

Global Association of Theological Studies

# LIFE GRID

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*Wisdom from Above  
for Living Here Below*

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## Suggestions for Teachers

### LESSONS 1–11

Each lesson, except for the last one (lesson 12) has a reading assignment. Consider giving the students ten to fifteen minutes to begin their homework assignment at the end of your session.

### LESSONS 2–3

Lessons 2 and 3 are a study of Proverbs. The Bible indicates that Solomon collected proverbs from wise men. Have your students collect proverbs from secular sources and/or parents.

### LESSONS 4–5

The theme of lessons 4 and 5 is the suffering of Job. Choose seven students to play the roles of narrator, God, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu. Have them read the passages that pertain to them orally as in a radio play.

### LESSONS 6–7

The Song of Solomon is the subject of lessons 6 and 7. Choose students to play the roles of the Shulamite maiden, King Solomon, and the “daughters of Jerusalem.” Have them rewrite the story in modern language and then present a radio play.

### LESSONS 8–9

Lessons 8 and 9 focus on Solomon’s degeneration in Ecclesiastes. Have the students graph his decline.

### LESSONS 10–12

The Psalms is the topic of lessons 10, 11, and 12. Have each student memorize two psalms that they had not memorized before.

### LESSON 12

Give a comprehensive, instructor-created test in the last half of this lesson.

## LESSON 1

# Introduction to Wisdom Literature

### Key Verse

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever. (Psalm 111:10)

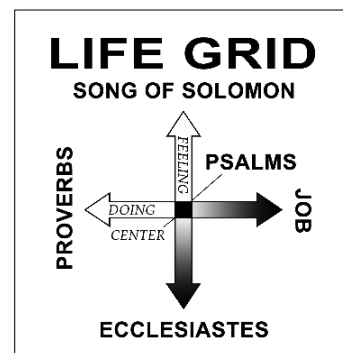
### Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Contrast the style of Hebrew poetry with modern English poetry
- Name the five books of wisdom literature
- Summarize the five books of wisdom literature
- Define the Old Testament meaning of *wisdom*
- Explain the Life Grid

### Life Grid

In the Bible's five books of wisdom literature, we see a Life Grid. This grid consists of a horizontal axis and a vertical axis: The horizontal line is the Doing Line, our everyday life. The vertical line is the Feeling Line, our relationship with God.



The Doing Line is where we live. It's what we do every day: work, school, and so on. It is the day-to-day activities of our lives: what we eat, when we sleep, where we work, and so forth. It is the physical, earthly, temporary life. Proverbs and Job are the outer life and on the Doing Line. On one end of this axis is Proverbs. It tells us that if we obey the Word of God, it should bring blessings to our lives. On the other end of the axis, we have Job. This is the dark side of this life. Job did everything right. He honored God, he prayed, he gave, but for some reason everything went wrong.

The Feeling Line is our relationship with God – the inner, spiritual life. It goes far beyond the earth into eternity. We are doing the right things because they are right even when feeling isn't there. Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes are the inner life and on the Feeling Line.

The Center of it all in the human grid is the wonderful 150 chapters of Psalms. Psalms express every emotion known to mankind. Sometimes it is praising, rejoicing, thanking, whining, God break the teeth of my enemies, wipe out my enemies, and so forth.

Everyone is on the Life Grid. No matter what happens in life, keep on praying. Keep on living for God. Keep on worshipping. Keep your relationship good with God.

## Poetry and Wisdom

Poetry and wisdom literature in the Old Testament are closely related. Five Old Testament books are clearly poetic: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Scholars consider Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon to be wisdom literature. Psalms is full of praises with some chapters of wisdom (e.g., 1 and 119). (Lamentations is also poetic but is usually studied with the Major Prophets. It follows Jeremiah in the Christian Bible.)

Most types of poetry use rhyme (the endings of two lines have the same sound) and meter (rhythm as in verse or music). Rhyme and meter can make translating such poetry into a foreign language difficult. Hebrew poetry, on the other hand, is unusual, for it focuses on parallelism. Parallelism is when ideas are set side by side, forming two thoughts in the mind. These thoughts may work together or be opposites, emphasizing the meaning of each other. For example,

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1)

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.  
(Psalm 126:2, NIV)

Those who are kind benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves. (Proverbs 11:17, NIV)

Because of the parallelism of thoughts, Hebrew poetry translates well into foreign languages.

Hebrew poetry appeals to human emotions and will as the writings are charged with feeling. It deals with experiences and problems that are common to man; these incidents are relayed to us for examples. Its purpose is to persuade, exhort, and reprove.

Wisdom literature is the Old Testament's "Instruction Manual for Life." It is poetic in form but practical in content. It teaches practical living skills instead of offering facts or abstract knowledge.

The Hebrew meaning of *wisdom* is much broader than the English. *Wisdom* in English speaks more about knowledge, but in Hebrew it relates to the skill of making things, which we consider to be craftsmanship.

In Hebrew *wisdom* includes the willingness and ability to rightly perceive and relate to the created world in all its aspects. God has created the world in a certain way, and He has given us wisdom to live according to that basic structure.

Many of the prophets thought wisdom to be important. For example, Jeremiah wrote, "For the teaching of the law by the priest will not be cease, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets" (Jeremiah 18:18, NIV). Wisdom was so important that it was mentioned with the Law and the Prophets.

## Just the Facts:

- Out of the sixty-six books in the Bible (thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament), five are written in poetic form. (As stated above, Lamentations is also poetic but is paired in the Christian Bible with the prophecies of Jeremiah, as he is considered the author.)

- The wisdom literature is the third section in the Bible.
- It is in the Old Testament.
- These books were primarily written during Israel's Golden Age in the time of David and Solomon (1040–931 BC).
- They spoke to Israel then, but also speak to us today.
- The value of this portion of Scripture is in the beautiful balance between the work of the Holy Spirit and the deepest human emotions and expressions. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:20–21).

## Overview of Poetical Books

- **Proverbs** (the bright side of everyday life) is a collection of wise sayings and principles to live by. Proverbs teaches good things *normally* happen in life to those living by God's principles. Obedience to God's Word equals blessings!
- **Job** (the dark side of everyday life) is the story of a man who did everything right by the rules and principles as far as we know. At the opposite end of everyday life, everything falls apart for some reason. Like Job, you have fasted, prayed, and lived as righteously as possible but still life does not go right.
- **Song of Solomon** (bright side of spiritual/inner life) is a love story between King Solomon and the Shulamite maiden. Everything is wonderful, romance is in the air, all is absolutely great. This is a high point of his life, and everything is good and right.
- **Ecclesiastes** (dark side of spiritual/inner life) is Solomon's comments after a life of disillusionments and disappointments: everything is vanity, vanity, all is vanity. He told us all is vanity when feelings evaporate and things don't make sense. Solomon was just putting one foot in front of the other, going through the motions with no feeling left. Sometimes in the Christian life we live for God because the Bible says to but not because we feel to. With no heart in it, we go through the motions.
- **Psalms** (the center of human life) is 150 songs of prayers and anthems of praise. David wrote most of the psalms, and he experienced all the emotions expressed on the Life Grid.



## Study Questions

1. Name the five poetical books in our study.
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. When were the poetical books written?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How does Hebrew poetry differ from modern English poetry?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Why is Hebrew poetry easier to translate into a different language than poetry with rhyme and meter?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Write a poetical stanza in the Hebrew style.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What is considered the Old Testament's "Instruction Manual for Life?"  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. What is the Life Grid?

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8. On the Life Grid, what is the difference between the *Doing Line* and the *Feeling Line*?

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9. In one sentence, summarize each of the five poetical books.

A. 

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B. 

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C. 

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D. 

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E. 

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