

## **How To Read the Old Testament's Wisdom Literature**

This year you will need a notebook to record your observations and ideas as you read each day. If you don't do this - on paper or electronically - much of what you read will slip away from you and you will not be changed by the Scripture. We must consider what we read and be changed by it or we won't please God. *We don't get wise from reading.* We get wise from putting the wisdom we read into our hearts and lives (see James 1:22-26). Answer the questions below for each reading in your notebook. They will help Bible reading become Bible living!

### **Reading Psalms**

1. It is very important you classify each psalm you read. The major types of psalms are laments (a cry to God for help, either individual or as a community), hymns (praise to God), thanksgiving, royal psalms (about the king), and wisdom psalms (teach directly). What kind of psalm is today's reading?
2. Are there word pictures in this psalm? What are they? Notice the emotional and attitudinal passages. What is the emotional tone of the psalm?
3. Read the psalm on three levels. What did it say for the original audience? What is its meaning in the light of Christ? What does it say to my own life?
4. What does this psalm teach about the psalmist's relationship with God? How does that help you build your relationship with God?

Other notes: get in the habit of praying one of the psalms we read each week. Put your name, your troubles, your thanksgiving into the psalm. Make it yours!

### **Reading Proverbs 1-9**

The first nine chapters offer the words of wisdom. For each of these chapters write down some notes on what wisdom says. Then write out how you will apply that. Write down a way in which you can be wiser in your conduct and actions today.

### **Reading Proverbs 10-31**

1. What do I see in my life that aligns or does not align with the proverbs I read today?
2. Do I see something in today's reading that is different/contradicts/swims upstream against the culture around me?
3. Can I think of a Bible character who did or didn't do what the proverbs today talk about?
4. Pick a Proverb from today's reading and share it with someone. Email it, get on social media, or best of all, have a face to face conversation with someone. How can I share the wisdom found in today's reading with someone today?

## **Reading Job**

Job is challenging. It is largely a debate between Job and his friends. They speak like the book of Proverbs: do right, get blessed. Job says he is right but he isn't being blessed. Why not? What has gone wrong? As we read the speeches in Job it is important to ask yourself key questions:

1. What does this chapter show me about God's nature or human nature?
2. Am I like the person speaking in this chapter? Is that good or bad?
3. What are the speakers saying about God? Do I agree with them?

## **Reading Ecclesiastes**

Much of Ecclesiastes is dark and even discouraging, because it tries to consider life without God. The key to the book is finding what provides meaning and purpose to life because it can outlast this life.

1. Summarize the chapter. Short and sweet. Less is more.
2. What are some big ideas and/or themes Ecclesiastes is trying to build today?
3. Watch for what Solomon says people try to build their life on. Note anything that people try to find purpose with in today's reading.
4. While Ecclesiastes often points out what is bad what in today's reading is said to be good?
5. Ecclesiastes is gritty and real. Sometimes we don't like it's message. What did you not like that Solomon said today?
6. Is God mentioned in today's reading? How does this help the message?
7. This book levels humanity. We're all in Ecclesiastes. Think about how that is true in today's chapter. How do you fit with all humanity in what is said in today's reading?

## **Reading Song of Solomon**

This book celebrates married love, and physical intimacy, in a marvelously beautiful and powerful way. Although marriage is its subject matter the metaphors and figures of speech will mean it is not too much for even families to read. The emphasis needs to be on love, how those in love should act, and how God is not against marriage and sex - He put a whole book in the Bible all about it!

1. What does this couple do to strengthen their bond? If married, what am I doing to strengthen my marriage?
2. How does this couple speak to each other? If married, do I speak to my spouse like this?
3. What does today's reading teach us about God's view of marriage and love?