

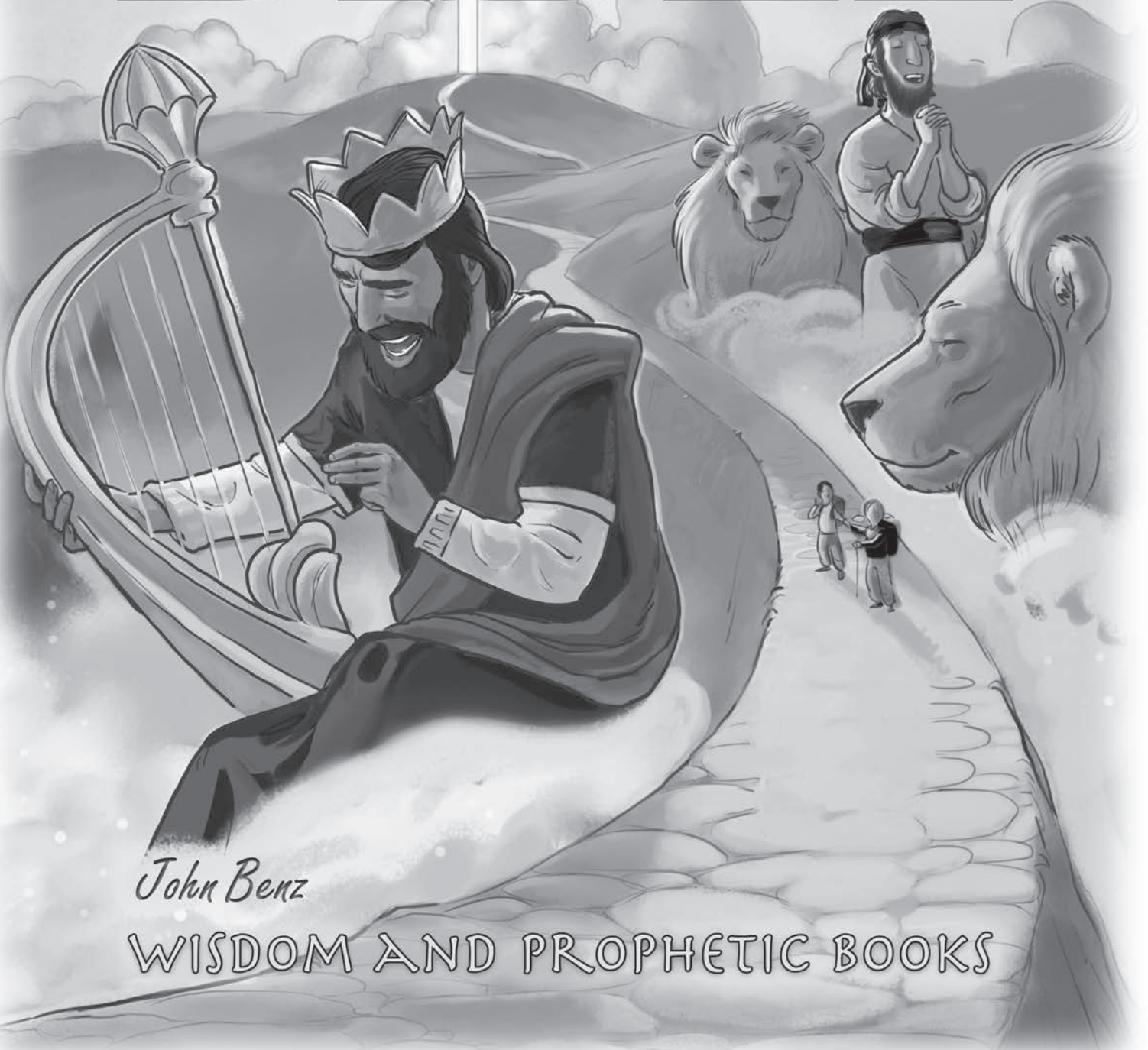
JOURNEY THROUGH THE

BIBLE

BOOK 2



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John Benz

WISDOM AND PROPHETIC BOOKS

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Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Note to Parents</i>	<i>ix</i>

UNIT 1 Psalms, Song of Solomon, & Lamentations..... 1

LESSON 1 PART 1	<i>Introduction to Poetry</i>	1
LESSON 1 PART 2	<i>Introduction to Psalms</i>	3
LESSON 2	<i>Psalm 1</i>	5
LESSON 3	<i>Psalm 2</i>	6
LESSON 4	<i>Psalm 13</i>	7
LESSON 5	<i>Psalm 19</i>	7
LESSON 6	<i>Psalm 23</i>	8
LESSON 7	<i>Psalm 34</i>	9
LESSON 8	<i>Psalm 41</i>	10
LESSON 9	<i>Psalms 42–43</i>	11
LESSON 10	<i>Psalm 45</i>	12
LESSON 11	<i>Psalm 51</i>	13
LESSON 12	<i>Psalm 53</i>	13
LESSON 13	<i>Psalm 58</i>	14
LESSON 14	<i>Psalm 69</i>	15
LESSON 15	<i>Psalm 72</i>	16
LESSON 16	<i>Psalm 73</i>	16
LESSON 17	<i>Psalm 79</i>	17
LESSON 18	<i>Psalm 84</i>	18
LESSON 19	<i>Psalm 88</i>	19
LESSON 20	<i>Psalm 95</i>	19
LESSON 21	<i>Psalm 96</i>	20
LESSON 22	<i>Psalm 98</i>	21
LESSON 23	<i>Psalm 99</i>	22
LESSON 24	<i>Psalm 103</i>	22
LESSON 25	<i>Psalm 109</i>	23
LESSON 26	<i>Psalm 110</i>	24
LESSON 27	<i>Psalm 115</i>	25
LESSON 28	<i>Psalm 118</i>	26
LESSON 29	<i>Psalm 119</i>	26
LESSON 30	<i>Psalm 121</i>	27
LESSON 31	<i>Psalm 133</i>	28
LESSON 32	<i>Psalm 139</i>	29
LESSON 33	<i>Psalm 150</i>	30
LESSON 34	<i>Introduction to Song of Solomon</i>	30
LESSON 35	<i>Song of Solomon 1:1–3:5</i>	31
LESSON 36	<i>Song of Solomon 3:6–5:1</i>	33
LESSON 37	<i>Song of Solomon 5:2–8:14</i>	33

LESSON 38	<i>Introduction to Lamentations</i>	35
LESSON 39	<i>Lamentations 1:1–3:20</i>	36
LESSON 40	<i>Lamentations 3:21–5:22</i>	37
UNIT 2	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Job	41
LESSON 41	<i>Introduction to Wisdom Literature</i>	41
LESSON 42	<i>Introduction to Proverbs</i>	41
LESSON 43	<i>Proverbs: The Value of Wisdom</i>	42
LESSON 44	<i>Proverbs: The Types of Fools</i>	43
LESSON 45	<i>Proverbs: The Fear of the Lord</i>	44
LESSON 46	<i>Proverbs: Prudence</i>	44
LESSON 47	<i>Proverbs: Trust in the Lord, Proverbs 3:5–8</i>	45
LESSON 48	<i>Proverbs: Fighting Temptation, Proverbs 7–9</i>	46
LESSON 49	<i>Proverbs: Accepting Correction</i>	47
LESSON 50	<i>Proverbs: Controlling the Tongue, Part 1</i>	48
LESSON 51	<i>Proverbs: Controlling the Tongue, Part 2</i>	48
LESSON 52	<i>Proverbs: Controlling the Tongue, Part 3</i>	49
LESSON 53	<i>Proverbs: Dealing with Conflict, Part 1</i>	50
LESSON 54	<i>Proverbs: Dealing with Conflict, Part 2</i>	51
LESSON 55	<i>Proverbs: Dealing with Conflict, Part 3</i>	51
LESSON 56	<i>Proverbs: Financial Wisdom</i>	52
LESSON 57	<i>Proverbs: Learning to Be Content</i>	53
LESSON 58	<i>Proverbs: Dating and Relationship Wisdom</i>	54
LESSON 59	<i>Proverbs: The Proverbs 31 Woman</i>	55
LESSON 60	<i>Introduction to Ecclesiastes</i>	56
LESSON 61	<i>Ecclesiastes 1–2</i>	56
LESSON 62	<i>Ecclesiastes 3</i>	57
LESSON 63	<i>Ecclesiastes 4–5</i>	58
LESSON 64	<i>Ecclesiastes 6–11</i>	59
LESSON 65	<i>Ecclesiastes 12</i>	59
LESSON 66	<i>Introduction to Job</i>	60
LESSON 67	<i>Job 1</i>	61
LESSON 68	<i>Job 2</i>	62
LESSON 69	<i>Job 3–5</i>	63
LESSON 70	<i>Job 6–8</i>	63
LESSON 71	<i>Job 9–11</i>	64
LESSON 72	<i>Job 12–14</i>	65
LESSON 73	<i>Job 15–17</i>	66
LESSON 74	<i>Job 18–21</i>	66
LESSON 75	<i>Job 22–24</i>	67
LESSON 76	<i>Job 25–27</i>	68
LESSON 77	<i>Job 28–31</i>	69
LESSON 78	<i>Elihu’s Speech: Job 32–37</i>	70
LESSON 79	<i>Job 38–39</i>	70

LESSON 80	<i>Job 40–42</i>	71
UNIT 3	Isaiah & Jeremiah	75
LESSON 81	<i>Introduction to Prophetic Literature</i>	75
LESSON 82	<i>Introduction to Isaiah</i>	76
LESSON 83	<i>Isaiah 1</i>	77
LESSON 84	<i>Isaiah 4–5</i>	78
LESSON 85	<i>Isaiah 6</i>	78
LESSON 86	<i>Isaiah 7–8</i>	79
LESSON 87	<i>Isaiah 9</i>	81
LESSON 88	<i>Isaiah 13–14</i>	82
LESSON 89	<i>Isaiah 15–21</i>	83
LESSON 90	<i>Isaiah 22–24</i>	84
LESSON 91	<i>Isaiah 25–27</i>	84
LESSON 92	<i>Isaiah 28–29</i>	85
LESSON 93	<i>Isaiah 30–33</i>	86
LESSON 94	<i>Isaiah 34–35</i>	87
LESSON 95	<i>Isaiah 36–39</i>	88
LESSON 96	<i>Isaiah 40</i>	88
LESSON 97	<i>Isaiah 41–45</i>	89
LESSON 98	<i>Isaiah 46–48</i>	90
LESSON 99	<i>Isaiah 49–52:12</i>	91
LESSON 100	<i>Isaiah 52:13–53</i>	92
LESSON 101	<i>Isaiah 54–56</i>	92
LESSON 102	<i>Isaiah 57–60</i>	93
LESSON 103	<i>Isaiah 61–66</i>	94
LESSON 104	<i>Introduction to Jeremiah</i>	95
LESSON 105	<i>Jeremiah 1</i>	96
LESSON 106	<i>Jeremiah 2–6</i>	98
LESSON 107	<i>Jeremiah 7–10</i>	99
LESSON 108	<i>Jeremiah 11–13</i>	99
LESSON 109	<i>Jeremiah 14–17</i>	100
LESSON 110	<i>Jeremiah 18–20</i>	101
LESSON 111	<i>Jeremiah 21–24</i>	102
LESSON 112	<i>Jeremiah 25–29</i>	103
LESSON 113	<i>Jeremiah 30–31</i>	103
LESSON 114	<i>Jeremiah 32–33</i>	104
LESSON 115	<i>Jeremiah 34–35</i>	105
LESSON 116	<i>Jeremiah 36–38</i>	106
LESSON 117	<i>Jeremiah 39–43</i>	106
LESSON 118	<i>Jeremiah 44–45</i>	107
LESSON 119	<i>Jeremiah 46–49</i>	108
LESSON 120	<i>Jeremiah 50–52</i>	109

UNIT 4	Ezekiel, Daniel, & Minor Prophets	111
LESSON 121	<i>Introduction to Ezekiel</i>	111
LESSON 122	<i>Ezekiel 1.....</i>	112
LESSON 123	<i>Ezekiel 2–3.....</i>	112
LESSON 124	<i>Ezekiel 4–7.....</i>	113
LESSON 125	<i>Ezekiel 8–11.....</i>	114
LESSON 126	<i>Ezekiel 12–14.....</i>	115
LESSON 127	<i>Ezekiel 15–16.....</i>	115
LESSON 128	<i>Ezekiel 17–18.....</i>	116
LESSON 129	<i>Ezekiel 19–22.....</i>	117
LESSON 130	<i>Ezekiel 23–24.....</i>	118
LESSON 131	<i>Ezekiel 25–28</i>	118
LESSON 132	<i>Ezekiel 29–32.....</i>	119
LESSON 133	<i>Ezekiel 33–36.....</i>	120
LESSON 134	<i>Ezekiel 37–39.....</i>	121
LESSON 135	<i>Ezekiel 40–42.....</i>	121
LESSON 136	<i>Ezekiel 43–46.....</i>	122
LESSON 137	<i>Ezekiel 47–48.....</i>	124
LESSON 138	<i>Introduction to Daniel, Daniel 1–3.....</i>	124
LESSON 139	<i>Daniel 4–6.....</i>	126
LESSON 140	<i>Daniel 7–9.....</i>	126
LESSON 141	<i>Daniel 10–12.....</i>	128
LESSON 142	<i>Introduction to Hosea, Hosea 1–3.....</i>	129
LESSON 143	<i>Hosea 4–6.....</i>	129
LESSON 144	<i>Hosea 7–9.....</i>	130
LESSON 145	<i>Hosea 10–14.....</i>	131
LESSON 146	<i>Joel.....</i>	132
LESSON 147	<i>Introduction to Amos, Amos 1–4.....</i>	132
LESSON 148	<i>Amos 5–9.....</i>	133
LESSON 149	<i>Obadiah.....</i>	135
LESSON 150	<i>Jonah</i>	135
LESSON 151	<i>Introduction to Micah, Micah 1–3.....</i>	136
LESSON 152	<i>Micah 4–7.....</i>	137
LESSON 153	<i>Nahum</i>	138
LESSON 154	<i>Habakkuk.....</i>	138
LESSON 155	<i>Zephaniah</i>	139
LESSON 156	<i>Haggai.....</i>	140
LESSON 157	<i>Introduction to Zechariah, Zechariah 1–4.....</i>	141
LESSON 158	<i>Zechariah 5–8</i>	142
LESSON 159	<i>Zechariah 9–14</i>	143
LESSON 160	<i>Malachi.....</i>	144
	<i>Index.....</i>	145

Introduction

The *Journey Through the Bible* curriculum is designed to have students encounter the biblical text firsthand. Many young children grow up hearing Bible stories in Sunday school or from their parents or even from similar home-schooling curricula. This approach is very valuable for their growth and maturity. The goal of this curriculum is to go beyond the stories of the Bible and to have students read the Bible itself. In fact, this curriculum, along with the seventh grade and ninth grade Bible curricula in this series, will take the student through the entire Bible. Within these three years, if a student follows the curriculum, he or she will have read the entire Bible.

For this year, we will look at the wisdom and poetic books of the Old Testament, as well as the prophets. The translation that we are going to use for this curriculum is the New King James Version. We chose this version because the King James Version of the Bible is the most widely used translation, and the New King James Version of the Bible is easier for children to read. While it is possible to complete this curriculum using other translations of the Bible, the questions in the workbook use the language and phrases of the New King James Version. As a result, it may be difficult at times to find the answers to these questions without using this version.

There are four main elements to this curriculum: the Bible, the *Student Exercises* workbook, the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook, and the tests. *First*, the direct reading of the Bible is the most important element of this course; as stated before, students need to encounter the biblical text firsthand. On average, the student will read about four chapters of the Bible per day. *Secondly*, as students read, they are to answer ten questions from the Bible reading in the *Student Exercises* each day. The vast majority of the questions in the workbook can be answered just using the text itself, but there are a few questions that require using outside sources, such as a dictionary. Many of these questions are designed to bring out some of the important points in the biblical text. The workbook is divided into four units, each covering forty days of reading. On the top right-hand side of each workbook page is the reading that the student should do for that day. A separate answer key for the workbook questions is available through Christian Liberty Press.

The *third* element to this curriculum is the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook. The lessons in this textbook are designed to help students understand what they are reading. This is not designed to be a theology book that teaches a particular view of theology; rather, it is a lesson book designed to bring clarity to the reading that the students are doing. As the student reads through a lesson each day, there are three questions from this textbook that will show up in the *Student Exercises* workbook. This is designed to hold students accountable to read through the textbook. There are forty lessons per quarter that correspond to the forty days per quarter in the workbook. The lesson will not always directly correspond to the specific reading for that particular day. Because this is designed to be a survey course, we cannot go into detail on every chapter of the Bible. Rather, this curriculum will highlight particular chapters or themes that run throughout the books. For the book of Psalms, the lessons in this book will analyze a number of particular psalms. Before reading a particular lesson, the student should read the Bible passage given at the beginning of that lesson, even if the student has read the passage before in the daily readings. One of the goals of this curriculum is to help the students learn how to analyze Scripture for themselves; therefore, for those chapters that are not covered in the lesson book, the students will have to analyze them on their own.

Fourthly, for each unit, the student will have two tests based on the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook and the questions in the *Student Exercises* workbook. In other words, there will be one test for every twenty lessons in the course. These tests are available through Christian Liberty Press.

There are a couple of features within the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook that are worth noting. *First*, occasionally there will be some vocabulary words that are printed in **bold type**. These are words that may either be significant or may just be words that are not commonly used in everyday speech. Often these words will appear on the questions from the lesson in the *Student Exercises* workbook. The *second* feature of the textbook is the Thought Question(s) at the end of many of the lessons. These questions are designed to help the student think about the reading in a more critical manner. Some of these questions are designed to bring out the theology of the passage, some are designed to encourage students to think more deeply about what is actually happening in the passage, and some are designed to help the student think about applying the passage to his or her life.

John Benz

Note to Parents:

In Deuteronomy 6:5–7, it says: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Scripture makes it clear that the primary responsibility for teaching children lies with the parents, particularly the fathers. This curriculum will be most effective if parents discuss the reading and lesson with the students after they do the work. The thought questions at the end of most lessons provide an excellent opportunity for discussion between parents and their students. In addition, parents are encouraged to use the daily readings for family devotionals. Although these questions are not included with the curriculum, here are some questions that can be asked after every lesson:

1. What is something that this passage teaches you about God?
2. What is something you can pray for as a result of this passage?
3. What is one question you have from this passage?

When you discuss the passage with your students, they will be far more likely to think about the passage and how to apply it to their lives.

UNIT 2: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Job

Introduction to Wisdom Literature

Lesson 41

When we think of a really wise person in our society, there are a number of different images that may come to mind. We might think of the wise guru from the kung fu movies with the long white beard who says everything in riddles. We might think of that older person who seems to have been through everything and always has a story to share. We might think of the really intelligent person who seems to be an expert in everything. Perhaps we think of the friend or mentor who always offers solid advice when we need it. And maybe we think of philosophers such as Plato or Aristotle who ponder the deeper things in life. The truth is, there are a lot of different types of “wisdom” in the world. So what does the Bible have to say about wisdom?

For many of the examples mentioned above of the types of “wisdom” we see in the world, the religious perspective of the people showing that “wisdom” is mostly irrelevant. For example, in our society, if a person offers solid advice for what to do in a relationship, he or she would be considered wise, regardless of his religious views. But in the Bible, wisdom is fundamentally a religious issue. A person could have all of the knowledge in the world and offer the best advice, and could have been through all of life’s experiences, yet if he or she does not believe in God and know Him, he or she cannot be wise in the eyes of God. In fact, as we have seen in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” A person could be incredibly intelligent but still be considered a fool according to biblical wisdom. Unfortunately, there are some very intelligent fools in this world. And as we will look at in more detail later, the starting point for obtaining wisdom is the fear of the Lord. It says in Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...” In light of this, it is virtually impossible to obtain wisdom without first acknowledging God and submitting to Him.

In Scripture, there are three primary books that are designated as wisdom books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Each of these three books looks at wisdom from a different perspective. Proverbs is the most basic book on wisdom and provides the foundation for understanding wisdom; this is why we will look at Proverbs first, even though Job shows up in the Bible before Proverbs. Ecclesiastes is more philosophical in nature

and deals with the wisdom of what is important, or lasting, in life. Moreover, Job deals with the wisdom of what to do when things do not happen in the ways that we would expect. In many ways, the wisdom in Job will even out, or complete, the wisdom of Proverbs.

In general, there are two types of wisdom sayings in the Bible. There is **proverbial** wisdom, which is composed of short statements or observations about life. The book of Proverbs is composed, not surprisingly, of these proverbial sayings. And the second type of wisdom in the Bible is **contemplative** wisdom. This style of wisdom takes place in monologues or dialogues that wrestle with a particular issue of wisdom. Job and Ecclesiastes are composed almost entirely of contemplative wisdom.

Because of the significance of learning wisdom at a young age, it is recommended that young people, particularly teenagers, read through and study these wisdom books multiple times. Countless stories have been told of how God has used the book of Proverbs to change young people’s lives. While this class only covers Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job once, it is recommended to try to read through a chapter of Proverbs a day for the next year.

proverbial: expressed in a short statement or observation about life; relating to a proverb

contemplative: thoughtful or reflective

Thought Question:

1. Name three people whom you consider to be wise. What is it about them that makes them wise?

Introduction to Proverbs

Lesson 42

Of all of the books in Scripture, the book of Proverbs is the book most directed to young teenagers. The majority of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs are written from a father to his son to give him the wisdom to lead a long and prosperous life. And while some of the issues in the book of Proverbs may not be immediately relevant to young teenagers (there are multiple references to being married), the vast majority of the wisdom in this book directly applies to the situations that young people face. Proverbs speaks directly to the issues of friendships, conflict with family, dating, working (including schoolwork), managing money, and learning how to speak to others, among the many other

topics in this book. A young person would do well to diligently study and apply this book.

One really helpful way to think of the book of Proverbs is to think of it as a toolbox. Each proverb is a tool that, when used properly, will help us to deal with the situation in the best manner possible. But, like all tools, you have to learn how to use the tools properly, or you can do more damage than good. For example, in Proverbs 26:7 it says, “Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools,” and again in Proverbs 26:9 it says, “Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” In both of these verses, it is clear that just knowing proverbs does not make one wise, but a person needs to know how to use them well. Another example of the need to have wisdom in order to apply proverbs well comes in Proverbs 26, as well. In Proverbs 26:4-5 it says, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Are we supposed to answer a fool according to his folly, or not answer a fool according to his folly? The truth is, it requires wisdom to know when to answer a fool, and when to avoid answering a fool. Both of these proverbs are applicable, but it requires wisdom to know when. So as you learn and hold onto these proverbs, pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the wisdom to know when and how to apply them.

There are *four primary types of sayings* in the book of Proverbs. There are statements that tell us (1) *how we are supposed to live*. The two proverbs mentioned above would be examples of this type of proverb. These proverbs tell us that sometimes we should answer a fool and sometimes we should not answer a fool. Another type of saying is (2) *comparison proverbs*. These have the words “better than.” In these proverbs, the listener is encouraged to pick one option over the other. For example, in Proverbs 21:9 it says, “Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” The third type of statement found in Proverbs is a statement of (3) *how things are*, not necessarily how things are supposed to be. In Proverbs 21:14 it says, “A gift in secret pacifies anger, and a bribe behind the back, strong wrath.” This passage says that bribes take away anger from people, but we know from the rest of Scripture that is wrong to offer bribes. This proverb is not encouraging us to make bribes, but letting us know that this happens in life. The last primary type of statement that appears in Proverbs is (4) *lists*. In Proverbs 30:18–19 it says, “There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air,

the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a virgin.”

Finally, as was the case with the book of Psalms, Proverbs uses the literary device of parallelism. Remember that there are four primary types of parallelism. In *synonymous parallelism* both lines say the same thing. In *antithetical parallelism*, both lines say the same thing, but in opposite ways. In *emblematic parallelism* there is a figurative statement followed by a literal explanation. Lastly, in *climactic parallelism*, there are three or more lines building to a climax.

Proverbs: The Value of Wisdom

Lesson 43

Because the book of Proverbs can be understood as a set of tools to be used to live an effective and prosperous life, the lessons in this book are going to be topical, focusing on one or two of these “tools” at a time. Even though the reading and the workbook will follow the chapter divisions in Proverbs, these lessons will focus on the different themes that are interwoven throughout the book of Proverbs.

For this lesson, we are going to focus on the *value of wisdom* as it is portrayed in the book of Proverbs. In Proverbs 3:13–18 it says:

Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
And the man who gains understanding;
For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver,
And her gain than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies,
And all the things you may desire cannot
compare with her.
Length of days is in her right hand,
In her left hand riches and honor.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who retain her.

Also, in Proverbs 8:11 it says:

For wisdom is better than rubies,
And all the things one may desire cannot be
compared with her.

In Proverbs 16:16 it says:

How much better to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding is to be chosen
rather than silver.

All of these verses, when taken together, make the same point: wisdom is worth far more than anything else we may value in life.

So why is this? Why is wisdom so valuable? For one, if a person were to have money and riches without the wisdom to know what to do with them, he may find himself more miserable than he was without them. There have been numerous documented stories of people winning the lottery, and within ten years they are broke and miserable. Yet beyond knowing what to do with money, wisdom leads us to make the decisions that lead to peace and a longer life. Wisdom teaches us to make the most of what we have and to stay out of trouble. Wisdom increases our quality of life and our length of life, as we will avoid making foolish decisions that ultimately hurt us.

Before diving into the various tools that Proverbs gives us for making wise decisions, we must make up our minds to value and passionately pursue wisdom. The very first step towards becoming a wise person is deciding that we want to become wise in the first place. Regrettably, far too many people, including young teenagers, do not care about or pursue wisdom but spend their lives focusing on pleasure, popularity, and money. These people pursue these things at all costs, often forfeiting the rest of their lives for the momentary pleasures that are immediately before them.

Thought Question:

1. How much would you say you value wisdom? How often do you purposely seek wisdom?

Proverbs: The Types of Fools

Lesson 44

In the book of Proverbs, there are really five different types of people that are characterized. Remembering that the goal of the book of Proverbs is to help the reader become the wise man, one of these characters is the wise man. Over and over again in the book of Proverbs, contrasts are made between the wise man and the fool. For example, in Proverbs 10:14 it says, “Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.” So who is the “fool” according to Proverbs?

There are four different types of “fool” in the book of Proverbs. As these fools are characterized, the readers are encouraged to examine themselves to see if any of these people characterize them. To start, we will look at the person who is directly called a “fool.” In the Hebrew Bible, there are two different words that we translate as fool in English: *kesil* (כֶּסִיל) and *avil* (אָוִיל). While these words can be used interchangeably at times, there is a

difference between the two. In Proverbs 14:16 it says, “A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident.” Another translation says that a fool is “reckless and careless.” The word used here is (1) *kesil*. This person does not necessarily have evil intentions, but he does not think before he acts and makes a lot of stupid mistakes. It is also said in Proverbs 1:22 that the *kesil* hates knowledge. This is the person who does not want to learn or to mature, so as a result he continues through life making mistake after mistake. Another word that could be used to describe the *kesil* is dullard, or “stupid,” as Proverbs 12:1 says: “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”

The second word for fool is (2) *avil*. This person not only makes foolish mistakes, but he does so with evil intent. This is the person who does not care about obeying God’s commandments but rebels against Him and does whatever he pleases. In Proverbs 14:9 it says, “Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor.” This person has no excuse for his folly; he is openly defiant against the Lord.

The next character that is described in the book of Proverbs is (3) *the simpleton*. The best way to understand this person is to think of a young child. It says in Proverbs 14:15, “The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.” Young children will believe just about anything an older person will tell them. Because they have very little life experience and no context to know otherwise, they usually trust older people. Most young teenagers are still “simple”; they have little life experience and do not know a lot yet. Proverbs encourages the simple to obtain knowledge and to develop views of their own. **Ignorance** cannot be an excuse forever.

The final character that is mentioned in the book of Proverbs is (4) *the mocker*. Not only does this person disobey God openly, but he or she mocks others who do obey God. A great example of the mocker comes in Proverbs 9:7: “He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself.” This person does not want to hear correction because he or she does not care; even worse, he or she will attack whoever tries to correct him or her. By far, the worst of the “fools” is the mocker.

So what does Proverbs have to say to all of these characters? First, for the *kesil*, the man who makes foolish mistakes, Proverbs gives him tools to avoid making those mistakes. For the *avil*, the one who sinfully defies God, Proverbs has a series of warnings about what will

happen to him. To the simple, Proverbs encourages them to pursue knowledge and understanding. And for the mocker there is only harsh punishment, hoping that others will learn from his demise.

ignorance: a lack of knowledge of something

Thought Questions:

1. Which of the five types of people do you feel characterizes you?
2. What might be some practical steps a person can take to no longer be simple?

Proverbs: The Fear of the Lord

Lesson 45

Now that we have covered the value of wisdom and the types of fools to avoid, hopefully we are ready to pursue wisdom. So how does one obtain wisdom? In Proverbs, as will be the case in Ecclesiastes and Job, the starting point for wisdom is the fear of the Lord. In Proverbs 1:7 it says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” And in Proverbs 9:10 it says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” In both of these verses, it is clear that the fear of the Lord is the place that a person must begin if he or she wants to become wise or knowledgeable.

So what is the fear of the Lord, and why is it so important for wisdom? Some people define the fear of the Lord as reverence or respect for the Lord. While this is certainly true, the fear of the Lord is more than simple reverence or respect. There is an element of terror involved in the fear of the Lord. One way for this to make sense is to think of a relationship between a child and his parents. While there is no excuse for parents to be abusive and children should not fear their parents to the point where they cannot approach them, there is a sense that children need to fear their parents. When a father or mother tells a child to do something or not to do something, that child should know that there will be consequences for disobedience and should be afraid of those consequences. This makes even more sense if we look at what would happen if a child does not fear his parents. Let us say that a young child has a tendency to run out into the street without looking. His father yells out to him not to go into the street, but he really wants to go into the street and ignores his father. His father yells louder and threatens to punish him but he still does not fear his dad so he goes anyway. The only thing

that will make that child give up his desire to go into the street is the fear that he will be punished if he does go.

The sad truth is that there are people who claim to be Christians but act like this child and have no fear of God. The first step in understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ is to understand and acknowledge that we are sinners and that we are under the wrath of God. God is no pushover, and He will not simply overlook sin. However, many young people view God more like they view Santa Claus, someone who simply gives them nice things when they ask. We must face the reality that God is holy and just and that He will punish sin. This should lead us to fall on our knees and beg for mercy before God. It is only after we understand this that we can truly accept the grace of forgiveness offered through the cross. Without the fear of the Lord, Jesus’ death on the cross is simply a “get-out-of-hell-free” card.

Elsewhere in Proverbs it says in 8:13, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” A person cannot have the fear of the Lord, and consequently wisdom, if he still loves or flirts with evil. This does not mean that we will never sin if we are saved, but it does mean that we will hate sin and we will work hard to overcome the sins in our lives. So wisdom begins with an attitude of submission to God. We cannot gain wisdom if we ignore God’s commands. We must first acknowledge that God is God, and we are not, and commit to obeying Him.

Thought Question:

1. In 1 John 4:18 it says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” How do you reconcile this verse with the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom?

Proverbs: Prudence

Lesson 46

While there is a lot of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, there is one piece of wisdom offered in this book that precedes the other principles in Proverbs, the concept of **prudence**. Prudence can be defined as caution or discretion. Another way to define prudence is “to think before you act.” A majority of the problems that people face in life could be avoided if people simply took time to think before they speak or act. If we develop even the slightest hesitation before we speak or act, we will spare ourselves from many troubles.