the country in which Job lived, the land itself is mentioned only in two other passages of Scripture. Jeremiah 25:20 remarks on the “kings of the land of Uz” as being among many kings and officials being judged in the Lord’s wrath. Here the land of Uz is associated with Edom (verse 21). In Lamentations the connection with Edom recurs: “Rejoice and be glad, Daughter Edom, you who live in the land of Uz. But to you also the cup will be passed; you will be drunk and stripped naked” (Lamentations 4:21).

The book of Job states that Job lived near the desert (Job 1:19) but that the territory was fertile for farming and raising livestock (Job 1:3, 14; 42:12). These verses also tell us that Job was the greatest of all “the people of the East” who lived in the land of Uz. And in Job 1:17 we read that Job’s homeland was vulnerable to Chaldean raiding parties. If we piece all these details together, the land of Uz appears to have been located to the east of the land of Israel and east of Edom in northern Arabia.

The *New American Commentary: Job* suggests Wadi Sirhan, a two-hundred-mile-long depression in the northernmost part of Saudi Arabia, as the most likely contender for being the land of Uz: “It is the catchment for the waters that run off Jebel Druz and is capable of supporting large herds of livestock such as Job had. . . . It was close enough to Edom to be occasionally linked with it, yet it was also within striking distance for Chaldean raiders” (vol. 11, p. 47).

Uz is also the name of three Old Testament figures. The first is the son of Aram and grandson of Shem (Genesis 10:22; 1 Chronicles 1:17). The second is Abraham’s nephew, the son of Nahor and Milcah and brother of Buz (Genesis 22:21). Finally, an Edomite living in Seir was named Uz. He was one of the sons of Dishan the Horite (Genesis 36:28; 1 Chronicles 1:42). The connection between Edom and the land of Uz strongly suggests that Uz was inhabited by descendants of this Horite man from Seir. From him, the land of Uz most likely inherited its name.

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Lesson 02 – Job Part 2

OPEN IT

1. When were you wronged for something when you thought you were right?

EXPLORE IT

2. What was Zophar the Naamathite's message to Job? (Job 11,20) (Job 11:13-14)
3. What was Job's response to his friend, Zophar? (Job 13:8)
4. How could Job say, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him?" (Job 13:15)
5. What does it mean to make a covenant with your eyes? (Job 31:1)
6. What was Elihu's message to Job? (Job 32-37) (Job 33:33)
7. What was Job's response to Elihu? Did Job respond?
8. What was God's message to Job? (Job 38-41) (Job 40:2)
9. What was Job's reply to God? (Job 42:3-6)
10. What did Job's friends have wrong and what did they have right? (Job 42:7-9)

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Lesson 02 – Job Part 2

11. What happened after Job prayed for his friends? (Job 42:10-17)

12. Did Job sin in anything he said? (Job 42:1-6)

GET IT

13. How would you describe the “patience of Job?” (James 5:10-11)

14. Why do the wicked prosper? Or do they?

APPLY IT

15. How can you exercise more patience this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

1.

2.

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Lesson 02 – Notes

1. The Words of Elihu (Job 32–37)

Elihu, a young man who had stood by listening to the controversy of Job and his three friends, can no longer restrain himself. He does not approve either of what the friends have said or of what Job has said. Elihu is much closer to the solution of the problem than were the three friends. His premise throughout his speech is that suffering is remedial. Through it, God is disciplining and teaching. He believes that Job has accused God unjustly.

Scripture makes it plain that some suffering is penal and that some suffering is remedial. Much of what Job's three friends have said is true; much that Elihu said is true; but even Elihu does not have the final answer to the problem of the book. God has given us, by inspiration, exactly what each of these persons has said. However, this does *not* mean that their words express God's thought upon the matter of suffering. In fact, in the epilogue, God clearly states that the friends have not spoken that which is right. Hence, we must be very careful, in quoting from the book of Job, that we do not take a quotation from its context and misapply it. Every word recorded in the book is inspired of God. This is true even of the words of Satan; yet we would not quote these words as though they were what God had to say.

2. The Answer of the Lord (Job 38–41)

Scripture plainly says that the Lord answered Job (**Job 38:1**). The most unique aspect of this answer is that it consists of a series of questions. Not once does God explain to Job the reason for his suffering. Instead, He asks Job questions concerning his knowledge of the natural world, with the clear implication that, since Job cannot even answer these questions, he clearly cannot understand questions about the spiritual realm. As the Lord's answer continues, Job realizes his own unworthiness (**Job 40:4**), and finally in the closing chapter he comes to despise himself and repents (**Job 42:6**). Job finally discovers that he does not need to know *why* if he knows God. A true vision of God gave to him a true vision of himself.

Some maintain this proves the point of the three friends that Job really was a sinner, but we must not overlook the words spoken by God Himself in the prologue. The truth is presented that those who know God best are most conscious of their own worthlessness—the greatest saints are those who know best their own innate sinfulness. So, it was with Isaiah when he saw the Lord (**Isaiah 6**), with Daniel by the Tigris River (**Daniel 10**), and with John on the Island of Patmos (**Revelation 1:9**). After he was a Christian for many years, Paul testified, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (**Romans 7:18**).

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Lesson 02 – Notes

7. Epilogue (Job 42)

God is fully justified and glorified against the slander of Satan. Some suffering is for punishment; some is for teaching and discipline; but there is a higher purpose in some suffering. It is for the glory of God, which is the most important consideration in the universe. James tells us, “You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the LORD finally brought about. The LORD is full of compassion and mercy” (**James 5:11**). In the closing section of the book, God, who always delights to give to His own, gives to Job twice as much as he had before (**Job 42:10**). God is glorified in a human life, and the implication is that Job’s experience is not unique. Satan has similarly accused others and God has been justified in the lives of many of His children.

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Author: The brief descriptions that introduce the psalms have David listed as author in 73 instances. David's personality and identity are clearly stamped on many of these psalms. While David wrote many of the individual psalms, he is not the author of the entire collection. Two of the psalms (72 and 127) are attributed to Solomon, David's son and successor. Psalm 90 is a prayer assigned to Moses. Another group of 12 psalms (50) and (73—83) is ascribed to the family of Asaph. The sons of Korah wrote 11 psalms (42, 44—49, 84—85, 87—88). Psalm 88 is attributed to Heman, while Psalm 89 is assigned to Ethan the Ezrahite. Apart from Solomon and Moses, all these additional authors were priests or Levites who were responsible for providing music for sanctuary worship during David's reign. Fifty of the psalms designate no specific person as author, although two of those are designated elsewhere in the Bible as psalms of David.

Date of Writing: A careful examination of the authorship question, as well as the subject matter covered by the psalms themselves, reveals that they span a period of many centuries. The oldest psalm in the collection is probably the prayer of Moses (90), a reflection on the frailty of man as compared to the eternity of God. The latest psalm is probably (137), a song of lament clearly written during the days when the Hebrews were being held captive by the Babylonians, from about 586 to 538 B.C.

The 150 individual psalms were written by many different people across a period of a thousand years in Israel's history. They must have been compiled and put together in their present form by some unknown editor shortly after the captivity ended about 537 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Psalms has far more "chapters" than any other book in the Bible, with 150 individual psalms. It is also one of the most diverse, since the psalms deal with such subjects as God and His creation, war, worship, wisdom, sin and evil, judgment, justice, and the coming of the Messiah.

Key Verses:

Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Psalm 22:16-19, "Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."

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Psalms 29:1-2, "Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness."

Psalms 51:10, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalms 119:1-2, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart."

Brief Summary: The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Parts of this book were used as a hymnal in the worship services of ancient Israel. The musical heritage of the psalms is demonstrated by its title. It comes from a Greek word which means "a song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument."

Foreshadowings: God's provision of a Savior for His people is a recurring theme in the Psalms. Prophetic pictures of the Messiah are seen in numerous psalms. Psalm 2:1-12 portrays the Messiah's triumph and kingdom. Psalm 16:8-11 foreshadows His death and resurrection. Psalm 22 shows us the suffering Savior on the cross and presents detailed prophecies of the crucifixion, all of which were fulfilled perfectly. The glories of the Messiah and His bride are on exhibit in Psalm 45:6-7, while Psalms 72:6-17, 89:3-37, 110:1-7 and 132:12-18 present the glory and universality of His reign.

Practical Application: One of the results of being filled with the Spirit or the word of Christ is singing. The psalms are the "songbook" of the early church that reflected the new truth in Christ.

God is the same Lord in all the psalms. But we respond to Him in different ways, according to the specific circumstances of our lives. What a marvelous God we worship, the psalmist declares, high and lifted up beyond our human experiences but also close enough to touch and who walks beside us along life's way.

We can bring all our feelings to God—no matter how negative or complaining they may be—and we can rest assured that He will hear and understand. The psalmist teaches us that the most profound prayer of all is a cry for help as we find ourselves overwhelmed by the problems of life.

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Poetic Books: Book of Psalms

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So, what is a Psalm?

A psalm is a song or poem used in worship. The word *psalm* comes from the Greek word *psallein*, which means “to pluck.” That word gave rise to *psalmos*, which means “a song sung to harp music.” (The strings on a harp are plucked, at least some of the time.) Finally, the English word *psalm* means “song” but usually refers to a sacred song regardless of what instrument it might be played on.

David is the author of many of the biblical psalms, and he is also known as one who played the harp, although the “harp” he played was not like a modern harp that might be used in an orchestra; rather, it was a small, handheld stringed instrument that today would be called a “lyre.” “Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play” (1 Samuel 16:23). Most modern translations use the word *lyre* instead of *harp*. So, David wrote lyrics and played the lyre, or we might say he would *psallein* his instrument and write psalms. Today, *hymns* might be the word that evokes an idea like *psalms*.

Today, we usually read the biblical psalms, often privately, rather than sing them. While many individual psalms came out of intensely personal and difficult situations, they were eventually put into a collection that was meant to be used in public worship.

The book of Psalms is a book of songs that is sometimes called “Israel’s National Hymnbook.” The title of the book in Hebrew is *Tehillim*, which means “Praises.” It is a book of praises, but some of the psalms are written out of deep despair and questioning. It is a book of prayers containing the writers’ innermost questions and doubts as well as their praises and thanksgiving.

Some of the biblical psalms tell us the names of the tunes that should go with them, but, alas, those tunes are lost to us. For instance, the heading of Psalm 22 says, “To the tune of ‘The Doe of the Morning.’” Perhaps “The Doe of the Morning” was a popular song and David wrote new words for it with spiritual content. It is also possible that “The Doe of the Morning” was a tune written specifically for this song/psalm, although there is nothing in the psalm that would seem to call for this title. It is not uncommon for modern songwriters to put the psalms to music, and one organization has written music for all 150 psalms.

Ephesians 5:18–20: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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Here are some technical facts to know when discussing psalms:

- When referring to the biblical book, *Psalms* is written with a capital *P*.
- When referring to psalms in general (i.e., songs, hymns, psalms, etc.) a lowercase *p* is used.
- The book is referred to as “Psalms” (plural), but individual psalms are referred to in the singular, as in “Please open your Bibles to Psalm 145,” and “I am going to read a psalm this morning.”
- The book of Psalms has the most verses of any book in the Bible but no chapters. The individual psalms are songs, not chapters; therefore, it would be technically incorrect to say, “Please open your Bibles to Psalms chapter 145.”
- Sometimes the book of Psalms is called “The Psalter,” which simply means “a book of psalms.”

Why is the book of Psalms divided into five books?"

The book of Psalms is the longest book of the Bible, with 150 “chapters”—more properly called “psalms” or “songs.” Psalms is divided into five books:

Book 1: Psalms 1—41

Book 2: Psalms 42—72

Book 3: Psalms 73—89

Book 4: Psalms 90—106

Book 5: Psalms 107—150

It is uncertain why Psalms is divided into five books. Some sources, including Jewish Midrash traditions, suggest the five-fold division is based on the five books of the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy). The division of the Psalms is not based on authorship or chronology, as several authors composed Psalms, and their individual songs are mixed throughout the various collections.

David is listed as the author of 73 psalms, Asaph of 12, and the sons of Korah of 11. Other psalms were written by Solomon, Heman the Ezrahite, Ethan the Ezrahite, and Moses (Psalm 90). The earliest extant copy of Psalms is from the Dead Sea Scrolls from about the first century AD. That copy shows that the division into five books extends to at least that time and certainly earlier.

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It is most likely that Ezra and/or other Jewish religious leaders compiled the Psalms into their existing order during Ezra's lifetime in the fourth century BC. Interestingly, the Psalms was one of the most popular writings among the Dead Sea Scrolls, with thirty scrolls of all or parts of the book included. Overall, Psalms is the book of the Old Testament with the most Hebrew manuscripts available for research, indicating its enduring popularity among both Jews and Christians.

Each of these five books or sections of Psalms ends with a doxology or a song of praise. The final verse of each concluding psalm includes either "Praise the Lord!" or "Amen." For example, the final verse of Psalm 41 ends this way: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, / from everlasting to everlasting. / Amen and Amen." Psalm 150, the final psalm, serves as the fitting final doxology, concluding with the words, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. / Praise the Lord."

What are the different types of psalms?"

The 150 psalms in the book of Psalms have often been categorized into various types. There is no one way to organize the psalms, but most systems include similar categories with only slight variations. Biblical scholar Hermann Gunkel's system covers the following categories:

Hymns: Many of the psalms are simple hymns or songs of praise. For example, Psalm 8 is a hymn that begins, "Lord, our Lord, / how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (verse 1).

Lament or Complaint Psalms: These include songs that express sadness to God or complaints against God's enemies. For example, Psalm 3 is a lament psalm that begins, "Lord, how many are my foes! / How many rise up against me!" (verse 1). Some complaint psalms sound quite negative, though they are set within a context of God responding in love or power. Psalm 44:23–24, for example, says, "Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? / Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. / Why do you hide your face / and forget our misery and oppression?"

Royal Psalms: Several psalms were performed in the presence of kings or dignitaries. Psalm 18:50 states, "He gives his king great victories; / he shows unfailing love to his anointed, / to David and to his descendants forever."

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Thanksgiving Psalms: These songs of thanks include both thanksgiving from individuals (such as Psalms 30, 32, and 34) and from the community (such as Psalms 67 and 124). One of the best-known thanksgiving psalms is Psalm 100. Verses 4–5 proclaim, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving / and his courts with praise; / give thanks to him and praise his name. / For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; / his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Wisdom Psalms: While many psalms discuss aspects of wisdom, certain psalms such as Psalms 1, 37, and 49 focus on the theme of wisdom, speaking of the fear of the Lord or offering words of wisdom. Psalm 1:1–3 is a great example: “Blessed is the one / who does not walk in step with the wicked / or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, / but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, / and who meditates on his law day and night. / That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, / which yields its fruit in season / and whose leaf does not wither— / whatever they do prospers.”

Smaller Genres and Mixed Types: Some psalms include a mix of types. Psalms 9, 10, and 123 are examples. Other psalms have only a small number in their category, such as psalms regarding the stories of Israel (Psalms 78, 105, and 106). The Songs of Ascent, written to be sung by worshipers on their way up to Jerusalem, also represent a smaller genre that includes mixed types (Psalms 120—134).

Hebrew Poetry

The chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry is neither rhyme nor rhythm, but a kind of “sense rhythm” or repetition of ideas, usually known as “parallelism.” Because of this quality, Hebrew poetry can be translated into any language without losing its poetic form. While there are many types of parallelism, the three most common types are:

- **“Synonymous parallelism,”** in which both lines say substantially the same thing in different words. Such as Job 38:7; “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” The phrases morning stars and parallel phrases referring to angels.
- **“Anti-thetical parallelism,”** in which the second line provides a contrasting parallel to the truth of the first line. Proverbs 14:34; “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. In parallelism, sin is contrasted to righteousness.
- **“Synthetical parallelism”** in which one line builds on the previous line. Such as Psalm 1:3; “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” In this verse the righteous man is one whose life is first “planted” so that it “yields” and “does not wither” until it finally “prosperes”.

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- **“Exemplar parallelism”** in which one line metaphorically illustrates the literal truth of the other. Such as Proverbs 27:17; “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” The first line is a metaphorical illustration of the literal truth that one man’s wit or personality is sharpened by another’s.

Inquiring Minds Asked: How Many Psalms Did David Write?

Contrary to popular belief, David is not the only author of the Psalms. In fact, of the 150 Psalms, David is named as the author of only 75.

David is specifically noted as the author of 73 psalms in the titles of the psalms. These include Psalms 3—9; 11—32; 34—41; 51—65; 68—70; 86; 101; 103; 108—110; 122; 124; 131; 133; and 138—145.

In addition to these psalms, David is mentioned as the author of two psalms by writers in the New Testament. Psalm 2 is attributed to David in Acts 4:25: “You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?’”

And Psalm 95 is attributed to David in Hebrews 4:7: “God again set a certain day, calling it ‘Today.’ This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’”

The first psalm of David’s that we find is Psalm 3, written when David fled from his son Absalom. From this title we surmise that David’s psalms are not organized in chronological order but rather by themes. David’s psalms are found throughout the five books of the Psalms that were likely grouped upon the completion of Psalms during the time of Ezra in the fourth century BC.

Many of David’s psalms lack background information regarding their context, but thirteen do share details of their setting:

1. Psalm 3: A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.
2. Psalm 7: A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.
3. Psalm 30: A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.

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4. Psalm 34: Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.
5. Psalm 51: A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone into Bathsheba.
6. Psalm 52: A Maskil of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."
7. Psalm 54: A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "Is not David hiding among us?"
8. Psalm 56: A Miktam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.
9. Psalm 57: A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.
10. Psalm 59: A Miktam of David, when Saul sent men to watch his house to kill him.
11. Psalm 60: A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.
12. Psalm 63: A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.
13. Psalm 142: A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer. by another's

For My Brother Jorge: Explain the Musical Terms in the Book of Psalms

Several musical terms are used in the titles or verse breaks of the Psalms. In most Bible translations, a footnote will state that the meaning of these musical terms is uncertain. Many versions of the Bible will not attempt to translate the terms but instead will transliterate the Hebrew letters into a word pronounceable in English. The following list of musical terms in the book of Psalms gives a reference where each term can be found, along with suggested meanings:

***Alamoth*:** Psalm 46:1. The meaning of this word is uncertain, although it has been suggested that the term refers to the music's pitch being high or soprano, since its Hebrew root refers to young women or virgins.

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Gittith: Psalm 81:1. Many meanings for *gittith* have been suggested, including “tune from Gath” and “song from the grape harvest.”

Higgaion: Psalm 9:16. The meaning of this word is uncertain, with some suggesting it refers to a musical interlude. The KJV translates it as “solemn sound” in Psalm 92:3.

Mahalath: Psalm 53:1. This most likely refers to an unidentified song tune or to a certain style of playing it.

Maskil: Psalm 32:1. The word means “prudent” and could refer to a contemplative style of music. The NET Bible translates it as “a well-written song.”

Mikram: Psalm 59:1. This technical word is of uncertain meaning to us.

Muth-labben: Psalm 9:1. This word can be translated as “to die for the son,” which could be the title of the tune used to accompany the song. However, the exact musical use of this term is uncertain.

Selah: Psalm 3:2. *Selah* is the most frequently used musical term in the Psalms, occurring 71 times in the book. Most scholars believe it refers to a pause or silence. Some Bibles translate it as “interlude.” *Selah* is also found in Habakkuk 3:3, 9, and 13.

Sheminith: Psalm 6:1. This musical term refers to a musical instrument—possibly an eight-string lyre—and can also be found in 1 Chronicles 15:21.

Shiggaion: Psalm 7:1. We are uncertain of this word’s meaning. Suggestions range from “dirge” to “rapid change of rhythm.”

The Psalms are songs and therefore include many musical terms that were important for those originally playing and singing these sacred tunes. Though the meaning of most of these terms has been lost, we can appreciate their importance and consider how God has used and continues to use these songs to the praise of His glory.

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One Last Question: Which Psalms Predict the Coming of Jesus Christ?

The book of Psalms is a collection of inspired songs used in worship of God, and many of them foretell the coming of the Messiah and predict events that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. In total, twenty-five different psalms (one out of every six psalms) include at least one messianic prophecy. Messianic psalms are quoted in eleven New Testament books, especially the gospels and the book of Acts. Below are nearly seventy specific references to Christ in the Psalms fulfilled in the New Testament. Some scholars see additional allusions, but we've only included those with the clearest connections to Jesus. The following list provides the reference(s) in Psalms where each prophecy is found and the New Testament fulfillment:

Concerning the Messiah's birth:

1. The Messiah will come from the lineage of David (Psalm 89:3–4, 29–36; 132:11–17; Matthew 1:1).
2. The Messiah will come for all people (Psalm 18:49; Ephesians 3:4–6).
3. The Messiah will know His Father from childhood (Psalm 22:9; Luke 2:40).
4. The Messiah will be called by God while still in the womb (Psalm 22:10; Luke 1:30–33).

Concerning the Messiah's nature and name:

5. The Messiah will be called King of the Jews (Psalm 2:6; John 12:12–13; 18:32).
6. The Messiah will be the Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Luke 1:31–35; Matthew 3:16–17; Hebrews 1:5–6).
7. The Messiah is God (Psalm 45:6–7b; Hebrews 1:8–9).
8. The Messiah will call God His Father (Psalm 89:26; Matthew 11:27).
9. The Messiah will be God's only "begotten" Son (Psalm 89:27; Mark 16:6; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).
10. The Messiah will be eternal (Psalm 102:25–27a; Revelation 1:8; Hebrews 1:10–12).
11. The Messiah is the creator of all things (Psalm 102:25–27b; John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:10–12).
12. The Messiah will be Lord and King (Psalm 110:1a; Matthew 22:41–45).
13. The Messiah will be a Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 6:17–20).
14. The Messiah will be the "Stone" rejected by the builders (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42–43).

Concerning the Messiah's ministry:

15. Infants will give praise to the Messiah (Psalm 8:2; Matthew 21:15–16).
16. The Messiah will reveal that the Hebrew Scriptures were written of Him (Psalm 40:6–8b; Luke 24:44; John 5:39–40).

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17. The Messiah will do God's (His Father's) will (Psalm 40:7–8; John 5:30).
18. The Messiah will not conceal His mission from believing people (Psalm 40:9–10; Luke 4:16–21).
19. The Messiah will communicate a message of mercy (Psalm 45:2; 55:12–14; Luke 4:22).
20. The Messiah will be angered by unethical practices by the Jews in the temple (Psalm 69:9a; John 2:13–17).
21. The Messiah will teach in parables (Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34–35).
22. The Messiah will calm the stormy sea (Psalm 107:28–29; Matthew 8:24–26).
23. The Messiah will act with righteousness (Psalm 45:6–7c; John 5:30).
24. The Messiah will come in the name of the Lord (Psalm 118:26; Matthew 21:9).

Concerning the Messiah's betrayal and death:

25. Political/religious leaders will conspire against the Messiah (Psalm 2:1–3; Matthew 26:3–4; Mark 3:6).
26. The Messiah will feel forsaken by God at His crucifixion (Psalm 22:1b; Mark 15:34).
27. The Messiah will pray without ceasing before His death (Psalm 22:2; Matthew 26:38–39).
28. The Messiah will be despised and rejected by His own (Psalm 22:6; Luke 23:21–23).
29. The Messiah will be mocked (Psalm 22:7; 109:25; Matthew 27:39).
30. Unbelievers will say to the Messiah, "He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him" (Psalm 22:8; Matthew 27:41–43).
31. The Messiah will be abandoned by His disciples (Psalm 22:11; 69:20; Mark 14:50).
32. The Messiah will be encompassed by wicked beings (Psalm 22:12–13; Colossians 2:15).
33. From the Messiah's body will flow blood and water (Psalm 22:14a; John 19:34).
34. The Messiah will be crucified (Psalm 22:14b; Matthew 27:35).
35. The Messiah will thirst while dying (Psalm 22:15; 69:21; John 19:28).
36. The Messiah will be observed by Gentiles at His crucifixion (Psalm 22:16a; Luke 23:36).
37. The Messiah will be observed by Jews at His crucifixion (Psalm 22:16b; Matthew 27:41–43).
38. The Messiah's hands and feet will be pierced (Psalm 22:16c; Matthew 27:38; John 20:25).
39. The Messiah's garments will be parted among the soldiers through the casting of lots (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23–24).
40. The Messiah will be accused by false witnesses (Psalm 27:12; 35:11; 109:2; Matthew 26:59–61).
41. The Messiah will cry out to God, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46).
42. There will be many attempts to kill the Messiah (Psalm 31:13; Matthew 27:1).
43. The Messiah will have no bones broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:32–33).
44. The Messiah will be hated without cause (Psalm 35:19; John 18:19–23; 15:24–25).
45. The Messiah will be silent as a lamb before His accusers (Psalm 38:13–14; Matthew 26:62–63).

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Introduction

- 46. The Messiah will be God's sacrificial lamb for redemption of all mankind (Psalm 40:6–8a; Hebrews 10:10–13).
- 47. The Messiah will be betrayed by one of His own disciples (Psalm 41:9; Mark 14:17–18).
- 48. The Messiah will be hated and rejected without cause (Psalm 69:4; Luke 23:13–22; John 15:24–25).
- 49. The Messiah will be condemned for God's sake (Psalm 69:7, 9; Matthew 26:65–67; Romans 15:3).
- 50. The Messiah will be rejected by the Jews (Psalm 69:8a; John 1:11).
- 51. The Messiah's very own brothers will reject Him (Psalm 69:8b; John 7:3–5).
- 52. The Messiah's heart will be broken (Psalm 69:20a; John 19:34).
- 53. The Messiah will be offered gall mingled with vinegar while dying (Psalm 69:21a; Matthew 27:34).
- 54. The Messiah will offer up prayer for His enemies (Psalm 109:4; Luke 23:34).
- 55. The Messiah's betrayer will have a short life (Psalm 109:8a; Acts 1:16–18; John 17:12).
- 56. The Messiah's betrayer will be replaced by a more faithful man (Psalm 109:8b; Acts 1:20–26).

Concerning the Messiah's resurrection and exaltation:

- 57. The Messiah will be resurrected (Psalm 16:8–10a; Matthew 28:6; Acts 2:25–32).
- 58. The Messiah's body will not see corruption (natural decay) (Psalm 16:8–10b; Acts 13:35–37).
- 59. The Messiah will be glorified into the presence of God (Psalm 16:11; Acts 2:25–33).
- 60. The Messiah will ask God for His inheritance (Psalm 2:8a; John 17:4–24).
- 61. The Messiah will have complete authority over all things (Psalm 2:8b–9; 8:6; Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 1:1–2).
- 62. The Messiah will destroy those who do not honor Him (Psalm 2:12; John 3:36).
- 63. The Messiah will bring many people into the family of God (Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 2:10–12; Matthew 12:50; John 20:14).
- 64. The Messiah's enemies will stumble and fall (Psalm 27:2; John 18:3–6).
- 65. The Messiah's throne will be eternal (Psalm 45:6–7a; Luke 1:31–33; Hebrews 1:8–9).
- 66. The Messiah will ascend back into heaven (Psalm 68:18a; Luke 24:51; Ephesians 4:8).
- 67. The Messiah will give good gifts unto believing men (Psalm 68:18b; Matthew 10:1; Ephesians 4:7–11).
- 68. The Messiah will be exalted to the right hand of God (Psalm 80:17; 110:1, 5; Acts 5:31).

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Lesson 01 – Part 1

OPEN IT

1. When was a time that you found comfort, strength or direction in the Book of Psalms?

EXPLORE IT

2. What is the counsel of the ungodly, and how do we not walk in it? (Psalms 1:1)
3. How do we delight in the law of the Lord? (Psalm 1:2)
4. What does it mean to be like a tree planted by the water? (Psalm 1:3)
5. To whom does Psalm 2:7 refer with the words, “You are my son, today I have begotten you”?
6. What does it mean to kiss the son? (Psalm 2:12)
7. What does it mean to “be angry and do not sin”? (Psalm 4:4)
8. What does it mean that “I will lie down and sleep in peace”? (Psalm 4:8)
9. Why does the psalmist ask, “What is man that you are mindful of him”? (Psalm 8:4)
10. What does it mean that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels? (Psalm 8:5)

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Lesson 01 – Part 1

11. Psalm 7, 35, 55 are imprecatory prayers. What does that mean?
12. What does it mean that “there is none that does good, no not one”? (Psalm 14:3)
13. What does “I shall not be moved” mean? (Psalm 16:8)
14. What does it mean that “at your right hand are pleasures forevermore”? (Psalm 16:11)
15. Name a couple of imprecatory psalms.
16. Name a couple of psalms of lament.

GET IT

17. The word *selah* is found in the Book of Psalms, 71 times. What is its meaning? Go to the previous section, “Introduction”.
18. What is a *maskil* in the Book of Psalms? Go to the previous section, “Introduction”.

APPLY IT

19. Review the Psalms we discussed today and select a verse or two to memorize.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

THE HUMAN WRITERS OF THE PSALMS

The principal human writer of the psalms is David, described in Scripture as “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (**2 Samuel 23:1**, NASB). Many of the psalms have titles indicating authorship; 73 are ascribed to David. In addition, **Psalms 2** and **Psalms 95** are attributed to David when they are quoted in the New Testament (**Acts 4:25**; **Hebrews 4:7**). Therefore, we can conclude that at least half of the psalms were written by David. Other writers were Asaph, with twelve psalms (**Psalms 50** and **Psalms 73–83**); Solomon, with two psalms (**Psalms 72** and **Psalms 127**); Moses, with one (**Psalms 90**); Heman, with one (**Psalms 88**); and Ethan, with one (**Psalms 89**). Many of the psalms are anonymous.

THE THEMES OF THE PSALMS

Because the themes of the psalms are exceedingly varied, it is difficult in a few words to survey their content. Many of the psalms are prophetic, and the most prominent theme in the book is the coming Messiah. Psalms that speak prophetically of Christ are called “messianic psalms.” There are at least thirteen of these quoted specifically in the New Testament as referring to Christ (**Psalms 2, Psalms 8, Psalms 16, Psalms 22, Psalms 31, Psalms 40, Psalms 41, Psalms 45, Psalms 68, Psalms 69, Psalms 102, Psalms 110, Psalms 118**).

There are undoubtedly many others that are messianic, although not specifically quoted as such in the New Testament. These would include the familiar **Psalms 23**, which can be linked with the statement of the Lord Jesus Christ in **John 10:11** concerning Himself as the Good Shepherd. **Psalms 22**, often referred to as the “psalm of the Cross,” reveals to us the thoughts of Christ as He bore our sins in His own body on the cross, crying out when God made Him to be sin for us (**2 Corinthians 5:21**), “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Compare **Psalms 22:1** and **Matthew 27:46**.)

Some of the psalms are “nature psalms,” but these differ from many secular poems depicting nature, for in Scripture nature is never celebrated for its own sake, but only as it points to its Creator. Some of the familiar nature psalms are **Psalms 8** (which is also messianic), **Psalms 19, Psalms 29, Psalms 33**, and **Psalms 104**.

There are also a number of “historical psalms,” in which the history of God’s people is recounted as a reminder of God’s faithfulness and as a lesson to present and future generations to trust and obey God. The great period of Israel’s history most often celebrated in these psalms is the period of the Exodus from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings. Some of the historical psalms are **Psalms 78, Psalms 105**, and **Psalms 106**.

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Many psalms look forward to the future reign of Christ upon the earth. While these could in a sense be called “messianic psalms,” they are often classified as a separate type, “millennial psalms.” Examples include **Psalms 46, 72, and 89**.

Another theme running through the psalms is that of confession and repentance. The leading “penitential psalms” are **Psalms 6, 32, and 51**.

The Word of God is another subject that engrossed the psalmists. The longest and best-known psalm of the Word is, of course, **Psalms 119**, which in form is an alphabetical psalm. Its 176 verses are divided into twenty-two sections of eight verses each. Each section of the psalm corresponds to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and in the Hebrew Bible all the verses in each section begin with the letter of that section. This cannot be shown in translation. Almost every verse describes some feature of the Word of God. Another psalm on the Word is **Psalms 19**, which is also a “nature psalm,” showing the testimony to God found in nature and in the Bible. **Psalms 1** describes the godly person’s attitude toward the Word.

A group of fifteen psalms, called the “songs of ascents,” evidently were used at the time of the pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. All the psalms were originally set to music and undoubtedly most of them were sung at various times in the public worship of the people of Israel.

These are only a few of the many themes in the psalms. Throughout, there are continual expressions of praise and thanksgiving, adoration of God for who He is, and gratitude to Him for what He has done for men. While the setting of the psalms is Israel, and many of the promises are earthly promises to the nation of Israel, there are nevertheless spiritual promises that belong to all the people of God in all ages. Many of the expressions of praise, and particularly those statements concerning the universal kingdom of God, will be most appropriately sung during the millennial kingdom, when Israel will be restored to the place God wanted for His chosen people.

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Poetic Books: Book of Psalms

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

THE FIVE BOOKS OF THE PSALMS

In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Psalms is subdivided into five books. This division is seen in the *New American Standard Version* and in the *New International Version*. The five books of the Psalms are as follows:

Book I: Psalms 1–41

Book II: Psalms 42–72

Book III: Psalms 73–89

Book IV: Psalms 90–106

Book V: Psalms 107–150

Each of these books ends with a special doxology or ascription of praise to God. While there is difference of opinion among scholars concerning the reason for this fivefold division, it is generally believed that the men who placed the psalms in their present order in ancient times thought of these five books as corresponding to the five books of the Law. One might think of the following general themes for these five books:

Book I: Creation and Man

Book II: Redemption

Book III: The Sanctuary

Book IV: The Earthly Pilgrimage

Book V: The Word of God

We can see that these are appropriate parallels to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, respectively.

THE PSALMS—TO BE EXPERIENCED

As previously suggested, the book of Psalms does not lend itself easily to survey. The psalms must be experienced. We must read and reread and, like the blessed man described in the opening psalm, we must meditate continually upon the Word of God. The theme found in **Psalm 1**, which contrasts the righteous and the wicked, is echoed throughout the psalms, as the experiences of those who trust in God are contrasted with the experiences of the wicked.

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“THE HALLELUJAH PSALMS”

The doxology at the close of Book V is not a single verse, or even a few verses, but a group of five psalms (**Psalms 146–150**) called collectively “the hallelujah psalms” because each begins and ends with the imperative form of the Hebrew word *Hallelujah*, meaning “praise Jehovah.” Here is an appropriate climax to this book of praises, culminating in an appeal for universal praise: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD” (**Psalms 150:6**).

“Imprecatory Psalms”

The book of Psalms is rich with poetry, praise, joy, sorrow, and more. It was written by several authors, including King David. There are seven major types of psalms found in this book: lament psalms, thanksgiving psalms, enthronement psalms, pilgrimage psalms, royal psalms, wisdom psalms, and imprecatory psalms.

An imprecation is a curse that invokes misfortune upon someone. Imprecatory psalms are those in which the author imprecates; that is, he calls down calamity, destruction, and God’s anger and judgment on his enemies. This type of psalm is found throughout the book. The major imprecatory psalms are Psalms 5, 10, 17, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, and 140. The following are a few examples of the imprecatory language gleaned from these psalms:

“Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you” (Psalm 5:10).

“Rise up, LORD, confront them, bring them down; with your sword rescue me from the wicked” (Psalm 17:13).

“Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the kingdoms that do not call on your name; for they have devoured Jacob and devastated his homeland” (Psalm 79:6–7).

“Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks” (Psalm 137:9).

When studying the imprecatory psalms, it is important to note that these psalms were not written out of vindictiveness or a need for personal vengeance. Instead, they are prayers that keep God’s justice, sovereignty, and protection in mind. God’s people had suffered much at the hands of those who opposed them, including the Hittites, Amorites, Philistines, and Babylonians (the subject of Psalm 137).

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These groups were not only enemies of Israel, but they were also enemies of God; they were degenerate and ruthless conquerors who had repeatedly tried and failed to destroy the Lord's chosen people. In writing the imprecatory psalms, the authors sought vindication on God's behalf as much as they sought their own.

While Jesus Himself quoted some imprecatory psalms (John 2:17; 15:25), He also instructed us to love our enemies and pray for them (Matthew 5:44–48; Luke 6:27–38). The New Testament makes it clear that our enemy is spiritual, not physical (Ephesians 6:12). It is not sinful to pray the imprecatory psalms against our spiritual enemies, but we should also pray with compassion and love and even thanksgiving for people who are under the devil's influence (1 Timothy 2:1). We should desire their salvation. After all, God "is patient . . . not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Above all things, we should seek the will of God in everything we do and, when we are wronged, leave the ultimate outcome to the Lord (Romans 12:19).

The bottom line is that the imprecatory psalms communicate a deep yearning for justice, written from the point of view of those who had been mightily oppressed. God's people have the promise of divine vengeance: "Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly" (Luke 18:7–8; cf. Revelation 19:2).

"Psalms of lament"

Bible scholars tend to identify the psalms by type or category, but they debate the exact classifications, with some naming more categories than others. Generally, there is agreement on a system that includes at least these five types: psalms of lament, royal psalms, thanksgiving psalms, wisdom psalms, and then a mix of smaller genres such as historical and prophetic psalms.

Lament is a major theme in the Bible and particularly in the book of Psalms. To lament is to express deep sorrow, grief, or regret. The psalms of lament are beautiful poems or hymns expressing human struggles. The psalms of lament comprise the largest category of psalms, making up about one third of the entire book of Psalms. These psalms are prayers that lay out a troubling situation to the Lord and make a request for His help.

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There are two types of lament psalms: community and individual. Community psalms of lament deal with situations of national crisis—they describe problems faced by all the people of God. Psalm 12 is an example of a community lament, expressing sadness over widespread sin: “Help, Lord, for no one is faithful anymore; / those who are loyal have vanished from humanity. / Everyone lies to their neighbor; / they flatter with their lips / but harbor deception in their hearts” (Psalm 12:1–2).

Individual laments address various isolated troubles—problems faced by one member of the people of God. An example of an individual psalm of lament is Psalm 86, as David lays out his need before God: “Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; / ruthless people are trying to kill me— / they have no regard for you” (Psalm 86:14). There are forty-two individual psalms of lament and sixteen community or national psalms of lament.

The psalms of lament are poetic hymns meant to be sung to God. They deal with issues that were and still are central to the life of faith for individual believers and the whole community of faith. The lament psalms express intense emotions, real human struggles, and the anguish of heart experienced by the people of Israel as they lived out their faith individually and corporately.

The men and women of the Old Testament were as real as we are today. They danced and sang, rejoiced and laughed, argued and confessed, lamented and mourned. They expressed emotions to God in prayer just as we do today. When we encounter difficult struggles and need God’s rescue, salvation, and help, the psalms of lament are a good place to turn.

The great Protestant Reformer Martin Luther treasured the psalms of lament. Of them, he said, “What is the greatest thing in the Psalter but this earnest speaking amid the storm winds of every kind? . . . Where do you find deeper, more sorrowful, more pitiful words of sadness than in the psalms of lamentation? There again you investigate the hearts of the saints, as into death, yes, as into hell itself. . . . When they speak of fear and hope, they use such words that no painter could depict for your fear or hope, and no Cicero or other orator has so portrayed them. And that they speak these words to God and with God, this I repeat, is the best thing of all. This gives the words double earnestness and life” (*Word and Sacrament*, Luther’s Works, vol. 1, ed. E. T. Bachmann. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960, pp. 255–56).

Like the whole book of Psalms, the psalms of lament follow a pattern that begins with suffering and ends with glory. Usually, these songs start on a negative, complaining note, but they end on a positive, faith-filled note.

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A lament typically opens with an address. For example, Psalm 44:1 says simply, “O God,” and Psalm 22 begins, “My God, my God.” A psalm of lament will contain a complaint: “Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (Psalm 44:22). A request to God for help will be found in a psalm of lament: “Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever” (Psalm 44:23). A psalm of lament will incorporate an affirmation of trust in God, often remembering His previous acts of faithfulness: “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation” (Psalm 13:5). And, finally, a psalm of lament will contain a glorious vow of praise to God: “I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me” (Psalm 13:6).

Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

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Lesson 02 – Part 2

OPEN IT

1. Was there ever a time when you were without food, water, rest, safety or direction? What did you do?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean that “the Lord is my rock”? (Psalm 18:2)
3. “How can I let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to God”? (Psalm 19:14)
4. How does David describe that God is his portion? (Psalm 16:5)
5. How do the heavens declare the glory of God? (Psalm 19:1) Does this explain the existence of God?
6. Explain, “Why have you forsaken me”. (Psalm 22:1) Relate this to: Matthew 27:46.
7. How does God inhabit the praise of His people? (Psalm 22:3)
8. Explain what David said: “Be not far from me”. (Psalm 22:11) What was David experiencing?
9. Psalm 22 is a messianic psalm. Explain verse 20.
10. What does it mean that the Lord is my Shepherd? (Psalm 23)

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Lesson 02 – Part 2

11. Explain, “I shall not want”. (Psalm 23:1)

12. What does “he makes me lie down in green pastures” mean? (Psalm 23:2)

13. Explain, “He leads me in the paths of righteousness”. (Psalm 23:3)

14. What does it mean to walk through the valley of the shadow of death? (Psalm 23:4) How can we boldly say, “I will fear no evil”?

15. Explain, “my cup runneth over; you prepare a table for me; you anoint my head with oil”. (Psalm 23:5)

16. How could David say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”? (Psalm 23:6)

17. Name a couple of psalms of praise.

18. Name a couple of penitential psalms.

GET IT

19. Which Psalms prophesy the death and resurrection of the Messiah? See the introduction to the Book of Psalms in this study.

20. What are the rod and staff in Psalm 23?

APPLY IT

21. Memorize Psalm 23.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes

What are the psalms of praise?"

Psalms 95:2 says, "Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him" (NLT). A psalm is a song intended to be sung with musical instruments. The book of Psalms is a divinely inspired songbook that was used by the Israelites in corporate worship. The psalms were penned by various songwriters and musicians, but most were written by David. Among other contributors to the book of Psalms were Asaph, the sons of Korah, Moses, Solomon, and several unknown writers.

Psalms are poetic expressions of a variety of emotions, just as modern music is, and there are several types of psalms in the Bible: laments, thanksgiving songs, songs of ascent, etc. One common theme in the book of Psalms is praise to God. Many individual psalms were written with the primary purpose of praising God. These are properly called psalms of praise. Psalm 150 is a short psalm of praise. It begins and ends with the Hebrew word *hallelujah* and contains the word *praise* thirteen times in the English translation as it gives instructions about musical instruments and dancing as ways to praise the Lord.

Even when the psalmists expressed fear, sorrow, doubt, or anger in their songs, they often ended the laments with words of praise. Psalm 13 expresses dismay at the speaker's suffering at the hands of an enemy, but it ends with these words: "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me" (verses 5–6).

The psalms of praise extol the virtue and power of the Lord. The God of Israel is praised for His handiwork in nature (Psalm 19:1; 89:5; 148:3), His deliverance of His people (Psalm 18:10; 111:9), and His wonderful attributes, such as lovingkindness and patience (Psalm 89:13–14; 130:7).

Psalms 147 is a good example of a psalm of praise. In this psalm, which also begins and ends with the Hebrew word *hallelujah*, the singer expresses praise to God for the following reasons:

- ♪ The Lord preserves Israel (verse 2)
- ♪ He heals the brokenhearted (verse 3)
- ♪ He possesses great wisdom and power, as seen in creation (verses 4–5)
- ♪ He metes out justice (verse 6)
- ♪ He sends rain to sustain His creatures (verses 8–9)
- ♪ He protects Jerusalem and grants His people peace (verses 13–14)
- ♪ He controls the weather and the seasons (verses 15–18)
- ♪ He has revealed His Word to Israel and blessed them above all other nations (verses 19–20).

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes

Since the Israelites were a people set apart to praise the Lord (Jeremiah 13:11), it is only fitting that many of their songs were psalms of praise. We, too, have been saved “for the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:12), and our songs should reflect our grateful praise. “How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!” (Psalm 147:1).

What are the penitential psalms?"

The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 poems, hymns, and songs originating from worship in ancient Israel. Throughout history, church fathers and Bible scholars have classified individual psalms into various categories according to their content, theme, and structure. One grouping known as the penitential psalms shares the key feature of expressing penitence—the psalmist’s sorrow over sin and spiritual failure.

There are seven penitential psalms: Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; and 143. In each, the author acknowledges or confesses his trespass before the Lord and recognizes his need for God’s favor and forgiveness. The penitential psalms make fitting prayers for the repentant sinner.

From as early as the time of Origen (AD 184—253) and Augustine (AD 354—430), the penitential psalms were set apart for liturgical use in the Christian church for the confession of sin and repentance. Medieval Pope Innocent III (AD 1161—1216) ordered that the penitential psalms be recited during Lent and Holy Week. The Roman Breviary, an ancient service book of the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, provided a special place for the penitential psalms. Likewise, the Church of England’s Book of Common Prayer designates the penitential psalms as appropriate for use on Ash Wednesday and in other Lenten prayer services.

The most familiar penitential psalm, Psalm 51, has been called the Sinner’s Guide. It is King David’s prayer of repentance after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sins (2 Samuel 12). David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and covered it up by having her husband, Uriah, killed. The words of Psalm 51 pour forth from David’s darkest moment of self-awareness. He acknowledges the depth of his sin and guilt and pleads for God’s mercy. Then, gripped with confidence in God’s faithfulness, David believes his plea will be heard and answered. Psalm 32, the follow-up to this psalm, reveals that God does indeed grant David’s prayer. Besides serving as a personal prayer of confession, contrition, and restoration, Psalm 51 also gives voice to the nation of Israel in its plea for repentance and salvation.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes

Psalm 6, the first of the penitential psalms, reveals the author in deep affliction, weary in body and spirit, and desperately appealing to God for mercy and relief from punishment. Again, the psalmist here is David, who has been suffering from an illness. Trusting in God's gracious reply, David closes his prayer knowing God will hear and help him.

Psalm 38 is the prayer of an individual suffering from an illness that he views as a punishment inflicted by God. The psalmist confesses his sins and asks God for forgiveness. Similarly, Psalm 102 is the lament of an individual who is sick, suffering, lonely, and threatened by his enemies. However, in this prayer, the psalmist asks for help for himself and for Jerusalem. Psalm 102 mixes personal concerns with those of the whole kingdom and includes a hymn of praise to God.

The author of Psalm 130 neither specifies the nature of his affliction nor explicitly repents of sin. But he does express awareness of his sinfulness and his need for God's grace. The closing verses suggest that this penitential psalm is not only an individual confession but a national prayer of repentance for all of Israel.

The last of the seven penitential psalms is Psalm 143. It contains a universal acknowledgment of guilt: "Don't put your servant on trial, for no one is innocent before you" (Psalm 143:2, NLT). But this is the only reference to sin and forgiveness in the psalm.

Repentance of one's sins before a holy God is one of the major themes of Scripture, and the penitential psalms are perfect examples of the value of repentance and a firm reliance on the God of all grace and comfort.

Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes

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Lesson 03 – Part 3

OPEN IT

1. Have you ever been abandoned by someone you trust? If so, would you trust them again?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean to “lift up your head”? (Psalm 24:7)
3. Explain, “joy comes in the morning”. (Psalm 30:4,5)
4. Read Psalm 24. Is God the King of Glory? Why? (Psalm 24:7-10)
5. What does it mean that “the Lord is my light and my salvation”? (Psalm 27:1)
6. Why did David say, “One thing I have asked of the Lord”? (Psalm 27:4)
7. What does it mean to “wait on the Lord”? (Psalm 27:14)
8. How can we “be of good courage”? (Psalm 27:14)
9. What does the phrase, “the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him”? (Psalm 33:18)
10. Explain what it means “to taste and see that the Lord is good”. (Psalm 34:8)

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Lesson 03 – Part 3

11. What does it mean “that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted”? (Psalm 34:18)
12. What does it mean to delight yourself in the Lord? (Psalm 37:4) How will God give you the desires of your heart?
13. What does it mean to commit your way to the Lord? (Psalm 37:5) How can you “rest in the Lord”? (Psalm 37:7)
14. How are the steps of a man ordered by the Lord? (Psalm 37:23) What does it mean that, “I have never seen the righteous forsaken”? (Psalm 37:25)
15. Who were the sons of Korah?
16. What is imprecatory prayer?

GET IT

17. How is the Lord the strength of your life?

APPLY IT

18. When you face trials and tribulations, read Psalm 37 again and again and store it in your heart.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

Who were the sons of Korah?

The story of the sons of Korah in the Old Testament is truly a tale of two fathers and two destinies. The story begins with the Israelites of Moses' time as they journeyed through the wilderness just after leaving Egypt. In Numbers 3, God set aside the Levites, out of the tribes of Israel, for full time service to Him. They were ordained to take care of the tabernacle and all its implements, as well as the Ark of the Covenant. Only the descendants of Aaron, however, were allowed to serve as priests.

The three sons of Levi were Gershon, Merari, and Kohath. The Gershonites were responsible for the care of the tabernacle and tent, its coverings, the curtain at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the curtains of the courtyard, the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard surrounding the tabernacle and altar, and the ropes—and everything related to their use. The Merarites were appointed to take care of the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, posts, bases, all its equipment, and everything related to their use, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs, and ropes. The Kohathites were responsible for the care of the sanctuary. They were responsible for the care of the ark, the table, the lamp stand, the altars, the articles of the sanctuary used in ministering, the curtain, and everything related to their use. They were under the direct supervision of Eleazar, son of Aaron.

Unlike the Gershonites and the Merarites, who were allowed to transport the items under their care on carts, the Kohathites had to carry their items, the holy things of the tabernacle, on their shoulders. They had the arduous burden of transporting these items from place to place as the camp moved, but they were not allowed to actually touch the items, or they would die. The priests had to wrap the sacred objects in special coverings before they were transported (Numbers 4:15). Many of the Kohathites began to disdain this task and to covet the role of the priests.

Korah was the grandson of Kohath, and he began to run with another group of Reubenite malcontents, namely, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth. In pride, they roused a group of 250 men together to challenge the right of Moses and Aaron to the priesthood (Numbers 16). Moses summoned the rebellious men to stand before God and burn incense. God warned Moses to let the assembly know to get away from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their households, and the other rebels. Then a remarkable and terrifying event happened.

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

“Moses said, ‘This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt.’ As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions. They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, ‘The earth is going to swallow us too!’ And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense” (Numbers 16:28–35).

Although this clearly marked the end of Korah, we discover that Korah’s sons, perhaps too young to understand their father’s uprising or maybe too cognizant of God’s authority to join in the revolt, were spared (Numbers 26:9–11). God judged those who turned against Him in active rebellion and purified His people, but He still had a purpose and plan for even the line of Korah. After seven successive generations, the prophet Samuel arose from the line of Korah, the genealogy of which is recorded in 1 Chronicles 6:31–38 and 1 Samuel 1:1, 20. The Korahites became doorkeepers and custodians for the tabernacle (1 Chronicles 9:19–21; 1 Chronicles 2.) One group of Korahites (1 Chronicles 12:6) joined King David in various military exploits and won the reputation of being expert warriors. However, the most remarkable thing to note about the sons of Korah is that during the time of King David, they became the great leaders in choral and orchestral music in the tabernacle. Heman the Korahite had a place of great importance as a singer, along with Asaph (a Gershonite) and Ethan or Jeduthan (a Merarite). These individuals played an important role in the thanksgiving services and pageantry when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem. David formed an elaborate organization for song, instrumental music, and prophesying through these men.

Of all the psalms in the Bible, eleven are attributed to the sons of Korah. These beautiful psalms express a spirit of great gratitude and humility to an awesome, mighty God. They express a longing for God and deep devotion. These poetic songs include Psalms 42, 44–49, 84–85, and 87–88. Psalm 42:1 contains the beautiful line, “As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.” Psalm 84:1 states, “How lovely is your dwelling place, O God.” Psalm 46:1–3 conveys the powerful message, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

One wonders if the poet who penned these lyrics was remembering his ignoble beginnings, his distant ancestor who perished in an earthquake for his pride and rebellion. Perhaps it was that reflection that prompted the following words of the same psalm: “He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth’” (Psalm 46:10). For each of us, our own songs of renewed purpose and redemption should flow out of a heart of humility as we remember the fallen state from which He raised us and the redemption that we experience through His grace. This was certainly the case for the sons of Korah.

What is imprecatory prayer?"

First, let's define imprecatory prayer. To imprecate means “to invoke evil upon or curse” one's enemies. King David, the psalmist most associated with imprecatory verses such as Psalm 55:15, 69:28, and 109:8, often used phrases like, “may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them” (Psalm 35:6) and “O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!” (Psalm 58:6).

Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 109, and 139 were written by David to ask God to bring judgment upon his enemies. (The other two imprecatory psalms, 79 and 137, were written by Asaph and an unknown psalmist.) These prayers were written not so much to exact revenge upon one's enemies, but rather to emphasize God's abhorrence of evil, His sovereignty over all mankind, and His divine protection of His chosen people. Many of these prayers were prophetic and could be seen taking place later in the New Testament in actual historical events.

When David prayed for God to shatter the teeth of his enemies, likening them to young lions pursuing him to his death, he was making the point that God is holy, righteous, and just, and He will ultimately judge the wicked for the evil they do. Jesus quoted some of the imprecatory psalms during His earthly ministry. In John 15:25, Jesus quotes Psalm 35:19 and 69:4. Paul also quoted an imprecatory prayer in Romans 11:9–10, which is a quote of Psalm 69:22–23. Since Jesus and Paul quoted verses from these imprecatory psalms, it proves those psalms were inspired by God and counters any allegation that they were sinful or selfish prayers of revenge.

Using imprecatory prayers from the Psalms today should only be done against our spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:12). Praying imprecations on human foes is unjustifiable, as it would require taking these prayers out of context. In the New Testament, Jesus exhorts us to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44–48; Luke 6:27–38) but praying for their death or for bad things to happen to them isn't what He meant. Instead, we are to pray for their salvation first and foremost, and then for God's will to be done.

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

There's no greater blessing than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and that's what Jesus means by praying for and blessing those who curse us.

Praying in that manner allows God to work in our own lives to soften our hearts toward our enemies so that we'll have compassion on them for their eternal destiny, and to remove bitterness and anger from our hearts. Praying for God's will to be done means we agree with God and are submitting ourselves to His divine sovereignty, despite not always understanding perfectly what He's doing in a particular situation. And it means we have given up the idea that we know best and instead are now relying on and trusting in God to work His will. If a personal wrong has truly been done to us, we seek God in prayer about it, and then leave room for God's judgment and trust Him to do what is best. That is the way to be at peace with God and all men (Romans 12:17-21).

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Lesson 04 – Part 4

OPEN IT

1. Why are some things harder to forgive than others?

EXPLORE IT

2. How does God, “make me to know the measure of my days”? (Psalm 39:4)
3. Explain what the psalmist said, “Be still and know that I am God”. (Psalm 46:10)
4. Psalm 40:2 is a picture of our salvation in Christ. What does it mean to “set your feet upon a rock” and “brought me out of a miry clay”?
5. Explain, “from everlasting to everlasting”. (Psalm 41:13)
6. What does it mean that deep calls to deep? (Psalm 42:7)
7. What does it mean that God is our refuge and strength? (Psalm 46:1) Who wrote this Psalm?
8. Does Psalm 49:7-9, speak of Jesus?
9. Psalm 51:5, David said, “In sin did my mother conceive me”. Are we conceived in sin?
10. How can you be whiter than snow? (Psalm 51:7)

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Lesson 04 – Part 4

11. Why was David asking God to create in him a clean heart? What was David expecting?
(Psalm 51:10)

12. What did David mean when he asked God to “restore to me the joy of your salvation”?
(Psalm 51:12)

13. Is it true that God will not despise a broken spirit and contrite heart? (Psalm 51:17)

14. Cite a few examples of acrostic poems in the Bible.

15. What does “selah” mean?

GET IT

16. How do you get your heart right with God after sin in your life?

17. What does true sorrow look like in your life?

APPLY IT

18. Read Psalm 51 again and remind yourself of God’s forgiveness.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 04 – Part 4 Notes

What is an acrostic poem? Any examples in the Bible?"

An acrostic poem is a poem in which the first letter (or sometimes the first syllable) of each line spells out a word, name, or sentence. A good example is Lewis Carroll's untitled poem, usually called "Life Is but a Dream," at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass*. The first letters of the twenty-one lines of this poem spell out *Alice Pleasance Liddell*, the full name of the young girl who inspired Carroll to write his novels.

Some scholars claim that the Bible contains acrostic poems, but there is debate on whether the poems were intended as acrostics by the original writers. What is beyond debate is the existence of some poems in the Old Testament that show an alphabetical arrangement. Sometimes, these are called "acrostic" poems, but they are more properly called "alphabetical" or "abecedarian."

Psalm 111 is a good example of an "acrostic" poem in Scripture. After the initial "Praise the Lord" in verse 1 are twenty-two lines to correspond with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each line of the poetry begins with a letter of the alphabet, in order.

Another example of an acrostic or alphabetical poem is Psalm 119. This psalm is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each Hebrew letter. Each section has sixteen lines, with that section's letter appearing at the start of each alternate line. So, for example, the first eight verses contain sixteen lines of poetry, and every other line begins with aleph (א), the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The next section of Psalm 119 comprises verses 9–16, and each verse begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, beth (ב).

Psalms 9 and 10, taken together, show some purposeful alphabetic arrangement, although not with the whole alphabet. Psalm 25 uses twenty of the twenty-two Hebrew letters. Each letter is given two lines of poetry. In verse 2, the expected letter comes at the beginning of the second word, rather than the first.

Other acrostic poems such as Psalm 34 (two lines per letter), Psalm 37 (four lines per letter), and Psalm 145 (two lines per letter) also have some omissions or minor adjustments to the strict alphabetical sequence. The acrostic or alphabetical structure of various portions of Scripture could have been a memorization aid or simply meant to enhance the beauty of the reading. In any case, such linguistic devices are a good reminder that the Bible is literature and that the biblical writers, guided by the Holy Spirit, used the literary forms and tools available to them to communicate God's Word.

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Lesson 04 – Part 4 Notes

What does *selah* mean?

The word *selah* is found in two books of the Bible, but is most prevalent in the Psalms, where it appears 71 times. It also appears three times in the third chapter of the minor prophet Habakkuk.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about the meaning of *selah*. Most versions of the Bible do not attempt to translate *selah* but simply transliterate the word straight from the Hebrew. The Septuagint translated the word as “*daplasma*” (“a division”). Well-meaning Bible scholars disagree on the definition of *selah* and on its root word, but since God has ordained that it be included in His Word, we should make an effort to find out, as best we can, the meaning.

One possible Hebrew word related to *selah* is *calah*, which means “to hang” or “to measure or weigh in the balances.” Referring to wisdom, Job says, “The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold” (Job 28:19). The word translated “valued” in this verse is the Hebrew *calah*. Here Job is saying that wisdom is beyond comparing against even jewels, and when weighed in the balance against wisdom, the finest jewels cannot equal its value.

Selah is also thought to be rendered from two Hebrew words: *s_lah*, “to praise”; and *s_lal*, “to lift up.” Another commentator believes it comes from *salah*, “to pause.” From *salah* comes the belief that *selah* is a musical notation signifying a rest to the singers and/or instrumentalists who performed the psalms. If this is true, then each time *selah* appears in a psalm, the musicians paused, perhaps to take a breath, to sing a cappella, or to let the instruments play alone. Perhaps they were pausing to praise the One about whom the song was speaking, perhaps even lifting their hands in worship. This theory would encompass all these meanings— “praise,” “lift up,” and “pause.” When we consider the three verses in Habakkuk, we also see how *selah* could mean “to pause and praise.” Habakkuk’s prayer in chapter 3 inspires the reader to pause and praise God for His mercy, power, sustaining grace, and sufficiency.

Perhaps the best way to think of *selah* is a combination of all these meanings. The Amplified Bible adds “pause and calmly think about that” to each verse where *selah* appears. When we see the word *selah* in a psalm or in Habakkuk 3, we should pause to carefully weigh the meaning of what we have just read or heard, lifting up our hearts in praise to God for His great truths. “All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you; they sing the praises of your name. *Selah!*” (Psalm 66:4).

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Lesson 05 – Part 5

OPEN IT

1. What motivates you to openly clap, sing and dance? At what times is clapping, singing, and dancing frowned upon?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean to make a joyful noise unto the Lord? (Psalm 66:1, 95:1-2)
3. While David was in custody of his enemies, he wrote, “You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle”. Does God collect our tears in a bottle? (Psalm 56:8)
4. What does it mean to ask God to “lead me to the rock that is higher than I”? (Psalm 61:2)
5. Why did David seek God early in the morning? Is this the best time? (Psalm 63:1)
6. Is God, father to the fatherless? (Psalm 68:5) What does that mean?
7. Can names be blotted out of the book of life? If so, how? (Psalm 69:28)
8. What hope is there even though “my flesh and heart may fail”? (Psalm 73:26)
9. Psalm 82:6 is cited by Jesus in John 10:34. What does it mean that “you are gods”?
10. How is a day in God’s courts better than a thousand elsewhere? (Psalm 84:10)

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Lesson 05 – Part 5

11. How is it that “righteousness and peace kiss each other”? (Psalm 85:10)
12. Explain, “unite my heart to fear Your name”. (Psalm 86:11)
13. What can we learn from the prayer of Moses? (Psalm 90) How is God our dwelling place?
14. Why should we want God to teach us to number our days? (Psalm 90:12)
15. What does it mean for God to establish the work of our hands (Psalm 90:17)
16. Who is Asaph mentioned in the Psalms?
17. Who are Heman the Ezrahite and Ethan the Ezrahite mentioned in the Psalms?

GET IT

18. Our time on earth is limited. How can we use this time wisely according to Psalm 90?
19. According to Psalm 66, when are we to praise and worship God?

APPLY IT

20. Reflect upon Psalm 90 this week and share the Holy Spirit’s message with someone this week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 05 – Part 5 Notes

Who was Asaph?

There were a number of Levites that King David assigned as worship leaders in the tabernacle choir, according to 1 Chronicles 6:31–32. Asaph was one of these men (1 Chronicles 6:39). Asaph's duties are described in detail in 1 Chronicles 16. According to 2 Chronicles 29:30, both Asaph and David were skilled musicians. Asaph is also mentioned as a "seer" or prophet. The "sons of Asaph" are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 25:1, 2 Chronicles 20:14, and Ezra 2:41. The sons of Asaph were likely a guild of skilled poets and singers, modeling themselves musically after Asaph, their master. The church musicians of our day can be considered spiritual "children of Asaph."

Psalms 50 and 73—83 are called the "Psalms of Asaph" because his name appears in the superscription at the head of those psalms. Regarding Asaph's role as a prophet, of particular interest is the imprecatory Psalm 83, which deals with God's judgment of Israel's enemies: Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagarites, Gebal, Ammon, the Amalekites, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria. If we examine the psalms written by Asaph, we can see that all of them have to do with the judgment of God, and many involve the prayers of the people at the prospect or moment of a particular event. Asaph was a gifted individual. He understood where the gift came from, and he used his music to praise the Lord and communicate His Word to a needy world.

Who was Heman the Ezrahite?

Heman the Ezrahite is the named author of Psalm 88 in the Old Testament. The title of this psalm notes, "A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to *mahalath leannoth*. A *maskil* of Heman the Ezrahite." It is clear from this title that Heman was from "the sons of Korah," meaning from the family of Korah, and that Heman was likely both a songwriter and musician. Heman worked closely with King David and is also named a seer in 1 Chronicles 25:5.

Heman was the grandson of Samuel, the final judge of Israel who anointed King Saul and King David. In addition, Heman is listed as one of three main musicians appointed by King David "for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals" (1 Chronicles 25:1).

Heman's family was well known, mentioned in 1 Chronicles 25:4–6: "As for Heman, from his sons: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael and Jerimoth; Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti and Romamti-Ezer; Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir and Mahazioth. (All these were sons of Heman the king's seer. They were given him through the promises of God to exalt him. God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.) All these men were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the Lord, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God."

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Lesson 05 – Part 5 Notes

Heman and his family were also present when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem: “All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets” (2 Chronicles 5:12). Heman and the other Levites were formally dressed, sang, and played instruments at this time.

The musician and sage Heman served in Israel as a Levite, a seer, a songwriter, a godly father, and a man of influence during the time of David and Solomon. Today, his only known song is Psalm 88, a song of one passionate for God: “Lord, you are the God who saves me; / day and night I cry out to you” (Psalm 88:1).

Who was Ethan the Ezrahite?

Ethan the Ezrahite is the songwriter-author of Psalm 89. The title of that psalm says it is “a maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.” In addition to Psalm 89, Ethan the Ezrahite is mentioned in 1 Kings 4:31 as a wise man, yet not as wise as King Solomon, who “was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite.” First Chronicles 2:6 gives the added information that Ethan had four brothers and was the son of Zerah (called Mahol in 1 Kings 4:31). He was of the tribe of Levi.

First Chronicles 15:17 mentions an Ethan who was involved with bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Since he is called “Ethan the son of Kushaiah,” he is probably a different person from the author of Psalm 89. However, 1 Chronicles 15:19 adds that the son of Kushaiah was a musician, one of the men to sound the bronze cymbals, and this had led some scholars to assume a link between the two Ethans. If they are the same person, then Ethan the Ezrahite is probably also known as Jeduthun (1 Chronicles 16:38–42 and the titles of Psalms 62 and 77).

Another way to learn about Ethan the Ezrahite is through his psalm. Verse 1 opens, “I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever; / with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.” Ethan emphasizes praise to God for His covenant with David (verses 1–4) and honors God’s character and power (verses 5–18). In verses 19–37, recording God’s own words in a vision, Ethan details God’s faithfulness to David and his descendants. Then Ethan expresses lament at the king’s defeat (verses 38–45) and asks God to remember the covenant (verses 46–52).

Ethan concludes, “Praise be to the Lord forever! / Amen and Amen” (verse 52). Even in times of suffering and struggle, this psalmist calls God’s people to bless the Lord and call upon His strength in time of need.

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Lesson 06 – Part 6

OPEN IT

1. When you think about the good ways in the past, which ways do you still practice today?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean to dwell in the “shadow of the almighty”? (Psalm 91:1)
3. How do we “take refuge under His wings”? (Psalm 91:4) (Matthew 23:37)
4. What does it mean that He will give His angels charge over you? (Psalm 91:11) (Matthew 4:6)
5. According to Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1, are atheists fools?
6. Does Psalm 95:6 mean we should always bow down when we worship God?
7. Psalm 95 is a call to worship. What is the meaning of Psalm 95:8?
8. What does it mean to “sing to the Lord a new song”? (Psalm 96:1)
9. How can we “enter into His gates with thanksgiving”? (Psalm 100:4)
10. What does it mean to “bless the Lord, O my soul”? (Psalm 103:1)

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Lesson 06 – Part 6

11. How can we “forget not His benefits”? (Psalm 103:2)
12. What does it mean that youth is renewed like the eagle’s? (Psalm 103:5)
13. How far has God removed our sins? (Psalm 103:12)
14. How can we “make know His deeds” to others? (Psalm 105)
15. Psalm 100 says that God is good. What does that mean?

GET IT

16. What type of psalm is Psalm 105? Wisdom, history, royalty, messianic, or praise?
17. Do you think that a purpose of music is to glorify God? If so, in what way?

APPLY IT

18. Read again one of the psalms we read today and sing it back to the Lord and share next week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 06 – Part 6 Notes

What does it mean that God is good?

Jesus declared, “No one is good—except God alone” (Luke 18:19). First John 1:5 tells us that “God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.” To say that God is good means that God always acts in accordance with what is right, true, and good. Goodness is part of God’s nature, and He cannot contradict His nature. Holiness and righteousness are part of God’s nature; He cannot do anything that is unholy or unrighteous. God is the standard of all that is good.

The fact that God is good means that He has no evil in Him, His intentions and motivations are always good, He always does what is right, and the outcome of His plan is always good (see Genesis 50:20). There is nothing unpleasant, evil, or dark in Him. The Bible teaches that God’s goodness extends from His nature to everything that He does (Psalm 119:68). “The LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

Everything that God made was originally good: “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31; cf. 1 Timothy 4:4). God’s goodness is showcased in the Law He gave to Israel; the Law is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12). “Every good and perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). God can create only what is good, because He is fully good.

God did not create evil (Habakkuk 1:13; 1 John 1:5). Rather, evil is the *absence* of goodness; it is whatever God is not. Because of His goodness, God abhors sin and will judge it someday (Romans 2:5). It is never the will of our good God for us to sin: “God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone” (James 1:13).

God’s goodness should lead to thankfulness on our part: “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever” (Psalm 107:1; cf. 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 118:1; 136). However, people do not naturally want to follow or thank God. Instead, “people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). In the Old Testament, the Israelites repeatedly rejected God’s good Law, forgot His goodness toward them, and were unfaithful to Him: “They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them” (Psalm 78:11).

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Lesson 06 – Part 6 Notes

Ultimately, God’s goodness is seen in His plan to redeem us from sin. The gospel is “good news.” In His goodness, God sent His Son to become the perfect and blameless sacrifice so we could be forgiven of our sins. God does not want “anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9), and it is “the goodness of God [that] leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4, KJV).

There is only One who is fully and truly good—God. This good God invites us to seek him and to “taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him” (Psalm 34:8).

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Lesson 07 – Part 7

OPEN IT

1. Are there areas of your life that you have more control over than others? Have they always been in control?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean to have a steadfast heart? (Psalm 108:1) (James 1:2-4)
3. What does it mean that God will make our enemies a footstool? (Psalm 110:1)
4. What is the order of Melchizedek? (Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:17)
5. How is God full of compassion? (Psalm 112:4)
6. What does it mean that “the Lord said to my Lord”? (Psalm 110:1) (Matthew 22:44)
7. Why should glory not be unto us? (Psalm 115:1)
8. During Passover, why were the Hallel Psalms used?
9. Have you ever experienced the pangs of Sheol? (Psalm 116:3)
10. What does it mean that all men are liars? (Psalm 116:11)

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Lesson 07 – Part 7

11. What is the cup of salvation? (Psalm 116:13)

12. What does it mean that “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”? (Psalm 116:15)

13. What is the sacrifice of thanksgiving in Psalm 116:17?

14. What does it mean that “this is the day that the Lord has made”? (Psalm 118:24)

15. What does it mean that “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”? (Psalm 118:26)

GET IT

16. According to scripture, what does the word “blessed” mean? Who is blessed?

APPLY IT

17. Learn one of the Hallel Psalms and teach another of its importance to your life.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

- 1.

- 2.

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Lesson 07 – Part 7 Notes

Psalms 113—118 are known as the Hallel Psalms, or simply the Hallel (*Hallel* means “praise”). While many psalms praise God, this set of psalms became associated with Passover due the mention of the deliverance from Egypt in Psalm 114. The focus on the exodus is the reason these psalms are also sometimes referred to as the Egyptian Hallel. These psalms were recited at Jewish feasts, especially Passover. Depending upon which tradition was being followed, one or two of the psalms were recited before the meal, and the rest after.

Here is a brief description of each of the Hallel Psalms:

Psalm 113 is a short psalm of praise without reference to any historical context. Verse 3 may be the best known from this psalm: “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised!” (ESV).

Psalm 114 is also a short psalm that poetically relates the Hebrews’ deliverance from Egypt: “The sea looked and fled. . . . The mountains skipped like rams. . . . [the Lord] turns the rock into a pool of water” (verses 3–4, 8).

Psalm 115 is slightly longer and contrasts those who trust in the Lord with those who trust in the idols of the surrounding nations. “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so, do all who trust in them” (verses 4–8, ESV).

Psalm 116 is written from the perspective of an individual who has been delivered from a dire situation. “I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live” (verses 1–2, ESV).

Psalm 117 is both the shortest psalm and the shortest “chapter” in the Bible, with only 2 verses (although psalms are not technically chapters). This is the whole psalm: “Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all people! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!” (ESV).

Psalm 118 is the longest of the Hallel Psalms. It admonishes both the nation and the individual to praise the Lord and expresses confidence that the Lord will save those who call on Him. It begins and ends with the well-known exhortation, “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” (ESV). Also well-known is verse 14: “The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation” (ESV).

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Lesson 07 – Part 7 Notes

Taken as a group, the Hallel Psalms focus on deliverance, both nationally and individually. It is quite possible that, when Jesus finished the Last Supper and He and His disciples sang a hymn (Mark 14:26), the hymn that they sang was this group of Hallel Psalms. At the Last Supper, Jesus took the Passover meal and infused it with new meaning. The salvation that He promised was not deliverance from physical danger or human bondage but salvation from spiritual bondage and the grave danger of the penalty of sin.

In the conclusion to the great chapter on salvation, Paul in Romans 8:31 asks, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” This may be an allusion to one of the Hallel Psalms: “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” (Psalm 118:6).

The Hallel Psalms were a fitting passage to be included in Passover celebrations and fitting for today’s New Covenant believer to celebrate salvation from the power and the penalty of sin.

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Lesson 08 – Part 8

OPEN IT

1. What was the last book you read that greatly influenced you? In what way?

EXPLORE IT

2. How can a young man cleanse his way? (Psalm 119:9)
3. How can I have God's Word hidden in my heart? (Psalm 119:11)
4. What does it mean that God's Word is settled in heaven? (Psalm 119:89)
5. How is God's Word a lamp to my feet? (Psalm 119:105)
6. What are the Songs of Ascent?
7. Explain what the psalmist means, "I lift my eyes to the hills". (Psalm 121:1)
8. "Where does my help come from?" According to Psalm 121:1-2. What if the Lord had not been on our side?
9. What does it mean that "unless the Lord builds the house" the builders labor in vain? (Psalm 127:1)
10. How are children a blessing from the Lord? (Psalm 127:3)

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Lesson 08 – Part 8

11. What does it mean that children are a heritage from the Lord? (Psalm 127:3)

12. Should everyone have a quiver full of children? (Psalm 127:5)

13. Why is it good and pleasant for God's people to be united? (Psalm 133:1)

14. What does it mean that "His mercy endures forever"? (Psalm 136)

GET IT

15. How can we walk in God's way? (Psalm 128:1)

16. In what way are Christians united or divided?

APPLY IT

17. Are there areas of your life that cause division in your family? What will you do to correct such a division?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

1.

2.

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Lesson 08 – Part 8 Notes

What can we learn from Psalm 119?"

Containing 176 verses, Psalm 119 is the longest single chapter in the Bible. The author of Psalm 119 is unknown, but most scholars agree that it was written by David, Ezra, Daniel, or Jeremiah. Each of these proposed authors suffered serious difficulties in his life, and the author of Psalm 119 reflects that in descriptions of plots, slanders, and taunts against him (verses 23, 42, 51, 150), persecutions (verses 61, 86, 95, 110, 121, 134, 157, 161), and afflictions (verses 67, 71, 143, 153). The persecution and affliction of the man (and woman) of God is a major theme of Psalm 119.

Another prominent theme in Psalm 119 is the profound truth that the Word of God is all-sufficient. Psalm 119 is an expansion of Psalm 19:7–9: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.” There are eight different terms referring to the Word of God throughout the psalm: *law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, and ordinances*. In almost every verse, the Word of God is mentioned. Psalm 119 affirms not only the character of the Scriptures, but it affirms that God’s Word reflects the very character of God Himself. Notice these attributes of God ascribed to Scripture in Psalm 119:

1. Righteousness (verses 7, 62, 75, 106, 123, 138, 144, 160, 164, 172)
2. Trustworthiness (verse 42)
3. Truthfulness (verses 43, 142, 151, 160)
4. Faithfulness (verse 86)
5. Unchangeableness (verse 89)
6. Eternality (verses 90, 152)
7. Light (verse 105)
8. Purity (verse 140)

The format of Psalm 119 is an alphabetic acrostic, meaning that the first letters of each line in Hebrew follow through the alphabet, 8 lines per letter, thus 8 lines x 22 letters in Hebrew = 176 lines. One message of this psalm is that we are to live a lifestyle that demonstrates obedience to the Lord, who is a God of order (hence the acrostic structure), not of chaos.

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Lesson 08 – Part 8 Notes

The psalm opens with two beatitudes. “Blessed” are those whose ways are blameless, who live according to God’s law, who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart. The author of the psalm is a man who has known great trouble in his life, but also one who has come through it with a deep and passionate understanding of God’s unfailing love and compassion (Psalm 119:75–77). Throughout his affliction, the author clings to the truths he learns from the Scriptures, which are eternal and “stand firm in the heavens” (Psalm 119:89–91). His love for the Word of God and his dedication to remember it and live by it is a theme that is repeated over and over (verses 11, 15–16, 24, 34, 44, 47, 55, 60, etc.).

These are the lessons for us in this great psalm. The Word of God is sufficient to make us wise, train us in righteousness, and equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15–17). The Scriptures are a reflection of God’s nature, and from them we learn that we can trust His character and His plan and purposes for mankind, even when those plans include affliction and persecution. Blessed indeed are we if our delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law, we meditate day and night (Psalm 1:2).

Songs of Ascent

The Songs of Ascent are a special group of psalms comprising Psalms 120—134. They are also called Pilgrim Songs. Four of these songs are attributed to King David (122, 124, 131, 133) and one to Solomon (127), while the remaining ten are anonymous.

The city of Jerusalem is situated on a high hill. Jews traveling to Jerusalem for one of the three main annual Jewish festivals traditionally sang these songs on the “ascent” or the uphill road to the city. According to some traditions, the Jewish priests also sang some of these Songs of Ascent as they walked up the steps to the temple in Jerusalem.

Each of the psalms in this collection begins with the title “A Song of Ascents.” While perhaps they were not originally composed for this purpose, these psalms were later grouped together for use in traveling toward Jerusalem for the yearly Jewish festivals.

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Lesson 08 – Part 8 Notes

The theme of each Song of Ascent offers much encouragement for those who seek to worship God today:

- Psalm 120: God's presence during distress
- Psalm 121: Joyful praise to the Lord
- Psalm 122: Prayer for Jerusalem
- Psalm 123: Patience for God's mercy
- Psalm 124: Help comes from the Lord
- Psalm 125: Prayer for God's blessing upon His people
- Psalm 126: The Lord has done great things
- Psalm 127: God's blessing on man's efforts
- Psalm 128: Joy for those who follow God's ways
- Psalm 129: A cry for help to the Lord
- Psalm 130: A prayer of repentance
- Psalm 131: Surrender as a child to the Lord
- Psalm 132: God's sovereign plan for His people
- Psalm 133: Praise of brotherly fellowship and unity
- Psalm 134: Praise to God in His temple

The Songs of Ascent continue to find a place among the many hymns and songs of worship of Jews and Christians today. They serve as powerful examples of how we can express our worship and love for God through the power of song.

Lesson 08 – Part 8 Notes

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Lesson 09 – Part 9

OPEN IT

1. What impact has reading the Psalms had upon your life?

EXPLORE IT

2. What does Psalm 137:9 mean?
3. What does it mean that God holds His Word above His name? (Psalm 138:2)
4. What are the depths of the earth? (Psalm 139:15)
5. What is the significance that God knows our anxious thoughts? (Psalm 139:23)
6. What is the land of the living, and how is God our portion in it? (Psalm 142:5)
7. What is Psalm 151? Is it in your Bible?
8. What are a few of your favorite psalms?
9. Group Question: Identify each Psalm by genre.

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Lesson 09 – Part 9 Notes

A Table of Psalms by Theme

God the Creator.	8 , 19 , 33 , 65 , 111 , 104 , 145 , 147 .
God the Redeemer.	15 , 33 , 102 , 103 , 111 , 113 , 114 , 126 , 130 , 138 .
God the Judge.	1 , 7 , 11 , 46 , 50 , 62 , 75 , 76 , 82 , 90 , 96 , 97 , 98 .
God's Glory.	18 , 29 , 99 , 36 , 46 , 148 , 150 .
God's Sovereignty.	24 , 46 , 47 , 72 , 89 , 93 , 96 , 97 , 98 , 99 , 112 , 146 , 145 .
God's Wisdom.	33 , 104 , 111 , 113 , 139 , 145 , 147 .
God's Law.	19 , 50 , 62 , 111 , 119 , 147 , 23 , 33 , 34 , 37 , 89 , 121 , 124 , 139 , 145 , 146 , 147 .
God's Mercy.	23 , 32 , 57 , 61 , 62 , 63 , 73 , 77 , 85 , 86 , 100 , 103 , 118 , 130 , 145 .
The Incarnation.	2 , 8 , 85 , 89 , 102 , 110 , 111 , 113 , 132 .
The Passion.	22 , 40 , 42 , 54 , 69 , 88 , 116 , 130 .
The Church.	46 , 48 , 84 , 111 , 122 , 133 , 147 .
Worship.	5 , 26 , 43 , 63 , 65 , 66 , 67 , 84 , 96 , 100 , 102 , 116 , 122 , 138 .
Thanksgiving.	30 , 65 , 67 , 92 , 98 , 100 , 111 , 103 , 107 , 116 , 134 , 138 , 145 , 147 , 148 , 150 .
Prayer.	4 , 5 , 17 , 20 , 28 , 31 , 54 , 61 , 84 , 86 , 102 , 141 , 142 .
Trust in God.	27 , 31 , 57 , 62 , 63 , 71 , 73 , 77 , 91 , 118 , 121 , 123 , 124 , 125 , 143 , 146 .
God our Refuge.	4 , 17 , 20 , 37 , 46 , 49 , 54 , 61 , 71 , 91 , 103 , 121 , 146 .
Divine Guidance.	25 , 43 , 80 , 85 , 111 , 112 .
In Time of Trouble.	3 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 18 , 20 , 30 , 40 , 46 , 49 , 57 , 62 , 63 , 80 , 85 , 86 , 90 , 107 , 118 , 144 , 146 .
Righteousness.	1 , 11 , 12 , 15 , 18 , 19 , 26 , 34 , 40 , 92 , 111 , 112 .
Peace.	29 , 46 , 76 , 85 , 98 , 100 , 124 , 125 , 126 .
The Transitoriness of Life.	39 , 49 , 90 , 102 .
The Hope of Immortality.	16 , 30 , 42 , 49 , 66 , 73 , 103 , 116 , 121 , 139 , 146 .
Morning.	3 , 5 , 20 , 63 , 90 , 143 .
Evening.	4 , 13 , 16 , 17 , 31 , 77 , 91 , 121 , 134 .
Penitential Psalms.	6 , 32 , 38 , 51 , 102 , 130 , 143 .
Preparation for Holy Communion.	23 , 25 , 26 , 36 , 41 , 43 , 63 , 84 , 85 , 86 , 122 , 130 , 133 , 139 .
Thanksgiving after Holy Communion.	8 , 15 , 18 , 19 , 27 , 29 , 30 , 34 , 100 , 103 , 110 , 118 , 145 , 150 .

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Lesson 09 – Part 9 Notes

The Six Genres of Psalms

An aid in reading the Psalms is to be able to arrange them in literary categories or genres. Based on thematic elements that are shared between the Psalms and literary features, we can more precisely classify the lyric poems of the Psalms. While some of the following literary categories may overlap as well as the rubrics for each may differ with varying sources, it is possible to place the psalms into six primary genres.

1. Lament Psalms

Psalms of Lament is the most dominant genre found in the Psalter. More than one-third of the psalms are of this nature. The chief defining characteristic of the lament is its mood. In this type of psalm, a psalmist will often be mourning the attack of his enemies. At other times, a psalmist may make a complaint about himself, and, at times, he expresses disappointment with God (**Psalms 22:1-2**). In addition, lament psalms move from mourning to expressing trust in God.

A problem often encountered in laments is that the enemy is described in vague terms. We need to avoid becoming too specific in our identification of enemies. Some commentators have gone to extremes in identifying the enemy. Unless the context is clear, we should avoid this extreme because the psalmist generally wanted to be vague in determining the specifics of a historical situation. As Longman has stated: “In most cases, the references are vague, and we have every reason to believe they are so intentionally. The psalms are purposefully vague in reference to historical events so that they can be used in a variety of situations.

The lament psalm may be written from an individual or national perspective. **Psalms 3** is a personal lament highlighting what took place when David fled from Absalom. An element of trust concludes this psalm in **Psalms 3:7-8** (other examples include **Psalms 4**, **Psalms 5**, **Psalms 6**, **Psalms 7**, **Psalms 9**, and others). **Psalms 12** is a national lament composed on behalf of Israel. David laments the oppression of Israel by their enemies. An expression of trust is found in **Psalms 12:7**, where a prayer for deliverance is offered (so also **Psalms 44:1-6**, **Psalms 58**, **Psalms 60**, and others). The lament also includes the penitential psalms such as **Psalms 51** (also **Psalms 6**, **Psalms 38**, **Psalms 102**, **Psalms 130**, **Psalms 143**) and psalms with imprecatory elements such as **Psalms 137** (also **Psalms 12**, **Psalms 35**, **Psalms 58**, **Psalms 59**, **Psalms 69**, **Psalms 70**, **Psalms 109**, **Psalms 140**).

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Lesson 09 – Part 9 Notes

2. Praise Hymns

The Praise Hymns are easily identifiable because of their emphasis on praise to God. With the lament, the psalmist is at the lower end of the emotional spectrum, but with the hymn, he moves to the opposite end of joyful praise. God is praised for his greatness and goodness. He may be praised as Creator as in **Psalms 8, Psalms 19, Psalms 29, Psalms 104, Psalms 148,** as the deliverer of Israel in **Psalms 66, Psalm 100, Psalm 111, Psalm 114, Psalm 148,** and as the Lord of history in **Psalms 33, Psalm 103, Psalm 113, Psalm 117, Psalm 145, Psalm 146, Psalm 147** (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 213). Another type of hymn is the Songs of Zion. In these psalms, God is extolled for having made Mount Zion the place where his presence would be uniquely manifested (**Psalms 46, Psalm 48, Psalm 76, Psalm 84, Psalm 87, Psalm 122**).

3. Thanksgiving Psalms

These are joyful expressions of thanksgiving. The dominant feature is an expression of gratitude to the LORD for having responded to a request of an individual or a group (Longman, *Psalms*, 30–31). An individual psalm of thanksgiving is found in **Psalm 32** (also **Psalms 18, Psalm 30, Psalm 34, Psalm 40, Psalm 66, Psalm 92, Psalm 116, Psalm 118, Psalm 138**). In this psalm, David thanks the LORD for forgiving him of his sin that involved his adultery with Bathsheba and responsibility for the murder of her husband. His prayer for forgiveness is found in his penitential lament in **Psalms 51**. A national psalm of thanksgiving is found in **Psalms 124**. Israel expresses gratitude to the LORD for delivering them from impending destruction (other examples include **Psalms 65, Psalm 67, Psalm 75, Psalm 107,** and **Psalms 136**).

4. Kingship and Covenant Psalms

These Psalms celebrate and affirm loyalty to God as King, the theocratic king, and God's covenant. This category has three subcategories. First, divine kingship psalms celebrate the LORD's sovereign rule over the universe. The psalms in this category are **Psalms 24, Psalms 29, Psalms 47, Psalms 93, Psalms 95, Psalms 96, Psalms 97, Psalms 98,** and **Psalms 99**. Second, theocratic kingship psalms, generally known as "royal psalms," celebrate the Davidic dynasty and the universal kingdom. These psalms are joined by their focus on Israel's earthly king. Further, they have the **Davidic Covenant** in **2 Samuel 7** (also **1 Chronicles 17**) as their foundation. Finally, they may focus on the importance of the Davidic line and its relationship to God, as in **Psalms 2, Psalms 89,** and **Psalms 132**. **Psalms 18** is a royal thanksgiving psalm. **Psalms 20** requests God's blessing on the king. **Psalms 45** focuses on a royal wedding.

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Lesson 09 – Part 9 Notes

Therefore, the focus of these psalms is the Davidic king, but it can refer to various phases of kingship. The remaining royal psalms are **Psalms 21**, **Psalms 72**, **Psalms 101**, **Psalms 110**, and **Psalms 144**. The royal psalms are especially significant for Christians because they provide the background and find their culmination in our Lord Jesus Christ. Third, two psalms, **Psalms 50** and **Psalms 81**, are intended to encourage Israel to renew her allegiance to God and the Mosaic Covenant (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 213).

5. Songs of Trust

These are dominated by their emphasis on trusting God and the safeguard that trusting in God produces. Though enemies surround David in **Psalms 11** and **Psalms 23**, he puts his trust in the LORD, and from this, he finds security. In **Psalms 121**, the worshippers traveling to Jerusalem were faced with danger, yet they focused their eyes of **faith** on the LORD. In **Psalms 131**, the psalmist's submissive trust in his LORD is graphically compared to a weaned child with his mother. Other psalms in this grouping are **Psalms 16**, **Psalms 62**, **Psalms 63**, **Psalms 91**, and **Psalms 125**.

6. Wisdom Psalms

Psalms of Wisdom have a didactic nature and emphasize the Torah as fundamental for blessing. In addition, they contrast the lifestyle of the righteous with that of the wicked. Two rhetorical elements that dominate this genre are the blessing pronouncement and the use of similes. Psalms in this category are **Psalms 1**, **Psalms 15**, **Psalms 36**, **Psalms 37**, **Psalms 49**, **Psalms 73**, **Psalms 112**, **Psalms 119**, **Psalms 127**, **Psalms 128**, and **Psalms 133**.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, we recognize genre whenever we read a psalm, as well as any portion of the Bible. For example, when reading **Joshua 1**, we know it is history; and looking at the Psalter, it is evident that each psalm is poetry. The poetic genre of the Psalms is a general literary category. More precisely, **Psalms 13** is an individual lament, as v. 1 indicates ("How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?").

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Lesson 09 – Part 9 Notes

Types of Psalms: Classifying the Psalms by Genre Dennis Bratcher

<u>Lament Psalms</u>	
Community	12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89*, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
Individual	3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27*, 28, 31, 36*, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52*, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89*, 120, 139, 141, 142
<u>Specialized Lament Psalms</u>	
<u>Penitential</u>	6, 32*, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
<u>Imprecatory</u>	35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140
<u>Thanksgiving (Todah) Psalms</u>	
Community	65*, 67*, 75, 107, 124, 136*
Individual	18, 21, 30, 32*, 34, 40:1-11, 66:13-20, 92, 108*, 116, 118, 138
<u>Specialized Thanksgiving (Todah) Psalms</u>	
<u>Salvation History</u>	8*, 105-106, 135, 136
<u>Songs of Trust</u>	11, 16, 23, 27*, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131
<u>Hymnic Psalms</u>	
<u>Hymn</u> and <u>Doxology</u>	8*, 19:1-6, 33, 66:1-12, 67*, 95, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
<u>Liturgical Psalms (for Public Worship)</u>	
Covenant Songs	50, 78, 81, 89*, 132
Royal / Enthronement	2, 18, 20, 21, 29, 45, 47, 72, 93, 95*, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 110, 144
Songs of Zion	46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
Temple Liturgies	15, 24, 68*, 82, 95*, 115, 134
<u>Community Psalms</u>	
<u>Wisdom Psalms</u>	1*, 36*, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133
<u>Torah Poems</u>	1*, 19:7-14, 119

***These Psalms are difficult to classify because they could fit into more than one group or are mixed types.**

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Poetic Books: Book of Proverbs

Page *i*

Introduction

Author: King Solomon is the principal writer of Proverbs. Solomon's name appears in 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1. We may also presume Solomon collected and edited proverbs other than his own, for Ecclesiastes 12:9 says, "Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs." Indeed, the Hebrew title *Mishle Shelomoh* is translated "Proverbs of Solomon."

Date of Writing: Solomon's proverbs were penned around 900 B.C. During his reign as king, the nation of Israel reached its pinnacle spiritually, politically, culturally, and economically. As Israel's reputation soared, so did King Solomon's. Foreign dignitaries from the far reaches of the known world traveled great distances to hear the wise monarch speak (1 Kings 4:34).

Purpose of Writing: Knowledge is nothing more than an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them. In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon reveals the mind of God in matters high and lofty and in common, ordinary, everyday situations, too. It appears that no topic escaped King Solomon's attention. Matters pertaining to personal conduct, sexual relations, business, wealth, charity, ambition, discipline, debt, child-rearing, character, alcohol, politics, revenge, and godliness are among the many topics covered in this rich collection of wise sayings.

Key Verses: Proverbs 1:5, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance."

Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

Proverbs 4:5, "Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them."

Proverbs 8:13-14, "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power."

Brief Summary: Summarizing the Book of Proverbs is a bit difficult, for unlike many other books of Scripture, there is no particular plot or storyline found in its pages; likewise, there are no principal characters in the book. It is wisdom that takes center stage—a grand, divine wisdom that transcends the whole of history, peoples, and cultures. Even a perfunctory reading of this magnificent treasury reveals the pithy sayings of the wise King Solomon are as relevant today as they were some three thousand years ago.

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Foreshadowings: The theme of wisdom and its necessity in our lives finds its fulfillment in Christ. We are continually exhorted in Proverbs to seek wisdom, get wisdom, and understand wisdom. Proverbs also tell us—and repeats it—that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (1:7; 9:10). Our fear of the Lord's wrath and justice is what drives us to Christ, who is the embodiment of God's wisdom as expressed in His glorious plan of redemption for mankind. In Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), we find the answer to our search for wisdom, the remedy for our fear of God, and the "righteousness, holiness and redemption" that we so desperately need (1 Corinthians 1:30). The wisdom that is found only in Christ contrasts with the foolishness of the world which encourages us to be wise in our own eyes. But Proverbs also tells us that the world's way is not God's way (Proverbs 3:7) and leads only to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Practical Application: There is an undeniable practicality found in this book, for sound and sensible answers to all manner of complex difficulties are found within its thirty-one chapters. Certainly, Proverbs is the greatest "how-to" book ever written, and those who have the good sense to take Solomon's lessons to heart will quickly discover godliness, prosperity, and contentment are theirs for the asking.

The recurring principle of the Book of Proverbs is that those who choose wisdom and follow God will be blessed in numerous ways: with long life (9:11); prosperity (2:20-22); joy (3:13-18); and the goodness of God (12:21). Those who reject Him, on the other hand, suffer shame and death (3:35; 10:21). To reject God is to choose folly over wisdom and is to separate ourselves from God, His Word, His wisdom, and His blessings.

Wisdom Literature of Proverbs

Most of the book of Proverbs is made up of short, pithy sayings about how the world works. Some of these bits of wisdom literature address simple, common-sense solutions to life's problems. Proverbs 27:14 is almost comical but true: "If anyone loudly blesses their neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse." In other words, let your neighbor sleep if he wants to! This proverb is also very practical: "Don't visit your neighbors too often, or you will wear out your welcome" (Proverbs 25:17). Another is sad but true: "Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife" (Proverbs 17:1).

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The truth of many of the proverbs can be readily apprehended without any special spiritual insight, but others will make more sense when viewed from God's perspective: "For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword" (Proverbs 5:3–4). And some will only make sense when viewed from the perspective of eternity: "The Lord works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster" (Proverbs 16:4).

What is a proverb?

While many questions can be asked and answered about the biblical book of Proverbs, ascertaining the exact definition of a proverb, including its form, purpose, and interpretation, is rather difficult! Scholars who have dedicated themselves as paremiologists, or students of proverbs, debate various definitions of what a proverb is. Biblical scholars have better success, confining the definition to biblical proverbs.

Paremiologist Archer Taylor claimed in his seminal work, *The Proverb*, that only "an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not." Many take advantage of this "incommunicable quality" by turning their definitions into proverbs themselves, such as "short sentences drawn from long experience" or "the wit of one and the wisdom of many." Within the biblical text, these descriptions are certainly applicable.

A good definition of a biblical proverb is "a short saying that expresses a general truth for practical, godly living." The Hebrew word translated "proverb" comes from a root word meaning "to be like"; thus, the book of Proverbs is full of comparisons showing us how various images illustrate the fundamental truths of life. The purpose of a proverb is to present wisdom in a short, memorable format. Proverbs are simple yet profound. Many deals with the commonplace yet clarify the deepest realities of life. The Bible refers to proverbs as "sayings of the wise" (Proverbs 24:23) and "sayings and riddles of the wise" (Proverbs 1:6).

Since the book of Proverbs is part of the Bible's wisdom literature, it is appropriate to interpret its contents differently than, say, a historical account. Proverbs are not necessarily to be taken literally, and they are not promises; rather, they are an acknowledgment of a common reality. For example, "Whoever says to the guilty, 'You are innocent,' will be cursed by peoples and denounced by nations" (Proverbs 24:24). Extensive experience tells us that sometimes a corrupt judge will actually gain more power and prestige, instead of being cursed. But such cases are the exception, not the rule. The proverb's point is that, in general, judges who allow the guilty to go unpunished will be seen as unjust and as a detriment to society.

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There are proverbs in the Bible found outside the book of Proverbs itself, in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament, Jesus is the master of teaching in parables, which we could consider an expanded proverbial form. He also said many pithy sayings that have become common proverbs: “turn the other cheek,” “go the second mile,” “not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing,” “casting pearls before swine,” “serving two masters,” “removing a speck but ignoring a log in the eye,” and, of course, the Golden Rule. Arguably, Jesus’ proverbial sayings are the most pervasive single corpus of such works in the world today, partly because of the ubiquitous translation of the Bible, and because of the value and wisdom of Jesus’ words.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

A proverb is a statement containing much truth in a few words, expressed in such a way as to gain attention and be remembered. The principal writer of the book is Solomon (**Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1**). The Scripture speaks elsewhere of the wisdom that God gave to Solomon and of the fact that he wrote many proverbs (**1 Kings 4:29–34**). Some of these proverbs were not collected in their present arrangement until the time of King Hezekiah (**Proverbs 25:1**). The last two chapters were written by Agur (**Proverbs 30**) and Lemuel (**Proverbs 31**). We do not know anything about either of these men.

1. The Themes of Proverbs

There are many themes in the book of Proverbs, but the purpose of the book is to impart wisdom (**Proverbs 1:2–4**). Wisdom in the Scripture is not mere intellectual knowledge; rather, it is a moral and spiritual use of knowledge in subjection to the will of God. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (**Proverbs 9:10**).

In addition to the theme of wisdom, we find many proverbs that teach obedience to parents, the value of friendship, the importance of good company, honesty, and industry. Many Proverbs also warn against laziness, lying, evil companions, drunkenness, and pride. These are only a few of the dozens of subjects covered in the book. Proverbs cannot be surveyed in the way that a historical book can, since it is purposely composed of many disconnected topics. It is written to give wisdom to the young (**Proverbs 1:4**), giving heavenly instruction to apply to practical, earthly matters.

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2. An Outline of Proverbs

- I. Wisdom and Foolishness Contrasted (**Proverbs 1–9**)
- II. Miscellaneous Proverbs of Solomon on Varied Themes (**Proverbs 10–24**)
- III. Proverbs of Solomon Copied by “The Men of Hezekiah” (**Proverbs 25–29**)
- IV. “The Words of Agur” (**Proverbs 30**)
- V. “The Words of King Lemuel” (**Proverbs 31**)

The only part of the book characterized by one predominant theme is the first division (**Proverbs 1–9**). Wisdom, being contrasted with foolishness, is personified as a noble lady who calls upon the young man to listen to her instruction, compared with the foolish woman who seeks to lead him astray. It is interesting to note that in the New Testament wisdom is not only personified in a figurative way, but is actually found in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom” (**1 Corinthians 1:30**).

In the second division of the book, which contains miscellaneous proverbs of Solomon on varied themes, **Proverbs 10–15** contains mostly antithetic parallelisms, while in **Proverbs 16–24** the synonymous form of parallelism predominates. You may recall from **Lesson 1** that in antithetical parallelism, a thought is stated and is followed by its contrast, and in synonymous parallelism, a thought is stated and then repeated in similar language.

The men of Hezekiah—a godly king who lived two centuries after Solomon’s time—copied certain proverbs of Solomon (**Proverbs 25–29**). These men, mentioned in **Proverbs 25:1**, may be the prophets Isaiah and Micah, who were contemporaries of Hezekiah.

Proverbs 31:10–31, which praises the virtuous woman, contains verses arranged alphabetically. Each verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from the first to the last.

Reading the proverbs will be far more profitable for you than reading comments about them, for in them you will find the very wisdom of God to apply to your daily life. The one who reads and observes the instructions of this book will reap great spiritual reward. “If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (**Proverbs 2:3–5**).

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The key word in Proverbs is wisdom, “the ability to live life skillfully.” A godly life in an ungodly world, however, is no simple assignment. Proverbs provides God’s detailed instructions for His people to deal successfully with the practical affairs of everyday life: how to relate to God, parents, children, neighbors, and government. Solomon, the principal author, uses a combination of poetry, parables, pithy questions, short stories, and wise maxims to give in strikingly memorable form the common sense and divine perspective necessary to handle life’s issues.

Because Solomon, the pinnacle of Israel’s wise men, was the principal contributor, the Hebrew title of this book is Mishle Shelomoh, “Proverbs of Solomon” (1:1). The Greek title is Paroimiai Salomontos, “Proverbs of Solomon.” The Latin title Liber Proverbiorum, “Book of Proverbs,” combines the words pro “for” and verba “words” to describe the way the proverbs concentrate many words into a few. The rabbinical writings called Proverbs Sepher Hokhmah, “Book of Wisdom.”

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Lesson 01 – Part 1

OPEN IT

1. Which do you value more? Wisdom or knowledge? And why?

EXPLORE IT

2. How is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10)
3. What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?
4. What is a fool according to the Book of Proverbs?
5. Why do fools despise wisdom? (Proverbs 1:7)
6. Why is wisdom referred to as a “she” in Proverbs? (Proverbs 1:20-23, 8:1-9:12)
7. Why are both wisdom and foolishness pictured as women in Proverbs? (Proverbs 9:1-18)
8. What does Proverbs say about a contentious and quarrelsome woman? (Proverbs 19:13, 25:15, 21:9, 21:19, 25:24)
9. What does it mean to write mercy and truth on the tablet of your heart? (Proverbs 3:3)
10. What does it mean to trust in the Lord with all your heart? (Proverbs 3:5)

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Lesson 01 – Part 1

11. What does it mean to lean not on your own understanding? (Proverbs 3:5-6)

12. Explain, “in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight”.
(Proverbs 3:6)

13. What does it mean to not be wise in your own eyes? (Proverbs 3:7)

14. How do you honor the Lord with your wealth? (Proverbs 3:9)

15. What is the meaning of “length of days”? (Proverbs 3:16)

GET IT

16. Why do you think Solomon did not follow his own advice on women?

APPLY IT

17. What steps can you take to seek and apply wisdom in your life?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?"

Wisdom and knowledge, both recurring themes in the Bible, are related but not synonymous. The dictionary defines *wisdom* as “the ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting.” *Knowledge*, on the other hand, is “information gained through experience, reasoning, or acquaintance.” Knowledge can exist without wisdom, but not the other way around. One can be knowledgeable without being wise. Knowledge is knowing how to use a gun; wisdom is knowing when to use it and when to keep it holstered.

God wants us to have knowledge of Him and what He expects of us. To obey Him, we must have knowledge of the commands. But as equally important as having knowledge is having wisdom. Knowing facts about God and the Bible is not all there is to wisdom. Wisdom is a gift from God. James 1:5 states, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” God blesses us with wisdom for us to glorify Him and use the knowledge we have of Him.

The book of Proverbs is perhaps the best place in the Bible to learn of biblical wisdom. Proverbs 1:7 speaks of both biblical knowledge and wisdom: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, / but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” To fear the Lord is to start on the path to knowledge, and God can then begin to provide us with wisdom through Christ, who the Bible says is wisdom itself: “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Knowledge is what is gathered over time through study of the Scriptures. It can be said that wisdom, in turn, acts properly upon that knowledge. Wisdom is the fitting application of knowledge. Knowledge understands the light has turned red; wisdom applies the brakes. Knowledge sees the quicksand; wisdom walks around it. Knowledge memorizes the Ten Commandments; wisdom obeys them. Knowledge learns of God; wisdom loves Him.

What is a fool?

The word *fool* appears forty times in the ESV version of Proverbs. The ways of the fool are often contrasted with the ways of the wise. In modern usage a “fool” can be a “dupe,” an “ignoramus,” or just a “ridiculous person,” but how is a “fool” defined in Proverbs?

A look at some of the occurrences of the word *fool* in Proverbs helps provide an explanation. Proverbs 10:8 refers to a “babbling fool.” One trait of a fool is that he is a constant talker who is not known for listening to wisdom (also 10:10).

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

Proverbs 10:14 states, “The mouth of a fool brings ruin near.” This contrasts the speech of the fool with the knowledge of the wise. A fool does not care about learning. He’s too busy talking.

Proverbs 10:18 teaches, “Whoever utters slander is a fool.” The fool will speak poorly of other people rather than be known as an encourager.

Proverbs 10:23 adds that “doing wrong is like a joke to a fool.” A foolish person does not take sin or its consequences seriously.

Proverbs 12:15 says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” The fool rejects the advice of others and instead listens only to himself.

Proverbs 13:16 notes, “A fool flaunts his folly.” In other words, a foolish person is proud of his wrong actions.

Proverbs 14:16 teaches that “a fool is reckless and careless.” A fool does not plan ahead but rather lives life without considering the impact his actions have on himself and others.

Proverbs 15:5 shows that “a fool despises his father’s instruction.” The foolish person will not listen to his parents or obey them. In fact, he spurns what his father says.

Proverbs 26:11 uses emblematic parallelism to graphically illustrate the behavior of fools: “As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.” A fool is known for repeating mistakes rather than learning from past wrongs.

Often in Scripture, a fool is associated with wickedness and a direct denial of God (e.g., in Psalm 53:1). Because God has infinite wisdom, the person who neglects God will naturally miss out on wisdom—he will become a fool. A fool is anyone who does not follow the warnings and commands of God. A fool lacks wisdom, has no concern for others, does not desire to avoid sin, and brags about his sinful actions. The Scripture is clear we are to avoid living as a fool; rather, we are to fear the Lord, walk in His wisdom, and follow His ways. We know that “those who walk in wisdom are kept safe” (Proverbs 28:26).

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

Why didn't Solomon follow his own advice on women?

Proverbs offers men much wisdom related to avoiding the trap of sexually immoral relationships with women. However, Solomon's greatest personal weakest was with women. He is recorded as having 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Unfortunately, "as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:4). Solomon knew what was right. Why didn't he follow his own advice concerning women?

Many explanations have been offered, though the Bible does not specifically give the answer. It should be mentioned that Solomon's father, David, also struggled in this area, though not to the extent that Solomon did. David took many wives and concubines (2 Samuel 5:13), but, even then, he lusted after Bathsheba and committed adultery with her. Like father, like son, they say, and Solomon it seems inherited his father's sin and amplified it in his own life.

One reason often noted for Solomon failing to follow his own advice is that Solomon learned his lessons from experience. If the Proverbs were compiled in the later part of Solomon's life, it would make sense that he recorded wise sayings to help others avoid problems he dealt with in his own life. If so, the proverbs of Solomon are deeply personal, since they were born out of the author's personal struggles with foolishness.

Another possible reason Solomon did not follow his own advice regarding women is that there's a difference between having knowledge and applying knowledge. Solomon *knew* it was wrong to obtain many wives—in fact, it was against the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 17:17)—but he did it regardless of his knowledge. Solomon likely later regretted his choices, as can be seen in the way he speaks of avoiding sexual immorality in Proverbs.

A third possible answer to this issue is that not all of the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon. The book indicates that some of the proverbs were written by other wise men (Proverbs 22:17—24:34), Agur son of Jakeh (Proverbs 30:1–33) and King Lemuel (Proverbs 31).

A fourth possible reason that Solomon did not follow his own advice concerning women can be found in the second part of 1 Kings 11:4: "His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been." The historian notes that it was when Solomon was older that he strayed from God's ways. God then gave a judgment concerning Solomon and his kingdom (1 Kings 11:9–13). Since Solomon had experienced judgment in his own life in this area, he determined to help others to avoid similar judgment in their lives.

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

In the end, we have some possible reasons why Solomon may have neglected his own advice, but we are not told for certain in Scripture. Solomon was extremely wise, but he was a man with temptations like any other person. He obeyed God in many areas, yet he often failed in his relationships with women. Instead of questioning the reasons why Solomon failed to follow his own advice, we would do better to learn from his mistakes and his wisdom recorded in Proverbs to avoid these problems in our own lives.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2

OPEN IT

1. Do you prefer a simple or complex structure in life? Why? Do you associate a simple life with a quiet life? Please explain.

EXPLORE IT

2. What does it mean to “drink water from your own cistern”? (Proverbs 5:15)
3. How do you understand Proverbs 5:18?
4. What do Proverbs teach about sluggards? (Proverbs 6:6-9, 10:26, 13:4, 19:24)
5. Explain, “go to the ant, you sluggard”. (Proverbs 6:6)
6. Why does Proverbs 6:10 say, “a little sleep, a little slumber” will bring poverty?
7. What is a perverse mouth? (Proverbs 6:12)
8. What can be said about a person who sows discord? (Proverbs 6:14)
9. How can Proverbs 6:27 be understood?
10. What are seven things God hates? (Proverbs 6:16-19)

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Lesson 02 – Part 2

11. Explain what haughty eyes are. (Proverbs 6:17)

12. How can I obtain favor from the Lord? (Proverbs 8:35)

13. What are the seven pillars of wisdom in Proverbs 9?

GET IT

14. What do wisdom and folly have in common?

15. How are wisdom and folly compared in chapter 9?

APPLY IT

16. Make a list of wisdom characteristics and apply them to your life this week.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes

Seven things God hates!

The seven things God hates are a catalog of sins summed up in Proverbs 6:16–19. While these aren't the only sins that should be avoided, they do sum up most of the wicked things condemned by God. The seven things God hates are the sins that deal with the deep heart motives of the individual. The writer of Proverbs points the finger straight at our hearts and our sinful thought processes.

This is in line with our Lord Jesus Christ's elaboration of the Ten Commandments during His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21–48). Sin is committed the moment it is conceived in the heart, even before it is actually committed. Avoiding the seven things God hates will help us expose our hidden intentions and motives.

The following is Proverbs' list of seven things God hates:

Arrogant (haughty) eyes: This describes a feeling of pride and looking down upon others (Philippians 2:3, 5–11). When we begin to think of ourselves more highly and with unparalleled importance, we are forgetting the fact that anything good in us is the result of Christ living in us and that the old self is now dead (Galatians 2:20). Often, believers feel superior to other believers when they receive godly wisdom and display amazing tenacity against sin. We fail to realize these gifts were given by God through Christ and fanned into flame by the Holy Spirit and are not due to our own goodness. This sin of pride is so detested by the LORD that Paul was kept from committing this sin by being provided with “a thorn in the flesh” to humble him (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Lying tongue: A lying tongue is one that speaks falsehood, knowingly and willingly, with an intention to deceive others. Lying can be used to impugn the character of a brother or to flatter a friend. It is a most detestable evil to God, who is a God of truth. Nothing we do causes us to more closely resemble the devil, who is the father of lies (John 8:44).

Hands that shed innocent blood: This refers to cold-blooded murder. We may never have orchestrated killing someone or never have touched a gun or knife, but in Matthew 5:21–24, Jesus says that anyone who is angry with someone else unreasonably without offering room for forgiveness commits a sin equivalent to murder. John reiterates this concept in 1 John 3:15.

A heart that devises wicked schemes: This encompasses thinking or conceiving evil against any individual or group for personal benefit or other misguided objectives, like modern-day terrorists indulge in. Any sin is basically a wicked scheme. David's sin against Uriah the Hittite and Bathsheba comes to mind (2 Samuel 11). The heart of an evil man continually contrives schemes to bring others to ruin, whether physically or spiritually.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes

Feet that are quick to rush into evil: Those whose feet are quick to rush into evil display no resistance whatsoever to sin. Having many examples in the Bible and having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; Galatians 5:16), we are expected to be wise in this regard (Romans 6:11–14; Ephesians 5:5, 11). In the Garden of Eden, Eve had the first experience of temptation. She displayed no resistance to the serpent's temptation. Instead, as soon as the devil attracted her to the fruit, she "saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye" (Genesis 3:6). Eve had sinned at that moment itself. Contrast this with the attitude of Jesus: when tired and hungry after forty days and forty nights of fasting, He refused to yield to the devil's tempting and killed the temptation in His mind without allowing it to grow into sin (Matthew 4:1–11). "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

False witness who pours out lies: This is similar to the sin of the lying tongue mentioned earlier, but this form of lying is given special mention as it could send an innocent person to jail or even lead to him being stoned to death as happened to Naboth, thanks to false witnesses instigated by the wicked Jezebel (1 Kings 21:8–14). The prohibition against bearing false witness is the ninth of the Ten Commandments, and the New Testament is equally condemning of it. Colossians 3:9–10 explains the reason for the continued prohibition against lying. Christians are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and, as such, we reflect His nature. We have been released from our "old self" with its evil practices such as lying and bearing false witness.

A man who stirs up dissension among brothers: Brothers are created by God to live in unity (Psalm 133:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:9). Believers are brothers and sisters since they have one Father God and one Brother, Jesus Christ. The Church is also the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25–27). In many situations strife among brothers and even within the church seems unavoidable, but anyone who purposely causes disruption to peace in the body of Christ will displease God above all, since that person gives room for others to sin and for himself to sin further (1 John 2:9–11; 4:19–21). Moreover, Jesus pronounced a great blessing on peacemakers, the privilege to be called "sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

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Poetic Books: Book of Proverbs

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Lesson 03 – Part 3

OPEN IT

1. Do you live by proverbs that are not in the Bible? If so, please share one or two.

EXPLORE IT

2. How is a winking eye trouble? (Proverbs 10:10)
3. How does love cover all wrongs? (Proverbs 10:12)
4. How does fearing God add length to a person's life? Proverbs 10:27)
5. Just can't make this stuff up! How is a beautiful woman without discretion like a gold ring in a pig's snout? (Proverbs 11:22)
6. What does it mean that "he who wins souls is wise"? (Proverbs 11:30)
7. How is a virtuous woman a crown to her husband? (Proverbs 12:4)
8. How is a shameful wife, rottenness to her husband's bones? (Proverbs 12:4)
9. What does it mean that a righteous person cares for the needs of animals? (Proverbs 12:10)
10. What does it mean that the tongue of the wise promotes health? (Proverbs 12:18)

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Lesson 03 – Part 3

11. Does anxiety cause depression? (Proverbs 12:25)
12. What does it mean that hope deferred makes the heart sick? (Proverbs 13:12)
13. What does it mean that “there is a way that seems right to a man”? (Proverbs 14:12)
14. How is envy; rottenness to the bones? (Proverbs 14:30)
15. How does oppressing the poor show contempt for their Maker? (Proverbs 14:31)
16. Make three comparisons between the wicked and the righteous.

GET IT

17. Share at least four comparisons between the foolish and the wise.
18. What wisdom does Proverbs instruct about money?

APPLY IT

19. After reading the comparisons between the foolish and the wise, pray about those traits that registered home.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

GOD'S ADVICE ABOUT MONEY

Proverbs 11:24-26 - The book of Proverbs gives some practical instruction on the use of money, although sometimes it is advice we would rather not hear. It's more comfortable to continue in our habits, but it is wiser to learn how to use money God's way.

- Be generous in giving. 11:24-25; 22:9
- Place people's needs ahead of profit. 11:26
- Be cautious of countersigning for someone. 17:18; 22:26-27
- Don't accept bribes. 17:23
- Help the poor. 19:17; 21:13
- Store up for the future. 21:20
- Be careful about borrowing. 22:7
- Other verses to study include 11:15; 20:16; 25:14; and 27:13. Proverbs 11:24

WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

Proverbs 14:1-35

The wise and the foolish are often contrasted in Proverbs. The characteristics, reputation, and results of the choices of each are worth knowing if wisdom is our goal.

Characteristics	Reference
The Wise: Help others with good advice	
The Foolish: Lack common sense	10:21
The Wise: Enjoy wisdom	
The Foolish: Enjoy wrongdoing	10:23
The Wise: Consider their steps	
The Foolish: Are gullible	14:15
The Foolish: Avoid the wise	15:12
The Wise: Are hungry for knowledge	
The Foolish: Feed on trash	15:14
The Wise: Value wisdom above riches	16:16
The Wise: Respond to correction	
The Foolish: Do not respond to punishment	17:10

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

The Wise: Have eyes on wisdom

The Foolish: Have eyes that wander to the ends of the earth 17:24

The Foolish: Blame failure on God 19:3

The Wise: Profit from correction

The Foolish: Become examples to others 19:25

The Foolish: Are proud and arrogant 21:24

The Foolish: Despise wise advice 23:9

The Foolish: Repeat their folly 26:11

The Wise: Trust in wisdom

The Foolish: Trust in themselves 28:26

The Wise: Control their anger

The Foolish: Unleash their anger 29:11

Reputation	Reference
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The Wise: Crowned with knowledge

The Foolish: Clothed with foolishness 14:18

The Foolish: Cause quarrels and insults 22:10

The Foolish: Receive no honor 26:1

The Wise: Calm anger

The Foolish: Stir up anger 29:8

Results	Reference
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The Wise: Stay on the right path

The Foolish: Enjoy going a foolish way 15:21

The Foolish: Lash out when discovered in folly 17:12

The Foolish: Are endangered by their words 18:6-7

The Wise: Conquer others' strength with wisdom 21:22

The Wise: Avoid wicked paths

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

The Foolish: Walk a treacherous road	22:5
The Wise: Grow stronger	24:5
The Foolish: Will never be chosen as leaders	24:7
The Foolish: Must be guided by hardship	26:3
The Foolish: Persist in foolishness	27:22

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WICKEDNESS

Proverbs often compares the lifestyles of the righteous and the wicked and makes a convincing case for living by God's pattern. It often points out the advantages of righteous living and the disadvantages of wicked living. The kind of person you decide to be will affect every area of your life. Proverbs 10:24-25

Outlook on Life

The Righteous: Hopeful

The Wicked: Fearful

Reference: 10:24

The Righteous: Concerned about the welfare of God's creation

The Wicked: Always cruel

Reference: 12:10

The Righteous: Understand justice

The Wicked: Don't understand justice

Reference: 28:5

Response to Life

The Righteous: Showered with blessings

The Wicked: Covered with violence

Reference: 10:6

The Righteous: Think before acting

The Wicked: Bluff their way through

Reference: 21:29

The Righteous: Persevere against evil

The Wicked: Brought down by calamity

Reference: 24:15-16

The Righteous: Seek to help the blameless

The Wicked: Hate those who are blameless

Reference: 29:10

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

How They Are Seen by Others

The Righteous: Respected

The Wicked: Headed for destruction

Reference: 13:15

The Wicked: Lead others into sin

Reference: 16:29

The Righteous: Walk a straight road

The Wicked: Walk a crooked path

Reference: 21:8

The Righteous: Should not desire the company of godless people

The Wicked: Plot violence

Reference: 24:1-2

The Righteous: Others are glad when they succeed

The Wicked: Others hide when they take charge

Reference: 28:12

The Righteous: Care for the poor

The Wicked: Unconcerned about the poor

Reference: 29:7

The Righteous: Despise the unjust

The Wicked: Despise the godly

Reference: 29:27

Quality of Life

The Righteous: Have a lasting foundation

The Wicked: Swept away

Reference: 10:25

The Righteous: Rescued by godliness

The Wicked: Trapped by ambition

Reference: 11:6

The Righteous: No real harm befalls them

The Wicked: Constant trouble befalls them

Reference: 12:21

The Righteous: Income results in treasure

The Wicked: Income results in trouble

Reference: 15:6

The Righteous: Avoid evil

Reference: 16:17

The Wicked: Do not prosper

Reference: 17:20

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

The Righteous: Bold as lions

The Wicked: Constantly fearful

Reference: 28:1

The Righteous: Will be rescued

The Wicked: Will suddenly be destroyed

Reference: 28:18

Short-Term Results

The Righteous: Walk safely

The Wicked: Will be exposed

Reference: 10:9

The Righteous: Rewarded with blessings

The Wicked: Pursued by trouble

Reference: 13:21

Long-Term Results

The Righteous: Protected by God

The Wicked: Destroyed by God

Reference: 10:29

The Righteous: Will be bowed to by evil people

The Wicked: Will bow to the righteous

Reference: 14:19

The Wicked: Will be punished for rebellion

Reference: 17:11

Eternal Expectations

The Righteous: Will never be disturbed

The Wicked: Will be removed from the land

Reference: 10:30

The Righteous: Have a reward that will last

The Wicked: Get rich for the moment

Reference: 11:18

The Righteous: Find life

The Wicked: Find death

Reference: 11:19

The Righteous: Look forward to a reward

The Wicked: Expect only judgment

Reference: 11:23

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Lesson 03 – Part 3 Notes

The Righteous: Will stand firm

The Wicked: Will die and disappear

Reference: 12:7

The Righteous: Have a refuge when they die

The Wicked: Are crushed by disaster

Reference: 14:32

God's Opinion

The Righteous: Delights in those with integrity

The Wicked: Detests those with crooked hearts

Reference: 11:20

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Lesson 04 – Part 4

OPEN IT

1. What is your best defense against a person that wants to verbally argue?

EXPLORE IT

2. How does a soft answer turn away wrath? (Proverbs 15:1)
3. Why are even the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? (Proverbs 15:8, 29)
4. Why are we to be slow to anger? (Proverbs 15:18)
5. Explain the value of a multitude of counselors? (Proverbs 15:22)
6. How can we commit our work to the Lord and have our plans established? (Proverbs 16:3)
7. What does it mean that a man's heart plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps? (Proverbs 16:9)
8. What does it mean that pride goes before a fall? (Proverbs 16:18)
9. How are pleasant words like a honeycomb? (Proverbs 16:24)
10. What does it mean that a friend loves at all times? (Proverbs 17:17)

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Lesson 04 – Part 4

11. What does it mean that a merry heart does good? (Proverbs 17:22)

12. What does the Bible say about having a calm spirit? (Proverbs 17:27)

13. How is the name of the Lord a strong tower? (Proverbs 18:10)

14. Why does he who finds a wife obtain favor from the Lord? (Proverbs 18:22)

15. How can a friend stick closer than a brother? (Proverbs 18:24)

GET IT

16. Compare humility and pride from the Book of Proverbs.

17. What can we learn of God's character from the Book of Proverbs?

APPLY IT

18. Review your heart and mind for any prideful ways and surrender them to God.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 04 – Part 4 Notes

HOW GOD IS DESCRIBED IN PROVERBS

Proverbs 15:3, 8-9, 11, 16

Proverbs is a book about wise living. It often focuses on people's responses to and attitudes toward God, who is the source of wisdom. A number of proverbs point out aspects of God's character. Knowing God leads to wisdom.

- God Is aware of all that happens (15:3)
- Knows the hearts of all people (15:11; 16:2; 21:2)
- Controls all things (16:33; 21:30) Is a place of safety (18:10)
- Rescues godly people from danger (11:8, 21)
- Condemns the wicked (11:31)
- Hears and delights in our prayers (15:8, 29)
- Loves those who obey him (15:9)
- Cares for the poor and needy (15:25; 22:22-23)
- Tests and purifies hearts (17:3)
- Detests the piety of the evil (17:5; 21:27; 28:9)

Best Response

- To fear and revere God (10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16; 16:6; 19:23; 28:14)
- To obey God's Word (13:13; 19:16)
- To please God by doing what is right and just (21:3)
- To trust in God (22:17-19; 29:25)

HUMILITY AND PRIDE

Proverbs 18:12

Humility	Pride	Reference
Leads to wisdom	Leads to disgrace	11:2
Takes advice	Produces conflict	13:10
Leads to honor		15:33
	Leads to punishment	16:5
	Leads to destruction	16:18
Ends in honor	Ends in downfall	18:12
Brings honor	Brings humiliation	29:23

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Lesson 04 – Part 4 Notes

Proverbs are direct and forceful in rejecting pride. A proud attitude heads the list of seven things God hates (6:16-19). In this book, the harmful results of pride are constantly contrasted with humility and its benefits.

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Lesson 05 – Part 5

OPEN IT

1. What does it mean to be successful in your home and in the community?

EXPLORE IT

2. How and when should we overlook an offense? (Proverbs 19:11)
3. What does it mean that wine is a mocker? (Proverbs 20:1)
4. What does it mean that even a child is known by his deeds? (Proverbs 20:11)
5. Does the Bible tell us to not love sleep? Why? (Proverbs 20:13)
6. How is choosing a good name better than choosing riches? (Proverbs 22:1)
7. Does the Bible promise that godly parenting results in godly children? (Proverbs 22:6)
8. How are we to train a child? (Proverbs 22:6)
9. What does it mean that “as a man thinks in his heart, so he is”? (Proverbs 23:7)
10. Why does Proverbs 23:10 tell us not to remove ancient landmarks?

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Lesson 05 – Part 5

11. What does it mean to buy the truth and not sell it? (Proverbs 23:23)

12. What does it mean that by wisdom a house is built? (Proverbs 24:3)

13. What does it mean that a righteous man falls seven times? (Proverbs 24:16)

14. Why should we not rejoice when our enemy falls? (Proverbs 24:17)

15. Why should we not fret because of evildoers? (Proverbs 24:19)

16. What does it mean that an honest answer is like a kiss on the lips? (Proverbs 24:26)

GET IT

17. Name two qualities That Promote Success and a Good Reputation. Explain.

18. Name two Qualities That Prevent Success and Cause a Bad Reputation. Explain.

APPLY IT

19. From the wisdom learned today, what change will you make this week to live wiser?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 05 – Part 5 Notes

HOW TO SUCCEED IN GOD'S EYES

Proverbs 19:8-10

Proverbs notes two significant by-products of wise living: success and a good reputation. Several verses also point out what causes failure and a poor reputation.

Qualities That Promote Success and a Good Reputation	Reference
Godliness (righteousness)	10:7; 12:3; 28:12
Hating what is false	13:5
Committing all work to the Lord	16:3
Using words with restraint and being even-tempered	17:27-28
Acquiring wisdom and understanding	19:8
Humility and fear of the Lord	22:4
Willingness to confess and turn from sin	28:13
Qualities That Prevent Success and Cause a Bad Reputation	
Wickedness	10:7; 12:3; 28:12
Seeking honors	25:27
Hatred, especially when masked as kindness	26:24-26
Praising oneself	27:2
Concealing sin	28:13

Other verses dealing with one's reputation are 11:10, 16; 14:3; 19:10; 22:1; 23:17-18; and 24:13-14.

HONESTY AND DISHONESTY

Proverbs 20:10

Proverbs tells us plainly that God despises all forms of dishonesty. Not only that, but we are also told that it works against us—when we are dishonest, others no longer trust us, and we cannot even enjoy our dishonest gains. It is wiser to be honest because “the godly escape such trouble” (12:13).

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Lesson 05 – Part 5 Notes

Other People's Opinions	Reference
Leaders value those who speak honestly.	16:13
In the end, most people will appreciate truth more than flattery.	28:23
Quality of Life	
The godly person's plans are just.	12:5
Honest witnesses do not lie; false witnesses breathe lies.	14:5
Truthful witnesses save lives; false witnesses are traitors.	14:25
The children of the righteous are blessed.	20:7
Short-Term Results	
Tainted wealth has no lasting value.	10:2
The godly are rescued from trouble.	11:8
The wicked are trapped by their own words.	12:13
Fraudulent gain is sweet only for a short time.	20:17
Long-Term Results	
Good people are guided by their honesty.	11:3
Truth endures.	12:19
Riches gained quickly don't last.	20:21
Riches gained dishonestly don't last.	21:6
The blameless are rescued from harm.	28:18
God's Opinion	
God delights in honesty.	11:1
God delights in those who are truthful.	12:22
God detests double standards.	20:10
God is pleased when we do what is right and just.	21:3

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Lesson 06 – Part 6

OPEN IT

1. What do you value in a good leader?

EXPLORE IT

2. Is there any benefit of a word fitly spoken? (Proverbs 25:11)
3. What is the meaning of apples of gold in settings of silver in Proverbs 25:11?
4. How is one who sings songs to a heavy heart like vinegar on soda? (Proverbs 25:30)
5. How should we treat our enemies? (Proverbs 25:21-22)
6. What does the Bible say about people who are wise in their own eyes? (Proverbs 26:12)
7. What is the value of letting another man praise you? (Proverbs 27:2)
8. Why is an open rebuke better than secret love? (Proverbs 27:5)
9. Explain, “faithful are the wounds of a friend”. (Proverbs 27:6)
10. What does it mean “to know the condition of your flock”? (Proverbs 27:23)

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Lesson 06 – Part 6

11. What does it mean that the righteous are as bold as a lion? (Proverbs 28:1)

12. Explain what it means that iron sharpens iron. (Proverbs 27:17)

GET IT

13. Name three qualities of a good leader.

14. Name two things that happen without good leadership.

APPLY IT

15. How will you be a better leader in your home and outside the home this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

1.

2.

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Lesson 06 – Part 6 Notes

LEADERSHIP

Proverbs 29:2, 12

Since many of the proverbs came from King Solomon, it is natural to expect some of his interest to be directed toward leadership. Other verses to study on this theme include 24:27; 25:13; and 27:18.

Qualities of a Good Leader	Reference
Works hard	12:24
Doesn't penalize people for honesty or integrity	17:26
Listens before answering	18:13
Willing to learn	18:15
Listens to both sides of the story	18:17
Stands up under pressure	24:10
Stands up under praise	27:21
What Happens without Good Leadership	
Fools are honored, which backfires	26:8
Wicked rulers are dangerous	28:15
People groan	29:2
Wicked rulers have wicked advisers	29:12

What is Christian leadership?"

What should a Christian leader be like? There is no finer example for Christian leadership than our Lord Jesus Christ. He declared, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). It is within this verse that we see the perfect description of a Christian leader. He is one who acts as a shepherd to those "sheep" in his care.

When Jesus referred to us as "sheep," He was not speaking in affectionate terms. In truth, sheep rank among the dumbest animals in creation. A stray sheep, still within earshot of the herd, becomes disoriented, confused, frightened, and incapable of finding its way back to the flock. Unable to ward off hungry predators, the stray is perhaps the most helpless of all creatures.

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Lesson 06 – Part 6 Notes

Entire herds of sheep are known to have drowned during times of flash flooding even in sight of easily accessible higher ground. Like it or not, when Jesus called us His sheep, He was saying that without a shepherd, we are helpless.

The shepherd is one who has several roles regarding his sheep. He leads, feeds, nurtures, comforts, corrects and protects. The shepherd of the Lord's flock leads by modeling godliness and righteousness in his own life and encouraging others to follow his example. Of course, our ultimate example—and the One we should follow—is Christ Himself. The Apostle Paul understood this: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). The Christian leader is one who follows Christ and inspires others to follow Him as well.

The Christian leader is also a feeder and a nourisher of the sheep, and the ultimate "sheep food" is the Word of God. Just as the shepherd leads his flock to the lushest pasture so they will grow and flourish, so the Christian leader nourishes his flock with the only food which will produce strong, vibrant Christians. The Bible—not psychology or the world's wisdom—is the only diet that can produce healthy Christians. "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The Christian leader also comforts the sheep, binding up their wounds and applying the balm of compassion and love. As the great Shepherd of Israel, the Lord Himself promised to "bind up the injured and strengthen the weak" (Ezekiel 34:16). As Christians in the world today, we suffer many injuries to our spirits, and we need compassionate leaders who will bear our burdens with us, sympathize with our circumstances, exhibit patience toward us, encourage us in the Word, and bring our concerns before the Father's throne.

The final role of the Christian leader is that of protector. The shepherd who was lax in this area soon found that he regularly lost sheep to the predators who prowled around—and sometimes among—his flock. The predators today are those who try to lure the sheep away with false doctrine, dismissing the Bible as quaint and old fashioned, insufficient, unclear, or unknowable. These lies are spread by those against whom Jesus warned us: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Our leaders must protect us from the false teachings of those who would lead us astray from the truth of the Scripture and the fact that Christ alone is the way of salvation: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

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Lesson 07 – Part 7

OPEN IT

1. What wisdom that you received from your parents do you especially treasure? What wisdom does each of your children need?

EXPLORE IT

2. Are life and death in the power of the tongue? (Proverbs 18:21)
3. What does it mean that without vision people perish? (Proverbs 29:18)
4. What does the Bible say about a child left to himself? (Proverbs 29:15)
5. What happens to a place where there is no revelation? (Proverbs 29:18)
6. How is the fear of man a snare? (Proverbs 29:25)
7. Who was Agur, son of Jakeh? (Proverbs 30)
8. Is Proverbs 30:4, “What is the name of His son”; referring to Jesus?
9. What does it mean that every word of God is pure? (Proverbs 30:5)
10. What is the meaning of “give me neither poverty nor riches”? (Proverbs 30:8)

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Lesson 07 – Part 7

11. What does it mean that the leech has two daughters? (Proverbs 30:15)

12. What do we know about King Lemuel? (Proverbs 31)

13. What should we learn about the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31?

14. What does it mean to be more precious than rubies? (Proverbs 31:10)

GET IT

15. What does it mean to have the fear of God?

16. What are some specific qualities about the virtuous woman portrayed in chapter 31 that you should imitate? How does her example teach you what it means to fear the Lord?

APPLY IT

17. How will you better use God's blessings in your life this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

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Lesson 07 – Part 7

THE AUTHORITY AND INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

The authority and inerrancy of Holy Scripture are the bedrock upon which true Christianity stands. We depend upon Scripture's witness for all that we hold true concerning God, man, and the way of salvation in Christ. The great events of redemptive history, such as the incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ, His atoning death, His glorious resurrection, and His ascension into heaven, are recorded only in Scripture. If the witness of Scripture is not reliable and compelling, then we have no basis for our faith and nothing to command our obedience.

Scripture has authority because it is the Word of God. God is first revealed as the Creator who speaks with compelling authority to call creation into being out of nothing (Gen. 1). That creative word was executed by the Holy Spirit, who secured the result intended by the words that were spoken. From that time until Christ came, God continued to speak through His servants, the prophets. In the person of His Son, God has spoken His final word, offering grace, forgiveness, and eternal life to all who believe in Christ (Heb. 1:1-3).

Moved by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, Christians confess that God's Word is true and trustworthy in all that it affirms. If the basic tenets of our faith are challenged by anyone, our reply must be, "Thus saith the LORD." This is equally so whether it concerns what man is to believe concerning God or what duty God requires of man. As a rule, or authority for faith and life, Scripture has no equal or rival, but stands alone and supreme.

This authority extends equally to all sixty-six books of Scripture. Though revealed "at sundry times and in diverse manners" (Heb. 1:1) and mediated through an astonishing array of human writers, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). It comes forth from God as breath proceeds from the body. Scripture is the product of one divine mind and speaks with one divine voice: "Prophecy of old came not by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

The authority of Scripture implies its inerrancy. As the Word of "God that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), it cannot err or stray from the path of truth: "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Ps. 119:160). Such was the faith of the church of the Old Testament, and zealous care was taken by her scribes to preserve every word and letter of the text of Scripture. Christ Himself

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confessed, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

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Lesson 07 – Part 7

A vain attempt has been made to distinguish inerrancy from infallibility by those who wish to maintain the authority of Scripture while granting the claim of unbelieving scholars that Scripture contains many errors by the writers of the books and those who transmitted the text. This attempt fails because the two words are synonymous, and because if the Bible errs at any point, it may err at every point and cannot be trusted.

While affirming the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, we do not attribute either quality to mere human beings whose task it is to read, translate, or expound them. There is no office in the church high enough to confer infallibility on the man who holds it. There is no degree of learning in the languages of Scripture and the history of their interpretation sufficient to ensure inerrancy on the part of the church's Bible scholars and teachers, much less their secular counterparts. No translation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures is absolutely perfect as a representation of the inspired Word of God; none is so good that it cannot be improved. Because our understanding is limited in so many ways, reading and interpreting the Bible must be an enterprise of faith. We must trust in Christ as our Chief Prophet to open our eyes to the wondrous things taught in Scripture and to lead us to a right understanding and faithful application of them.

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Poetic Books: Book of Ecclesiastes

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Introduction

Author: The Book of Ecclesiastes does not directly identify its author. There are quite a few verses that imply Solomon authored this book. There are some clues in the context that may suggest a different person authored the book after Solomon's death, possibly several hundred years later. Still, the conventional belief is that the author is indeed Solomon. The books of Ecclesiastes and Job boldly address life's discomforts. While Job centers on the suffering of the innocent, Ecclesiastes adopts a more cynical tone on life in general, proclaiming that all human endeavors are ultimately fleeting and meaningless. The theme "all is vanity" is established in the book's opening verses (Ecclesiastes 1:2, ESV), along with the author of Ecclesiastes: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (verse 1, ESV).

The author's name is not given, but he introduces himself as "the Preacher" (ESV) or "the Teacher" (NIV); the Hebrew word is *qoheleth*. The term *Ecclesiastes* originates from the Greek word *ekklesia* and commonly refers to a teacher or, more accurately, "one who convenes an assembly." This teacher is described as "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:1), strongly suggesting Solomon as the author. The author appears to be of old age, and in his philosophizing, he reminisces on his past life, his diverse pursuit in search of meaning, and his despair at the lack of satisfaction found even in good things like wisdom and work. His self-description as a king who had "increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me" also fits the historical account of Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:16; cf. 1 Kings 4:29–34). Further clues that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes include the fact that the author "undertook great projects" such as houses, vineyards, gardens, parks, and water reservoirs (Ecclesiastes 2:4–6). He was rich, as measured by the number of slaves and livestock herds he possessed and the amount of silver and gold in his treasury (Ecclesiastes 2:7–8a). And he had a harem (Ecclesiastes 7:8b). This all corresponds with what we know of Solomon's reign (see 1 Kings 7; 10:4–5, 14–29; 11:3; Song of Solomon 8:11). For these reasons, we can safely conclude that Solomon authored the book of Ecclesiastes.

There are other theories concerning the authorship of Ecclesiastes. Could the introduction and conclusion have been written by someone else who was setting the stage for Solomon's musing? Three possibilities emerge: 1) Solomon himself wrote the whole book, 2) later scribes compiled Solomon's writings as instructive material, or 3) the *Qoheleth* was another king in the line of David. The traditional view, unquestioned until the rise of higher criticism in the eighteenth century, is that Solomon is the sole author.

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Considering Solomon's spiritual downfall in his later years (1 Kings 11:4–8), the book of Ecclesiastes was likely written at the end of his life. The book's cynical tone aligns with his experience. As a king who once had it all, he rues the emptiness of worldly pursuits, warn youths to remember the Creator, and laments the futility of a naturalistic existence.

In a world where God often takes the back seat to idols like sexuality, money, and worldly success, Ecclesiastes admonishes us to "fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). As the Westminster Catechism states, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" (Q. 1).

Date of Writing: Solomon's reign as king of Israel lasted from around 970 B.C. to around 930 B.C. The Book of Ecclesiastes was likely written towards the end of his reign, approximately 935 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Ecclesiastes is a book of perspective. The narrative of "the Preacher" (KJV), or "the Teacher" (NIV) reveals the depression that inevitably results from seeking happiness in worldly things. This book gives Christians a chance to see the world through the eyes of a person who, though incredibly wise, is trying to find meaning in temporary, human things. Most every form of worldly pleasure is explored by the Preacher, and none of it gives him a sense of meaning.

In the end, the Preacher comes to accept that faith in God is the only way to find personal meaning. He decides to accept the fact that life is brief and ultimately worthless without God. The Preacher advises the reader to focus on an eternal God instead of temporary pleasure.

Key Verses: Ecclesiastes 1:2, "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity'" (NKJV).

Ecclesiastes 1:18, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief."

Ecclesiastes 2:11, "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

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Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.'"

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Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Brief Summary: Two phrases are repeated often in Ecclesiastes. The word translated as "vanity" in the KJV, and "meaningless" in the NIV appears often, and is used to emphasize the temporary nature of worldly things. In the end, even the most impressive human achievements will be left behind. The phrase "under the sun" occurs 28 times and refers to the mortal world. When the Preacher refers to "all things under the sun," he is talking about earthly, temporary, human things.

The first seven chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes describe all the worldly things "under the sun" that the Preacher tries to find fulfillment in. He tries scientific discovery (1:10-11), wisdom and philosophy (1:13-18), mirth (2:1), alcohol (2:3), architecture (2:4), property (2:7-8), and luxury (2:8). The Preacher turned his mind towards different philosophies to find meaning, such as materialism (2:19-20), and even moral codes (including chapters 8-9). He found that everything was meaningless, a temporary diversion that, without God, had no purpose or longevity.

Chapters 8-12 of Ecclesiastes describe the Preacher's suggestions and comments on how a life should be lived. He concludes that without God, there is no truth or meaning to life. He has seen many evils and realized that even the best of man's achievements are worth nothing in the long run. So, he advises the reader to acknowledge God from youth (12:1) and to follow His will (12:13-14).

Foreshadowings: For all of the vanities described in the Book of Ecclesiastes, the answer is Christ. According to Ecclesiastes 3:17, God judges the righteous and the wicked, and the righteous are only those who are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). God has placed the desire for eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and has provided the Way to eternal life through Christ (John 3:16). We are reminded that striving after the world's wealth is not only vanity because it does not satisfy (Ecclesiastes 5:10), but even if we could attain it, without Christ we would lose our souls and what profit is there in that (Mark 8:36)? Ultimately, every disappointment and vanity described in Ecclesiastes has its remedy in Christ, the wisdom of God and the only true meaning to be found in life.

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Practical Application: Ecclesiastes offers the Christian an opportunity to understand the emptiness and despair that those who do not know God grapple with. Those who do not have a saving faith in Christ are faced with a life that will ultimately end and become irrelevant. If there is no salvation, and no God, then not only is there no point to life, but no purpose or direction to it, either. The world "under the sun," apart from God, is frustrating, cruel, unfair, brief, and "utterly meaningless." But with Christ, life is but a shadow of the glories to come in a heaven that is only accessible through Him.

A Perplexing But Inspired Book

This is a perplexing book to many people because, on the surface at least, many of its conclusions appear to contradict other parts of Scripture. Yet we know that Ecclesiastes is a part of the Word of God, for all the books of the Old Testament had been collected before the time of Christ and were endorsed by Him in their entirety (see **Luke 24:44**)

Key Phrase

The key to properly understanding the book of Ecclesiastes is found in the phrase, "under the sun," which is found twenty-nine times throughout the book. The theme is expressed in **Ecclesiastes 1:2, 3**: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.' What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?" The point made throughout the book is that life lived under the sun, that is, on the purely natural plane, is futile. Nothing in this world can fully satisfy the longings of the human heart. "What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?" (**Ecclesiastes 1:3**).

The Inadequacy of Philosophy to Solve Life's Problems

In this book, God permitted Solomon to be a philosopher so that He might show the inadequacy of philosophy to solve the problems of life. The conclusions concerning the emptiness of life are true when viewed by human observation "under the sun," but far from the truth in Christ Jesus.

In philosophy, the two main methods of acquiring knowledge are empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism, in the strict sense of the term, is the belief that the only valid knowledge comes through sensory experience. Rationalism, on the other hand, is the view that the only valid knowledge comes through reason. Solomon, in the experiences recorded in the book, makes full use of both philosophical methods. Repeatedly he says, "I saw." This is empiricism, depending upon the senses for knowledge. Likewise, he says repeatedly, "I said in my heart," and other similar expressions. This is rationalism, seeking to discover truth through human reason.

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The conclusions in this book and in many other portions of Scripture attest to the fact that these methods are unable to fathom ultimate truths. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 **Corinthians 2:9**). By this statement God rules out both empiricism and rationalism as means for attaining the truth of God. The Preacher discovered this through his long, discouraging, and frustrating experiments. He sought satisfaction in nature, in philosophy, in pleasure, in material possessions, in riches, in accomplishments, in philanthropy, in ethics, and so on. Over everything he had to write “meaningless” (**Ecclesiastes 12:8**). Even this experience, however, was enough to show him the necessity of reverence toward God and obedience to Him. The beautiful closing chapter calls upon the young to remember their Creator while they are young, before advancing age closes their opportunities. The preacher recognizes the duty of obeying God in view of a coming judgment (**Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14**).

The Truth of God Given by Supernatural Revelation

If the book of Ecclesiastes were the only portion of God’s Word we had, we would be perplexed and even in despair, knowing the futility of life apart from God and realizing that God will judge every work. We could not, from this book alone, find the full way of escape. Against this dark background, the grace of God manifested in the other parts of His Word shines more brightly. “But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit” (1 **Corinthians 2:10**). God, through His Word, has supernaturally revealed to us that which cannot be known either by senses or by reason.

Continuing to Understand

The key word in Ecclesiastes is **vanity**, “the futile emptiness of trying to be happy apart from God.” The Preacher (traditionally taken to be Solomon—1:1, 12—the wisest, richest, most influential king in Israel’s history) looks at life “under the sun” (1:9) and, from the human perspective, declares it all to be empty. Power, popularity, prestige, pleasure—nothing can fill the God-shaped void in man’s life but God Himself! But once seen from God’s perspective, life takes on meaning and purpose, causing Solomon to exclaim, “Eat . . . drink . . . rejoice . . . do good . . . live joyfully . . . fear God . . . keep His commandments!” Skepticism and despair melt away when life is viewed as a daily gift from God.

The Hebrew title Qoheleth is a rare term, found only in Ecclesiastes (1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12:8–10). It comes from the word qahal, “to convoke an assembly, to assemble.” Thus, it means “One Who Addresses an Assembly,” “A Preacher.” The Septuagint used the Greek word Ekklesiastes as its title for this book. Derived from the word ekklesia, “assembly,” “congregation,” “church,” it simply means “Preacher.” The Latin Ecclesiastes means “Speaker Before an Assembly.”

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The Blueprint

1. Solomon's personal experience (1:1–2:26)
2. Solomon's general observations (3:1–5:20)
3. Solomon's practical counsel (6:1–8:17)
4. Solomon's final conclusion (9:1–12:14)

Ecclesiastes shows that certain paths in life lead to emptiness. This profound book also helps us discover true purpose in life. Such wisdom can spare us from the emptiness that results from life without God. Solomon teaches that people will not find meaning in life through knowledge, money, pleasure, work, or popularity. True satisfaction comes from knowing that what we are doing is part of God's purpose for our lives. This is a book that can help free us from our scramble for power, approval, and money and draw us closer to God.

Mega Themes

Searching

Solomon searched for satisfaction almost as though he was conducting a scientific experiment. Through this process, he discovered that life without God is a long and fruitless search for fleeting pleasure, meaning, and fulfillment. True happiness is not in our power to attain because we always want more than we can have. In addition, circumstances beyond our control can snatch away our possessions or attainments. The more we try to get, the more we realize how little we really have and how temporary it is. No pleasure or happiness is possible without God. Without him, satisfaction is a lost cause. Above everything, we should strive to know and love God. He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy.

Emptiness

Solomon shows how empty it is to pursue the pleasures that this life has to offer rather than seek to have a relationship with the eternal God. The search for pleasure, wealth, and success is ultimately disappointing. Nothing in the world can fill the emptiness and satisfy the deep longings in our restless hearts. The cure for emptiness is to focus on God. His love can fill the emptiness of human experience. Fear God throughout your life and fill your life with serving him and others rather than with selfish pleasures.

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Work

Solomon tried to shake people's confidence in their own efforts, abilities, and wisdom and to direct them to faith in God as the only sound basis for living. Without God, there is no lasting reward or benefit in arduous work. Work done with the wrong attitude will leave us empty. But work accepted as an assignment from God can be seen as a gift. We need to examine what we expect from our efforts. God gives us abilities and opportunities to work so that we can use our time well.

Death

The certainty of death makes all human achievements futile. God has a plan for each one of us that goes beyond life and death. The reality of aging and dying reminds us of the end to come when God will judge each person's life. Because life is short, we need wisdom that is greater than this world can offer and the words of God so we can live his way. If we listen to him, his wisdom spares us the bitterness of futile human experience and gives us a hope that goes beyond death.

Wisdom

Human wisdom doesn't contain all the answers. Knowledge and education have their limits. To understand life and make good choices, we need the wisdom that can be found only in God's Word, the Bible. When we realize that God is present each day and will evaluate all we do, we are motivated to live wisely and to obey his guidelines for living. But in order to have God's wisdom, we must first get to know and honor him.

FINAL NOTES

When Solomon became king, he asked God for wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:7-12), and God made him the wisest man in the world (1 Kings 4:29-34). Solomon studied, taught, judged, and wrote. Kings and leaders from other nations came to Jerusalem to learn from him. But with all his practical insight on life, Solomon failed to heed his own advice, and he began a downward spiral. At some point near the end of his life, Solomon looked back with an attitude of humility and repentance. He took stock of his life, hoping to spare his readers the bitterness of learning through personal experience that everything apart from God is empty, hollow, and meaningless.

Although the tone of Ecclesiastes is negative and pessimistic, we must not conclude that the only chapter worth reading and applying is the last one, where he draws his conclusions. The entire book is filled with practical wisdom (how to accomplish things in the world and stay out of trouble) and spiritual wisdom (how to find and know eternal values).

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Solomon had a very honest approach. All his remarks relating to the futility of life are there for a purpose: to lead us to seek fulfillment and happiness in God alone. He was not trying to destroy all hope but to direct our hopes to the only one who can truly fulfill them and give life meaning. Solomon affirms the value of knowledge, relationships, work, and pleasure, but only in their proper place. Everything temporal must be seen considering the eternal. Read Ecclesiastes and learn about life. Hear the stern warnings and dire predictions and commit yourself to remembering your creator now (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

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Lesson 01 - Part 1

OPEN IT

1. Have you ever faced a period in your life when all seemed “meaningless”—useless, irrational, pointless, foolish, and empty?

EXPLORE IT

2. Who is the preacher in Ecclesiastes?
3. Who is the Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes?
4. What does “chasing the wind” mean? (Eccl. 1:14)
5. What does it mean that “everything is meaningless”? (Eccl. 1:2)
6. What does it mean that “there is nothing new under the sun”? (Eccl. 1:9)
7. What does it mean that there is a proper time for everything? (Eccl. 3:1-8)
8. What does it mean that there is a “time to be born and a time to die” and “a time to plant and a time to uproot”? (Eccl. 3:2)
9. What does it mean that there is a “time to kill and a time to heal” and “a time to break down and a time to build”? (Eccl. 3:3)
10. What does it mean that there is “a time to weep and a time to laugh” and “a time to mourn and a time to dance”? (Eccl. 3:4)

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Lesson 01 - Part 1

11. What does it mean that there is “a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them” and “a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing”? (Eccl. 3:5)

12. What does it mean that there is “a time to search and a time to give up” and “a time to keep and a time to throw away”? (Eccl. 3:6)

13. What does it mean that there is “a time to tear and a time to mend” and “a time to be silent and a time to speak”? (Eccl. 3:7)

14. What does it mean that there is “a time to love and a time to hate” and “a time for war and a time for peace”? (Eccl. 3:8)

15. What does it mean that “He has made everything beautiful in its time”? (Eccl. 3:11)

16. What does it mean that we “have eternity in our hearts”? (Eccl. 3:11)

GET IT

17. Where are the best places to find wisdom?

APPLY IT

18. Is there any area of your life that is empty and meaningless; submit those areas to God's wisdom and His Word.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

- 1.

- 2.

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Lesson 01 - Part 1 Notes

Who is the Preacher in Ecclesiastes?"

Ecclesiastes 1:1 begins the book this way: “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (ESV). The Hebrew word translated here and throughout Ecclesiastes is *qohleleth*, a word also meaning “collector” or “convener.” Some other Bible versions translate it as “Teacher.” Who is this nameless Preacher/Teacher—Solomon, or someone else?

First, we know the Preacher was a collector of sayings. This fits the biblical description of King Solomon. First Kings 4:32 says that Solomon “spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.” In Proverbs 1:1 we also see that Solomon was a writer of proverbs. These were the collected sayings of Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel. Solomon, as a “collector” of words, fits the description of Ecclesiastes 1:1. In fact, Ecclesiastes 12:9 specifically says that the Preacher “set in order many proverbs.”

Second, the phrase “son of David” limits the identification of the author of Ecclesiastes to one of David’s physical sons. Since Solomon was the only son of David that we know of to leave writings, he also fits the identity of the Preacher in this respect.

Third, the Preacher in Ecclesiastes was “king in Jerusalem.” He served as both a writer and a king—again, descriptions that fit Solomon.

Fourth, the Preacher, according to Ecclesiastes 12:9, was “wise,” and we know that King Solomon was given the gift of wisdom by God (1 Kings 4:29).

Fifth, the Preacher “imparted knowledge to the people” (Ecclesiastes 12:9). This also corresponds with what we know of King Solomon: “He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kings 4:33–34).

The word translated “Preacher” is used six other times in Ecclesiastes (in the ESV), including the following passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:2: “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, / vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 1:12: “I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.”

Ecclesiastes 7:27: “Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things.”

All the evidence points to Solomon as the Preacher and the writer of Ecclesiastes. As an older man, Solomon looked back at the mistakes he had made in his life and drew practical wisdom and an eternal perspective from them.

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Lesson 01 - Part 1 Notes

Who is the Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes?"

Qoheleth, a Hebrew word meaning “preacher,” “teacher,” or “a collector of sayings,” appears in the first verse of the book of Ecclesiastes. In fact, the literal Hebrew title of this book is “The Words of *Qoheleth*, the Son of David, King in Jerusalem,” which is often shortened to simply “*Qoheleth*.” The Preacher (or Teacher) is also mentioned in Ecclesiastes 1:12; 7:27; and 12:8–11.

The book of Ecclesiastes does not give specific information about who this *Qoheleth* is. However, evidence from the text of Ecclesiastes, as well as from the rest of the Bible, leads most scholars to conclude that Solomon is the Preacher and author.

One reason the *Qoheleth* is identified as Solomon is that at one time Solomon was the king of Israel, and Ecclesiastes 1:1 identifies the Preacher as “king in Jerusalem.” Also in agreement with Ecclesiastes 1:1, Solomon was a “son of David.” While the term *son of* can sometimes refer to a descendant other than a son, Solomon was actually the direct “son” of David, so the first verse of Ecclesiastes applies to him more literally than it would to almost any other person.

Most of the information useful in identifying the *Qoheleth* of Ecclesiastes comes from the end of the book. Ecclesiastes 12:9 says that the *Qoheleth* “pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.” This corresponds to the Bible’s descriptions of Solomon as a writer of proverbs (1 Kings 4:32; Proverbs 1:1). The description of the *Qoheleth* as “wise” also matches other passages regarding Solomon (1 Kings 4:29).

Ecclesiastes 12:9 also describes the *Qoheleth* as imparting knowledge to people; this harmonizes with the biblical view of Solomon (1 Kings 4:33–34). Ecclesiastes 1:16–17 further makes this point.

The general content of Ecclesiastes also connects with the idea of Solomon’s being the *Qoheleth*. Solomon was blessed with profound wisdom, wealth, and power (2 Chronicles 1:11–13). The writer of Ecclesiastes certainly experienced wealth and power (Ecclesiastes 2:6–7). Unfortunately, it seems that, for a period in his life, Solomon chose to use his wisdom in a less-than-God-honoring way. He married an outrageous number of women and had concubines in addition to those (1 Kings 11:1–3). Interestingly, virtually every other king of Israel is associated with some prophet, but not Solomon. Even these facts dovetail with the idea that Solomon is the *Qoheleth* of Ecclesiastes, a book written by a man who had tried everything under the sun and found it all to be vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Ecclesiastes is the story of a man who sought happiness everywhere but in God and concluded that God is

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ultimately all that matters (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14). This certainly agrees with the Bible's depiction of Solomon, at least in terms of his wisdom, wealth, and spiritual knowledge.

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Lesson 01 - Part 1 Notes

Since the book of Ecclesiastes is technically anonymous, there remains some doubt as to the identity of the *Qoheleth*. One primary reason some scholars question the claim that Solomon is the *Qoheleth* is that other Old Testament passages detail Solomon's spiritual fall (1 Kings 11:4–8) but don't refer to a personal re-awakening. Of course, what's described in Ecclesiastes comes across as highly personal and private. The book details the lessons and regrets of a man near the end of his life. Solomon might well have penned these words close to his own death. The struggles he experienced near the end of his reign might have triggered conviction, as well (1 Kings 11:9–12).

All in all, there seems to be no solid evidence against Solomon's identity as the *Qoheleth*, and a fair amount of circumstantial evidence supporting it. The most common conclusion, therefore, is that the Preacher of Ecclesiastes is Solomon, the son of David.

What is wisdom?

Wisdom and knowledge, both recurring themes in the Bible, are related but not synonymous. The dictionary defines *wisdom* as “the ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting.” *Knowledge*, on the other hand, is “information gained through experience, reasoning, or acquaintance.” Knowledge can exist without wisdom, but not the other way around. One can be knowledgeable without being wise. Knowledge is knowing how to use a gun; wisdom is knowing when to use it and when to keep it holstered.

God wants us to have knowledge of Him and what He expects of us. To obey Him, we must have knowledge of the commands. But as equally important as having knowledge is having wisdom. Knowing facts about God and the Bible is not all there is to wisdom. Wisdom is a gift from God. James 1:5 states, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” God blesses us with wisdom for us to glorify Him and use the knowledge we have of Him.

The book of Proverbs is perhaps the best place in the Bible to learn of biblical wisdom. Proverbs 1:7 speaks of both biblical knowledge and wisdom: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, / but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” To fear the Lord is to start on the path to knowledge, and God can then begin to provide us with wisdom through Christ, who the Bible says is wisdom itself: “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

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Lesson 01 - Part 1 Notes

Knowledge is what is gathered over time through study of the Scriptures. It can be said that wisdom, in turn, acts properly upon that knowledge. Wisdom is the fitting application of knowledge. Knowledge understands the light has turned red; wisdom applies the brakes. Knowledge sees the quicksand; wisdom walks around it. Knowledge memorizes the Ten Commandments; wisdom obeys them. Knowledge learns of God; wisdom loves Him.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2

OPEN IT

1. What accomplishments in life are important to you?

EXPLORE IT

2. How are two better than one? (Eccl. 4:9)
3. How is a good name better than precious ointment? (Eccl. 7:1)
4. How is sorrow better than laughter? (Eccl. 7:3)
5. What does it mean to be over-righteous and over-wise? (Eccl. 7:6)
6. What does it mean that “whoever fears God will avoid all extremes”? (Eccl 7:18)
7. Why is a living dog better than a dead lion? (Eccl. 9:4)
8. What does it mean that the dead know nothing? (Eccl. 9:5)
9. What does it mean that “money is the answer for everything”? (Eccl. 10:19)
10. What is the meaning of “cast your bread upon the waters”? (Eccl. 11:1)

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Lesson 02 – Part 2

11. What does it mean to “remember your Creator in the days of your youth”? (Eccl. 12:1)

12. Why does the Preacher conclude, “All is vanity”? (Eccl. 12:8)

13. What does it mean to fear God and keep His commandments? (Eccl. 12:13)

GET IT

14. What is the meaning of life?

15. What does the Bible say about how to find purpose in life?

16. How should a Christian view wealth?

APPLY IT

17. Review your life this week and spend time glorifying the Lord.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

1.

2.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes (Got Questions Ministries)

What is the meaning of life?

What is the meaning of life? How can purpose, fulfillment, and satisfaction in life be found? How can something of lasting significance be achieved? Many people have never stopped to consider these important questions. They look back years later and wonder why their relationships have fallen apart and why they feel so empty, even though they may have achieved what they set out to accomplish. As the book of Ecclesiastes points out, many goals reveal their emptiness only after years have been wasted in their pursuit (Ecclesiastes 1—2).

In our humanistic culture, people easily lose sight of the meaning of life. They pursue many things, thinking that in them they will find meaning and purpose. Some of these pursuits include business success, wealth, good relationships, sex, entertainment, and doing good to others. People have testified that, while they achieved their goals of wealth, relationships, and pleasure, there was still a deep void inside, a feeling of emptiness that nothing seemed to fill.

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes looked for the meaning of life in many vain pursuits. He describes the feeling of emptiness he felt: “Meaningless! Meaningless! . . . Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). King Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, had wealth beyond measure, wisdom beyond any man of his time or ours, hundreds of women, palaces and gardens that were the envy of kingdoms, the best food and wine, and every form of entertainment available. He said at one point that anything his heart wanted, he pursued (Ecclesiastes 2:10). Yet he summed up life “under the sun”—life lived as though all there is to life is what we can see with our eyes and experience with our senses—as meaningless. What explains this void? God created us for something beyond what we can experience in the here-and-now. Solomon said of God, “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). In our hearts we are aware that the “here-and-now” is not all there is.

In the book of Genesis, we find a clue to the meaning of life in that God created mankind in His image (Genesis 1:26). We were specially made by God, and that gives us intrinsic value; nothing can give us greater value. Made to reflect His image, we have a purpose: to glorify God; nothing can give us greater satisfaction.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes (Got Questions Ministries)

Before mankind fell and the curse of sin came upon the earth, the following things were true:

- 1) God made man a social creature (Genesis 2:18–25)
- 2) God gave man work (Genesis 2:15)
- 3) God had fellowship with man (Genesis 3:8)
- 4) God gave man dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26).

These facts have significance related to the meaning of life. God intended mankind to have fulfillment in life, but our condition (especially touching our fellowship with God) was adversely affected by the fall into sin and the resulting curse upon the earth (Genesis 3).

The book of Revelation shows that God is concerned with restoring the meaning of life to us. God will destroy this present creation and create a new heaven and a new earth. At that time, He will restore full fellowship with redeemed mankind, while the unredeemed will have been judged and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11–15). The curse of sin will be done away with; there will be no more sin, sorrow, sickness, death, or pain (Revelation 21:4). God will dwell with mankind, and they shall be His children (Revelation 21:7). Thus, we come full circle: God created us to have fellowship with Him; man sinned, breaking that fellowship; God restores that fellowship in the eternal state. To go through life achieving everything we set out to achieve only to die separated from God for eternity would be unthinkably tragic! But God has made a way to make eternal bliss possible (Luke 23:43) and life on earth satisfying and meaningful. How is this eternal bliss and “heaven on earth” obtained?

The meaning of life restored through Jesus Christ

The real meaning of life, both now and in eternity, is found in the restoration of our relationship with God. This restoration is only possible through God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who reconciles us to God (Romans 5:10; Acts 4:12; John 1:12; 14:6). Salvation and eternal life are the gift of God when we trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. Once salvation is received by grace through faith, Christ makes us new creations, and we begin the journey of growing closer to Him and learning to rely on Him.

God wants us to know the meaning of life. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). A “full” life is one that is meaningful and devoid of aimless wandering.

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes (Got Questions Ministries)

The meaning of life is wrapped up in the glory of God. In calling His elect, God says, “Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them” (Isaiah 43:7, NLT). The reason we were made is for God’s glory. Any time we substitute our own glory for God’s, we become idolators and miss the meaning of life. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:24–25). And we have this promise: “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

What does the Bible say about how to find purpose in life?

The Bible is truly clear as to what our purpose in life should be. Men in both the Old and New Testaments sought for and discovered life's purpose. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, discovered the futility of life when it is lived only for this world. He gives these concluding remarks in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Solomon says that life is all about honoring God with our thoughts and lives and thus keeping His commandments, for one day we will stand before Him in judgment. Part of our purpose in life is to fear God and obey Him.

Another part of our purpose is to see life on this earth in perspective. Unlike those whose focus was on this life, King David looked for His satisfaction in the time to come. He said, "And I—in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness" (Psalm 17:15). To David, full satisfaction would come on the day when he awoke (in the next life) both beholding God's face (fellowship with Him) and being like Him (1 John 3:2).

In Psalm 73, Asaph talks about how he was tempted to envy the wicked who seemed to have no cares and built their fortunes upon the backs of those they took advantage of, but then he considered their ultimate end. In contrast to what they sought after, he states in verse 25 what mattered to him: "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you" (verse 25). To Asaph, a relationship with God mattered above all else in life. Without that relationship, life has no real purpose.

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The apostle Paul talked about all he had achieved religiously before being confronted by the risen Christ, and he concluded that all of it was like a pile of manure compared to the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus. In Philippians 3:9-10, Paul says that he wants nothing more than to know Christ and "be found in Him," to have His righteousness and to live by faith in Him, even if it meant suffering and dying. Paul's purpose was knowing Christ, having a righteousness obtained through faith in Him, and living in fellowship with Him, even when that brought on suffering (2 Timothy 3:12). Ultimately, he looked for the time when he would be a part of the "resurrection from the dead."

Our purpose in life, as God originally created man, is 1) glorify God and enjoy fellowship with Him, 2) have good relationships with others, 3) work, and 4) have dominion over the earth. But with man's fall into sin, fellowship with God is broken, relationships with others are strained, work seems to always be frustrating, and man struggles to maintain any semblance of dominion over nature. Only by restoring fellowship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, can purpose in life be rediscovered.

The purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We glorify God by fearing and obeying Him, keeping our eyes on our future home in heaven, and knowing Him intimately. We enjoy God by following His purpose for our lives, which enables us to experience true and lasting joy—the abundant life that He desires for us.

How should a Christian view wealth?"

The Christian view of wealth should be derived from the Scriptures. There are many times in the Old Testament that God gave riches to His people. Solomon was promised riches and became the richest of all the kings of the earth (1 Kings 3:11-13; 2 Chronicles 9:22); David said in 1 Chronicles 29:12: "Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things." Abraham (Genesis 17-20), Jacob (Genesis 30-31), Joseph (Genesis 41), King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:5), and many others were blessed by God with wealth. However, they were a chosen people with earthly promises and rewards. They were given a land and all the riches it held.

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In the New Testament, there is a different standard. The church was never given a land or the promise of riches. Ephesians 1:3 tells us, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Christ spoke in Matthew 13:22 concerning the seed of God's Word falling among thorns and “the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (NKJV). This is the first reference to earthly riches in the New Testament. Clearly, this is not a positive image.

In Mark 10:23, “Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’” It was not impossible—for all things are possible with God—but it would be “hard.” In Luke 16:13, Jesus spoke about “mammon” (the Aramaic word for “riches”): “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Again, the imagery here is of wealth as a negative influence on spirituality and one that can keep us from God.

God speaks of the true riches He brings to us today in Romans 2:4: “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?” These are the riches which bring eternal life. Again, this is brought out in Romans 9:23: “And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (NKJV). Also, Ephesians 1:7: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.” Referring to God giving mercy, Paul praises God in Romans 11:33: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” The emphasis of the New Testament is God's riches in us: “That you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18b). God actually wants to show off His riches in us in heaven: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6-7).

The riches that God wants for us: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Ephesians 3:16). The greatest verse for New Testament believers concerning riches is Philippians 4:19: “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

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Lesson 02 – Part 2 Notes (Got Questions Ministries)

First Timothy 6:17 gives a warning to the rich: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” James 5:1-3 gives us another warning about riches that were wrongly gained: “Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.” The last time that riches are mentioned in the Bible is in Revelation 18:17, speaking of the great destruction of Babylon: “In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!”

To summarize, Israel was given earthly promises and rewards as God's chosen people on earth. He gave many illustrations and types and truths through them. Many people desire to take their blessings, but not their curses. However, in the progression of revelation, God has revealed through Jesus Christ a more excellent ministry: “But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6).

God does not condemn anyone for having riches. Riches come to people from many sources, but He gives grave warnings to those who seek after them more than they seek after God and trust in them more than in God. His greatest desire is for us to set our hearts on things above and not on things on this earth. This may sound very high and unobtainable, but Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV). The secret is knowing Christ as Savior and allowing the Holy Spirit to conform our minds and heart to His (Romans 12:1-2).

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Poetic Books: The Song of Solomon

Page *i*

Introduction

Author: Solomon wrote Song of Solomon, according to the first verse. This song is one of 1,005 that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32). The title "Song of Songs" is a superlative, meaning this is the best one.

Here again we find much that is perplexing. God is not mentioned in the book, except by a very indirect reference to His name in **Song of Solomon 8:6**, which is not even apparent in the *New International Version* or King James Version (see NASB). To some people, the language of the song seems perhaps inappropriate or even indecent; yet this cannot be, for the book is indeed a part of the Word of God. In fact, the ancient Hebrews considered it particularly sacred. The Song of Solomon, one of the five books called "the rolls," is read in the synagogues annually at the first great feast of the Hebrew religious year, Passover.

Three Interpretations of the Book

There have been three main interpretations of this book.

- The first is the literal, in which the song is simply considered a celebration of the delights of married love, illustrated by the marriage of Solomon to a young woman called the Shulammite (**Song of Solomon 6:13**).
- The second is the allegorical interpretation. According to this view, nothing in the song is to be taken literally, but every detail is to be spiritualized, referring to the love of God for Israel or of Christ for the church. This view does not permit any historical setting for the song.
- The third is the typical interpretation. This interpretation (in some respects a combination of the other two) is, in the opinion of your author, the correct one. The song does have a literal, historical setting, describing the love of Solomon and the Shulammite. The details belong to this literal series of events. The earthly love of the bridegroom and the bride, however, is a type or divinely appointed prophetic symbol of the love of Christ and the church.

Here God presents us a picture of true and holy married love, distinct on one hand from the false system of "asceticism" (that which views everything earthly and physical as evil) but also from the equally false immorality of the world. God ordained marriage before the Fall (**Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:23–25**). The New Testament reveals that the very marriage relationship was designed by God to be a picture of the relationship of Christ and the church (**Ephesians 5:22–32**; note especially **Ephesians 5:32**; compare **Hebrews 13:4**).

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Poetic Books: The Song of Solomon

Page ii

Introduction

Date of Writing: Solomon most likely wrote this song during the early part of his reign. This would place the date of composition around 965 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Song of Solomon is a lyric poem written to extol the virtues of love between a husband and his wife. The poem clearly presents marriage as God's design. A man and woman are to live together within the context of marriage, loving each other spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

This book combats two extremes: asceticism (the denial of all pleasure) and hedonism (the pursuit of only pleasure). The marriage profiled in Song of Solomon is a model of care, commitment, and delight.

Key Verses: Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4 - "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."

Song of Solomon 5:1 - "Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers."

Song of Solomon 8:6-7 - "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."

Brief Summary: The poetry takes the form of a dialogue between a husband (the king) and his wife (the Shulamite). We can divide the book into three sections: the courtship (1:1 - 3:5); the wedding (3:6 - 5:1); and the maturing marriage (5:2 - 8:14).

The song begins before the wedding, as the bride-to-be longs to be with her betrothed, and she looks forward to his intimate caresses. However, she advises letting love develop naturally, in its own time. The king praises the Shulamite's beauty, overcoming her feelings of insecurity about her appearance. The Shulamite has a dream in which she loses Solomon and searches throughout the city for him. With the help of the city guards, she finds her beloved and clings to him, taking him to a safe place. Upon waking, she repeats her injunction not to force love.

On the wedding night, the husband again praises the beauty of his wife, and in highly symbolic language, the wife invites her spouse to partake of all she has to offer. They make love, and God blesses their union.

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As the marriage matures, the husband and wife go through a difficult time, symbolized in another dream. In this second dream, the Shulamite rebuffs her husband, and he leaves. Overcome with guilt, she searches the city for him; but this time, instead of helping her, the guards beat her—symbolic of her pained conscience. Things end happily as the lovers reunite and are reconciled.

As the song ends, both the husband and wife are confident and secure in their love, they sing of the lasting nature of true love, and they yearn to be in each other's presence.

Foreshadowings: Some Bible interpreters see in Song of Solomon an exact symbolic representation of Christ and His church. Christ is seen as the king, while the church is represented by the Shulamite. While we believe the book should be understood literally as a depiction of marriage, there are some elements that foreshadow the Church and her relationship with her king, the Lord Jesus. Song of Solomon 2:4 describes the experience of every believer who is sought and bought by the Lord Jesus. We are in a place of great spiritual wealth and are covered by His love. Verse 16 of chapter 2 says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies" (NKJV). Here is a picture of not only the security of the believer in Christ (John 10:28-29), but of the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep—believers—and lays down His life for us (John 10:11). Because of Him, we are no longer stained by sin, having had our "spots" removed by His blood (Song of Solomon 4:7; Ephesians 5:27).

Practical Application: Our world is confused about marriage. The prevalence of divorce and modern attempts to redefine marriage stand in glaring contrast to Solomon's Song. Marriage, says the biblical poet, is to be celebrated, enjoyed, and revered. This book provides some practical guidelines for strengthening our marriages:

- 1) Give your spouse the attention he or she needs. Take the time to truly know your spouse.
- 2) Encouragement and praise, not criticism, are vital to a successful relationship.
- 3) Enjoy each other. Plan some getaways. Be creative, even playful, with each other. Delight in God's gift of married love.
- 4) Do whatever is necessary to reassure your commitment to your spouse. Renew your vows; work through problems and do not consider divorce as a solution. God intends for you both to live in a deeply peaceful, secure love.

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Poetic Books: The Song of Solomon

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“A Song Which Grace Alone Can Teach ...”

The song is a lyric poem, consisting mainly of the bride and bridegroom’s memories of their meeting, their courtship, and subsequent marriage. The story is told through dialogue and is difficult to follow. However, through the terms of address, one can usually detect which person is speaking. The bridegroom invariably calls the bride “my love,” while she refers to him as “my beloved.” Certain lines are spoken by a group called “the daughters of Jerusalem.” As Hudson Taylor said, “This is a song which grace alone can teach and experience alone can learn.”

How can we doubt that beyond the earthly bridegroom can be seen the features of the heavenly Bridegroom Himself, the One who is indeed “altogether lovely” (**Song of Solomon 5:16**)? To belong to Christ through faith in Him is to be a member of His body, which is mysteriously and wonderfully also His bride.

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Poetic Books: The Song of Solomon

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Lesson 01 – Part 1

OPEN IT

1. Where did you learn about love, marriage, and sex?

EXPLORE IT

2. Is the Song of Solomon a canticle?
3. Is Song of Solomon an allegory of God's love for Israel and/or Christ's love for the Church?
4. What does it mean that the Shulammite had dark skin? (SOS 1:6)
5. Who are the daughters of Jerusalem? (SOS 2:7)
6. What is the meaning of foxes? (SOS 2:15)
7. What is the Rose of Sharon? (SOS 2:1)
8. What is the lily of the valley? (SOS 2:1)
9. Why is it said that we “shouldn’t awaken love until it pleases”? (SOS 2:7; 3:5; 8:4)
10. Why does Solomon refer to his wife as his sister? (SOS 4:9)

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Poetic Books: The Song of Solomon

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Lesson 01 – Part 1

11. Why are mandrakes mentioned? (SOS 7:13)

GET IT

12. After reading Song of Solomon, what types of love are being shown? Eros, agape, storge, and/or philia.

APPLY IT

13. Read the entire book of Song of Solomon and better understand the meaning of “true love”.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE REPORTS

- 1.
- 2.

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

What is a canticle?

The word *canticle* is Latin in origin and simply means “little song.” In Latin versions of the Bible, the Song of Solomon (also expressed as the Song of Songs based on the opening verse) is called Canticum of Canticles.

Canticles are biblical. They are songs derived from biblical texts other than the book of Psalms. Canticles are non-rhythmic songs and are either spoken, chanted, or sung in liturgical worship services. For the most part, canticles are said at Lauds, or morning prayer services. Denominations that incorporate canticles include Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopal, and Eastern Orthodox churches. The Greek Orthodox Church has nine biblical canticles, called odes.

Examples of Old Testament canticles are the two Songs of Moses (Exodus 15:1–19 and Deuteronomy 32:1–43); the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10); the Song of Habakkuk (Habakkuk 3:2–19); the Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 26:1–21); and the Song of Jonah (Jonah 2:2–9). Examples of New Testament canticles are Ephesians 1:3–10; Philippians 2:6–11; Colossians 1:12–20; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 2:21–24; and Revelation 4:11.

Three better-known canticles are taken from the Gospel of Luke. The Benedictus is the hymn of Zechariah celebrating the birth of his son, John the Baptist, and the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation for Israel (Luke 1:68–79). The Magnificat or Canticum of the Blessed Virgin is Mary’s song of praise upon greeting Elizabeth (Luke 1:46–55). Mary expresses joy over the privilege of giving birth to the promised Messiah and praises the Lord for His power, holiness, and mercy toward her and the nation of Israel. The Nunc Dimittis is Simeon’s hymn of joy and praise for the Lord’s salvation of all people (Luke 2:29–32). These three canticles have been used in public worship since the earliest Christian centuries and can still be found in many contemporary prayer books, including the Book of Common Prayer.

Psalms, then, are poetic compositions from the Bible set to music for praise and worship. Canticles, on the other hand, are non-metrical biblical texts that are chanted, spoken, or sung.

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Lesson 01 – Part 1 Notes

Is Song of Solomon an allegory of God's love for Israel and/or Christ's love for the Church?"

An allegory is a literary work in which the characters and events are symbolic of a deeper moral or spiritual truth. *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War* by John Bunyan are famous allegories. The Song of Solomon is often interpreted as an allegory by both Jewish and Christian scholars. Jews have seen it as an allegory of God's love, while Christians have often viewed the book as an allegory of Christ's love for the Church. The book is lyric, poetic, and rich in symbolism, but can it properly be called an allegory?

Because of the romantic and even sexual nature of the book's contents, many have sought a different way to understand its message. However, an allegorical approach is unnecessary to understanding the intended meaning of the Song of Solomon. The straightforward approach to the Song of Solomon shows it is a love poem written by Solomon regarding a woman he loves. The book includes many intimate details regarding the love between a man and a woman; those details are cloaked in symbolism, but chapter 4 is obviously a poetic description of the consummation of a marriage on the wedding night. There is no need to allegorize this, since its presentation of connubial love is completely consistent with the Bible's other teachings regarding marriage.

There is nothing in the book to suggest it's anything but a lyrical presentation of what actually took place between King Solomon and his true love. There are no supernatural events or apocalyptic beasts; there is nothing that must be understood as allegorical, and there is no need to spiritualize the text.

A major concern with an allegorical approach to the Song of Solomon is that the meaning of the allegory is debatable. The lover is usually seen as God or Christ, with the beloved as either God's people (Israel) or the Church. While the Church is called the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5; Revelation 19:7), this does not mean the bride in the Song of Solomon must be seen from this perspective. The Church did not exist at the time the Song of Solomon was composed. Unless speaking prophetically, the book cannot refer to the Church.

The Song of Solomon can be read and interpreted just as it was written, as a love poem. It offers an intimate look of the growth, joy, and maturation of love between a man and woman. It can thus offer much insight into married life today. The Song of Solomon can also be seen as an illustration of God's love for His people, but it is not an allegory, per se.