

## 9/07/2025, GABC Ames, Foundations - Wisdom 1: Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Lamentations

Wisdom literature - Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations.

The world is **good** - created by God, for his glory, and our good.

Yet the world is **fallen** - marred by sin, touched by curse and death.

These books help us to understand how to relate **norms** and exceptions

*Proverbs* – **norms**, how life normally operates

*Job* – **exception**, sometimes things just go bad for no sin or fault of your own.

*Ecclesiastes* – **exception**, sometimes things go extremely well, and you still find yourself unhappy.

"The life of wisdom declared in Proverbs is not an easy path, and the truths of world order laid out in Proverbs do not always find immediate fulfillment. As such, Job and Ecclesiastes provide a balanced call to continue to fear and follow God and to turn from evil, even when life is filled with suffering and **enigma**. Wise living for humans always means *dependence* on a God who is not controlled but who is always in control," Jason Derouchie, *Lecture Notes*, "Lecture 20: Introduction to Wisdom Literature," 3.

### OVERVIEW

*Proverbs* - norms, wisdom for living a **godly** life.

*Job* - fearing the Lord when things go really **bad**.

*Ecclesiastes* - fearing the Lord when **everything** goes your way.

*Song of Solomon* - about marriage, example of how to fear the Lord in **good** times

*Lamentations* - about the fall of Jerusalem, example of how to fear the Lord under his sharp **discipline**, when things go poorly.

Wisdom literature and human **mastery** in the world:

"The books that follow... fall into the category of wisdom literature, which develops the theme of human mastery of the world. 'Wisdom' signifies the mastery of a skill in a particular domain..."

The wisdom books present wisdom not in terms of a specific skill, "but for life itself. Consequently, Solomon in part embodies what it means to fulfill the call to be human in Genesis 1:27-28, namely to rule the creation and to exercise **dominion** over it. Wisdom literature specifically deals with this concern for legitimate mastery and control of creation," Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 202.

The picture of the wise life that these books paint brings together:

1. The **righteous** life - how to be godly, Proverbs 3:7 "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil."
2. The **satisfying** life - how to be happy and satisfied, Proverbs 15:16-17 "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it."
3. The **dominion** life - how to actually impact the world around you for good
  - a. Proverbs 29:2 "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan."
  - b. Proverbs 21:5 "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty."

Righteousness, satisfaction, and dominion are founded on what Solomon calls the fear of the Lord: Proverbs 9:10, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

### PROVERBS

Central, normative wisdom book. This is the guidebook for the wise life. It isn't **simplistic**, but on the whole presents life in its normal operations.

Chapters 1-9: Introduction to wisdom

Chapters 10-29: Wise sayings

Chapters 30-31: Closing bracket

Proverbs connects the pursuit of wisdom, and the need to continue to pursue wisdom as you age by analogy to the pursuit of a good **wife**, and the need to stay **faithful** to her as you age.

Chapter 4 – Find wisdom and hold fast to **her**.

Chapter 5 – Cultivate your delight in the wife of your youth.

Chapter 6 and 7 – Beware the adulteress, avoid her.

Chapter 9 – Heed the invitation of Lady Wisdom, not Madame Folly, the choice is **life** and **death**.

Chapter 31 – The portrait of the wise and godly wife

Proverbs 8:11 – "for wisdom is better than **jewels**, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."

Proverbs 31:10 - "an excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than **jewels**."

### SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Solomon is a picture of how to live wisely, how to fear the Lord in light of God's good **gifts**. It is meant to help us see the role of delight and **gratitude** in the cultivation of godly wisdom even in the face of sin and misery. God's created order, including marriage, though fallen, is still good, and to be delighted in.

"The Song of Songs celebrates the dimensions of blessing much like Proverbs, and particularly the marital blessing. The beauty of each beloved is praised and there is transparency to each other; there is a candid eroticism in an atmosphere of complete openness to each other, without any shame or fear. This has led some scholars to remark that the entire text is a type of commentary on Genesis 2:25 "the man and women were naked and not ashamed"

"In the light of the larger storyline and prophetic commentary, notably Jeremiah and Hosea, the love between the two human lovers points to the relationship between [the LORD] and Israel at the beginning: (Jeremiah 2:2) 'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me, and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown,' Dempster, 207

Song of Solomon: Christ and the Church? Or Marriage?

Is this about Christ and the Church? Or is it simply about the beauty of marriage?

Song of Solomon is a celebration of the blessing and oneness of marriage which is itself a pointer to Christ's relationship to his bride, the church.

Song 2:3, "As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

## LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations is about how to live wisely in a good but fallen world as redeemed but still sinful people.

"If the Song of Songs underlines the blessing and the relationship between [the LORD] and Israel at the beginning of their relationship, and a promising future, Lamentations expresses grief for the present reality of exile, divorce and judgment" Dempster, 208.

Lamentations emphasizes that this suffering is because of Jerusalem's sins.

Lamentations 1:8, "Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy."

Lamentations 1:14, "My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together, they were set upon my neck."

Lamentations 1:18, "The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word."

Lamentations teaches us how to continue to fear the Lord, and hope in his covenant mercy in spite of our sin.

Lamentations 3:21-24, "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'"

Three errors that Lamentations helps us avoid

1. Not owning our sin
2. Not mourning our suffering
3. Not hoping in his love

Structural Fun-Facts:

5 discrete poems, like the 5 books of the Psalms, or 5 books of Moses.

Each chapter is a stand-alone piece, like the Psalms.

Chapters 1-4 are all acrostic

Chapter 3 has 66 verses, and each letter gets three verses, A, A, A, B, B, B...

This is the center and focal point of the book.

This chapter makes hope in the mercy of God the central theme and climax of the whole book.

Chapter 5 isn't an acrostic - but it still has 22 verses.

## Application by way of summary

Proverbs lays out the norms for wise living - wise living is meant to help us live righteous, and satisfying lives of good and godly dominion.

Song of Solomon shows us what it looks like to delight in God's good gifts, specifically marriage, while also pointing us to the covenant love between God and his people.

Lamentations helps us live wisely in repentant hope recognizing the sin and suffering of God's creation, especially our own sin and suffering.

## DISCUSSION

- I. Proverbs - why is it helpful to keep the distinction between norms and exceptions in mind? What errors might we fall into if we only focus on the norms? On the exceptions?
- II. Song - How do delight and gratitude cultivate godly wisdom? Or, how do delight and gratitude shape the way we think about God, the world, and our circumstances? (They remind us of our creatureliness, and reinforce our view of God's goodness and generosity, and strengthen us for the hard duties that God gives us - it is hard to obey an aloof and uncaring lord)
- III. Lamentations - How do confession, mourning, and hope cultivate godly wisdom?