



BOT252 WISDOM LITERATURE
STUDENT LECTURE NOTES

INTRODUCTION TO WISDOM

¹⁵ So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. ¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. ¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.

^{NLT} Ephesians 5:15-17

There are two ways to live under the power of the Holy Spirit.

- The first is the way most people seek – _____

- The second is by _____ – this is the most _____

Wisdom is a _____ discipline

Borderline Christianity

There's something comfortable about reducing Christianity to a list of do's and don'ts, whether your list comes from mindless fundamentalism or mindless liberalism: you always know where you stand, and this helps reduce anxiety. Do's-and-don'ts-ism has the advantage that you don't need wisdom. You don't have to think subtly or make hard choices. You don't have to relate personally to a demanding and loving Lord.

Robert C. Roberts in The Reformed Journal (Feb. 1987). Christianity Today, Vol. 31, no. 9.

1. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GENRE

The wisdom literature in the Old Testament is unique in that it has little to no mention of these important biblical themes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

2. THE IDENTITY OF THE WISDOM MATERIAL

Job
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Psalms 1, 19b, 32, 34, 37, 49, 78, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 133¹

Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical Wisdom Books²

The Wisdom of Jesus
Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
The Wisdom of Solomon

3. WHAT IS BIBLICAL WISDOM?

"Wisdom is the discipline of applying truth to one's life in the light of experience."³

The central theological essence of biblical wisdom is _____.

^{NIV} Job 28:28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

¹ Walter Kaiser, Jr. *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 215.

² Ernest C. Lucas, *A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature: Exploring the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 80.

³ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, 2 ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 187.

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

^{NIV} Proverbs 9:10-11 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. ¹¹ For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

See also, Ecc. 7:18; 8:12; 12:13-14; Psalms 19:7-14; 112:1; 119:33-38, 57-64.

Kaiser states, "When we come to wisdom books and wisdom psalms, the fear of the Lord has become the essence of the knowledge and wisdom of God."⁴

Hill and Walton expand upon the definition and explain it this way:⁵

Perhaps we can best capture the biblical way of thinking about all this by thinking in terms of worldview integration. In the ancient world, including Israel, *order* was an important value. Creation brought order to the cosmos; law brought order to society; etiquette brought order to human relationships; politics brought order to governance and authority. Ancient wisdom can then be understood as the pursuit of understanding and preserving order in the world.... In Israel, people saw the fear of the Lord as the key to this integration process. Order in the cosmos could only be understood through acknowledgment of the one who brought order. Order could only be preserved in society and in life by understanding God's requirements and expectations.

To say that wisdom is rooted in "the fear of the Lord" is to acknowledge the following truths:⁶

- Wisdom begins with the _____ of _____.
- God is the _____ of all wisdom, and wisdom begins by _____ ourselves with who he is.
- Proper _____ results in _____ (i.e. the fear of the Lord).
- The practical side of _____ is _____.

The theological notion of the wisdom literature is also rooted in the concept of _____.

⁴ Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 169.

⁵ John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *Old Testament Today: A Journey from Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 290-291.

⁶ Hebrew wisdom literature, as distinguished from the wisdom writings of other cultures, was centered on God. In contrast, Egyptian wisdom, for example, focused on the wisdom of the sages and on disciplining oneself to accept the trials of life.

NIV Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

NIV Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF WISDOM

- The rise of _____ is a barrier to biblical wisdom
- Therefore, one of the great barriers to wisdom is _____.
- The fear of the Lord in biblical literature becomes the antidote for _____.⁷
- Knowledge requires _____.
- Wisdom is a _____ issue, not just an _____ one.
- Since the 1990's, _____ in the West have been _____.
- Only the _____ people love your _____.

5. CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLICAL WISDOM

Ryken gives two basic criteria for categorizing a text as wisdom:⁸

1. The position of the _____.
2. The use of _____.

The goal of wisdom is two-fold:

⁷ Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 40.

⁸ Leland Ryken, *The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 243.

1. The formation of _____.
2. To make sense of _____ through a _____ grid.

The Wisdom literature is classified into two broad categories.

Primary Wisdom Books	Job	Higher Wisdom	Deals with life's big questions. Theme is "God is free" and sovereign over His creation.
	Proverbs	Lower Wisdom	Deals with the daily rhythms of life and the practical considerations that lead to wise living.
	Ecclesiastes	Higher Wisdom	Deals with life's big questions. How to live free for the God who is "above the Sun."
Secondary Wisdom Books	Psalms		Not a book of wisdom yet has wisdom psalms within its collection.
	Song of Songs		Has proverbial lyrics in it. Intended to be a picture of intimate and beautiful sexual relations within marriage.

According to Bartlett, there are seven dominant characteristics of wisdom literature.⁹

1. It is less concerned with what God reveals to _____ (either through the words of the prophets or through acts in history) than with what _____ can _____ about the world through human _____.
2. It presupposes that there are various _____ and that the _____ can discover something of those _____ (e.g. Ecc. 3:1-8).

⁹ David L. Bartlett, *The Shape of Scriptural Authority* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 83-95.

3. It stresses "_____." The wise are not wise because of scientific _____
_____. Rather, they are _____ because they effectively fit into and
integrate the _____ around them. Further, this common/ordinary sense is a
_____ (Prov. 26:20; 25:19; 26:11).
4. However, the wisdom writers and teachers are quite aware that "_____"
has _____. The _____ is inevitable and is to be attributed to
the _____ (Prov. 16:1; 21:31; 25:2; Ecc. 8:16-17; Job 28:1-28).
5. The literary style (parable, poem, essay, and the emphasis on parallelism) tends to
_____ of the _____, and rather moves in the realm of the
_____. Imperatives are often _____ by a reference
to the _____. Hence, wisdom is not up for _____, rather it is
something to which to respond, _____
(Prov. 17:17, 28; 22:26-27; Ecc. 7:13-14).
6. It _____ the gifts of _____;
rather than _____ of God (Job 28:1-28; Prov. 1:7; 16:4;
Ecc. 7:13-14).
7. Wisdom is a _____ that was _____ with God at the time of
_____, and while distinct from the _____ and
_____, is determinative in succeeding in the _____
_____ (Prov. 8:22-36).

INTRODUCTION TO WISDOM – PART 2

The forms of wisdom fall into three broad categories:

1. _____ - A short pithy statement that expresses a truth.
2. _____ - This tests the mind in order to expose the truth behind a situation.
(cf. Prov. 1:6)
3. _____ - As seen in the first 9 chapters of Proverbs.

The proverb and essay dominate biblical wisdom literature.

5. THE HEBREW VOCABULARY FOR WISDOM

The Hebrew verb for the word wisdom is *hokmah* חֲכָמָה

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament gives the following concerning this Hebrew word:¹⁰

The verb is used twenty-six times and most of the passages appear in the Qal stem meaning "be wise," etc. In the Piel stem the meaning is "making wise" or "teaching." Of all the words denoting intelligence, the most frequently used are this verb and its derivatives, which occur some 312 times in the Hebrew OT. About three-fifths of the usages are found in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

The essential idea of חֲכָמָה represents a manner of thinking and attitude concerning life's experiences, including matters of general interest and basic morality. These concerns relate to prudence in secular affairs, skills in the arts, moral sensitivity, and experience in the ways of the Lord.¹¹

¹⁰ Bibleworks 6, Norfolk Virginia, 2004.

¹¹ The Greek word for wisdom is σοφία (sophia). It would involve what the Greeks termed *theoria* and *praktika* (educated discipline of mind and skillful practice). In Gnostic literature "she" became the lowest and final emanation of God, and this term has given rise to the cultic "Sophia" religions that honor the feminine

- The Hebrew word for wisdom is thereby translated “skill for living,” because the Jews regarded wisdom in very practical terms. This literature provided guidance for moral behavior and everyday living and maintaining the order that God had imbued the creation with.
- The wisdom literature centers on the regular rhythms of life as opposed to the unique or the miraculous. They are general principles and guidelines for living.
- The literature is marked by sage observations about life set down in memorable form. It specializes in rules for success and happiness.¹²

Another Hebrew term, derived from the verb, is the noun form *hokam* חָכָם

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament gives the following concerning this Hebrew word:¹³

Wise(men); cunning (man). Reflects the usages of חָכָם in describing the wise man. He is skilful in various kinds of technical work, e.g., as artisans (of tabernacle and temple furniture, Exo 35:10), and goldsmiths (Jer 10:9). The wise man knows how to administer the affairs of state (1Kings 5:7) and is also shrewd, e.g., the wise woman of Tekoa handling a delicate matter before Solomon (2Sam 14:2). The plural also indicates the learned and shrewd men, astrologers, magicians of many nations: Egypt (Gen 41:8), Babylon (Isa 44:28), Persia (Est 6:13). Prudence also describes the wise person's attitude to kings (Prov 16:14), his prudence in conforming to the word of God (Deut 4:6), or a lack of it in ignoring God's will (Hos 13:13).

The wise man constituted a third office, using wisdom in harmony with the function of the other two offices (Jer 18:18). Thus, the wise man gave practical advice based on divine revelation as well as his own experience and observation.

^{NIV} 2 Samuel 16:23 Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel's advice.

^{NIV} Proverbs 5:13 I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors.

^{NIV} Acts 7:22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

6. THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WISDOM LITERATURE

personification of God. Her fall from grace helped to create the material world in the mythic texts, while others see her as intrinsic of the human soul and/or the Bride of Christ.

¹² William LaSor, David Hubbard, and Frederic Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 447.

¹³ Bibleworks 6.

The theology of the wisdom literature, though not limited to the covenant life of the community of faith, does speak to the covenant community in that it seeks to instruct in matters of _____, _____, and an _____ life.¹⁴

Two reasons for this conclusion:

- According to Jeremiah 18:18, the prophet, priest, and sage were essential agents of divine instruction. The sages were part of the institutional life of Israel who intended to move them to appropriate living within the covenant community.
- Secondly, there were many commonalities of concept, prescription and instruction between wisdom and Deuteronomy.¹⁵

E.g. Deut. 1:17; 16:19 with Prov. 24:23; 28:21 - impartiality in judgment

Deut 4:2; 13:1 with Prov. 30:5-6 - do not "add to my/the words"

Deut 16:20 with Prov. 21:21 - "justice" brings "life"

Deut. 23:22-24 with Ecc. 5:1-5 - "do not remove the landmarks"

Deut. 25:13-16 with Prov. 11:1; 20:10, 23 - "alternate weights"

The wisdom writers of Israel were well verse in Deuteronomic law and sought to integrate that law into the wisdom life of the covenant community.

Waltke outlines the following commonalities between the law and the wisdom material:¹⁶

1. The same _____

The sages use the name _____ and describe him the same way the prophets do.

2. The same _____

The sages had the same emphasis on ethical _____ and were critical of ritual devoid of _____ and _____.

3. The same _____

¹⁴ Some of this material is borrowed from Dr. Barker's class notes on Old Testament theology.

¹⁵ Moshe Weinfeld, *"The Wisdom Substrata in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic Literature," Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 244-247.

¹⁶ Bruce K. Waltke *Proverbs*, 304-316.

While the means of collecting data for the biblical record may differ, the same _____
that _____ moved the sages to write as the
_____ desired.

4. The same _____

Both the sage and prophet spoke to the community with _____, and their
writings were _____ to continue to speak to the covenant people. In fact,
the wisdom materials are called " _____ " and " _____ ." (Prov. 1:8;
2:1; 3:1, and so on...)

5. The same _____

Both sage and prophet speak of man as disconnected from God and in need of the
divine intervention of _____ and _____.

6. The same _____

The sage understands that the _____ is essential to _____
and _____ (per law and prophet).

7. The same _____

It is a demand to " _____, " _____, " and " _____."

8. The same _____

Both prophet and sage demanded care for the _____
_____. They both look for _____ and
_____.

9. The same _____

A hope based namely on _____! Whether prosperity of many days, or the

realization of the highest possible good, or existence beyond death; law, prophet and sage see "_____." ("_____") as the hope of the godly.

10. The same _____

The sage in concert with the rest of the OT calls his hearers to "_____"

the living, sovereign, gracious Creator and covenant God.

However, this is not to suggest that there are no differences in wisdom theology and the law. The foundational difference seems to be that the sage spoke from within the covenant community to the covenant community but did not point them to a God of covenant, but to a Creator God that has created a natural order of things.

This is not just a response to general revelation. Instead, the sage roots their wisdom in the special revelation of Scripture to establish the theological, ethical, and moral framework; thus, pointing the people to the harmony of the natural order of the created world.

PARALLELS BETWEEN THE LAW AND WISDOM

Law and wisdom both had secular functions outside of Israel, but are transformed into spiritual concepts in Israel by God's revealed relationship to them.		
SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION: God is source	LAW "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2).	WISDOM "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Pr 9:10).
MOTIVATION: Only a God-centered perspective gives ultimate value.	Not just so that society runs smoothly, but so that we will do what is right.	Not pursued for personal fulfillment, but so that we become people of faith.
FOCUS OF GOD'S SELF-REVELATION	God is characterized by absolute morality.	God is characterized by unfathomable wisdom.

Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament, p. 25

7. THE PRACTICAL COMPONENTS OF THE WISDOM LITERATURE

The "fear of the Lord" leads to _____. This is due to the following:

1. It leads to an _____, leading to a life of _____ (Psalm 34:11-14; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 28:28; Prov. 3:7; 10:27; 14:2, 26; 16:6, 17; 19:23; 22:4).
2. To fear the Lord keeps in proper perspective the relationship of the _____ versus the _____ (Ecc. 1:3-11; 3:14; 12:13).
3. To fear the Lord keeps a person living in _____ (Ecc. 5:1-7).

William Brown sees in these components the primary basis for the wisdom material. He writes the following:¹⁷

The appeal of suggesting character formation as the central framework and goal of biblical wisdom lies in the literature's focus on the developing self in relation to the perceived world, thus bridging the gulf between the anthropocentric and theocentric frames of reference that run throughout the wisdom corpus.

The "fear of the Lord" is the basis for a _____ from God.

Life is viewed here as both qualitative and quantitative. A life of wisdom did not mean just existence. It meant a life of _____.

The wisdom material borrows from the themes of _____ and _____ which declare that if a child of God keeps the statutes of God, they will _____.! (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 8:1, 3; 30:15, 19-20)

There are a number of metaphors for "life" in the wisdom literature:

1. The _____ of life (Prov. 2:19; 5:6; 10:17; 15:24)
2. The _____ of life (Prov 13:14)

¹⁷ William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 4.

3. The _____ of life (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 15:4)

The "fear of the Lord" also leads to an integration of _____ and _____. This is the primary theological notion of Ecclesiastes.

It is through the Lord that humanity learns appropriate values and priorities for life. Outside of God everything is "vanity." Humanity is dependent upon the Creator, and values must come from God who lives "above the sun," rather than the creation that is "under the sun."

The "fear of the Lord" leads to a proper understanding of _____.

The wisdom teachers pointed to the practicalities of due reward intrinsic in the natural order of things. Two examples are hard work (Prov. 10:4) and moral uprightness (Prov. 11:6). These were even seen outside the covenant promises of blessing for those who were obedient.

This is not to promote the idea that all hard work and moral good was rewarded with health, wealth, and happiness because God gives no guarantees since His purposes must prevail (Job; Psalm 73; Ecc. 6:1-12; 7:1-15).

So, the sages taught the values of moral and ethical uprightness, diligent work, and godly relationships as an end in and of themselves. Whatever blessings came into the life of a believer were purely considered to be gifts from God, meant to be enjoyed by the godly.

Blessings included the gifts of food, drink, fun, relationships, marriage, and sexual intimacy based on love and fidelity (Prov. 5:18; Ecc. 2:24; 3:13; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; Song of Songs 4:12, 15; 8:6-7).

The final blessing, according to wisdom – "What is the ultimate good in life?"

Note: Job 14:7, 14; 19:23-27; Ecc. 3:17, 21-22; 11:9-10; 12:14.

Namely, _____! (cf. Psalm 1:6).

In the New Testament, wisdom continues to be an important component of faith, as well as a by-product of prayer, when needed.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you

for asking.⁶ But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.⁷ Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.⁸ Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do. (James 1:5-8 NLT)

PROVERBS

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.³⁰ Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.³¹ He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite-- wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations.³² He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.³³ He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.³⁴ Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

^{NIV} 1 Kings 4:29-34

1. OUTLINE OF PROVERBS

I The Purpose of Proverbs 1:1-7

II Proverbs to the Youth 1:8-9:18

- A Obey Parents 1:8-9
- B Avoid Bad Company 1:10-19
- C Seek Wisdom 1:20-2:22
- D Benefits of Wisdom 3:1-26
- E Be Kind to Others 3:27-35
- F Father Says Get Wisdom 4:1-13
- G Avoid the Wicked 4:14-22
- H Keep Your Heart 4:23-27
- I Do Not Commit Adultery 5:1-14
- J Do Be Faithful to Your Spouse 5:15-23
- K Avoid Surety 6:1-5
- L Do Not Be Lazy 6:6-19
- M Do Not Commit Adultery 6:20-7:27
- N Praise of Wisdom 8:1-9:12
- O Foolish Woman 9:13-18

III Proverbs of Solomon 10:1-24:34

- A Proverbs Contrasting the Godly and the Wicked 10:1-15:33

- B Proverbs Encouraging Godly Lives 16:1–22:16
- C Proverbs Concerning Various Situations 22:17–24:34

IV Proverbs of Solomon Copied by Hezekiah's Men 25:1–29:27

A Proverbs Regulating Relationships with Others 25:1–26:28

- 1 Relationships with Kings 25:1–7
- 2 Relationships with Neighbors 25:8–20
- 3 Relationships with Enemies 25:21–24
- 4 Relationships with Yourself 25:25–28
- 5 Relationships with Fools 26:1–12
- 6 Relationships with Sluggards 26:13–16
- 7 Relationships with Gossips 26:17–28

B Proverbs Regulating Various Activities 27:1–29:27

V The Words of Agur 30:1–33

VI The Words of King Lemuel 31:1–31

- A Wisdom for Leaders 31:1–9
- B Wise Woman 31:10–31

Further to the outline given above, there are seven major sections within the book that are introduced by the phrases, "the proverbs of," or "the sayings of."

1-9	The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel
10:1-22:16	The Proverbs of Solomon
22:17-24:22	The Sayings of the Wise
24:23-34	More Sayings of the Wise
25-29	More Proverbs of Solomon transcribed by the men of Hezekiah
30	The Sayings of Agur
31	The Sayings of Lemuel

2. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The opening verse of the book introduces it as a work of Solomon.

- The Babylonian Talmud tractate, the *Baba Batra*, refers to the book being edited by the “men of Hezekiah.”
- The book also attributes sections to Hezekiah (25:1); Agur (30:1); and Lemuel (31:1).
- Waltke, though recognizing the validity of the book being edited at a later date, gives strong arguments validating the authorship or compiling of the book by Solomon (Chapters 1-29).¹⁸

Just as _____ is linked to the _____, so is _____

linked to the _____ literature. (see 1 Kings 4:29-34). He is depicted in the

historical narratives as the patron of Israel’s wisdom tradition.¹⁹

The dating of the book is problematic due to the nature of its composition. Most, if not all scholars affirm an editor of the book’s final form. This is primarily seen as happening during the Persian period (540 B.C. – 332 B.C.), though the book itself was authored during the pre-exilic period.²⁰

Therefore, holding to the priority of Solomon, we recognize a tenth century dating for the book, with additions being made into the time of Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.) and perhaps beyond.

Waltke quotes Howard who summarizes the process wonderfully when he writes:²¹

The inspired editor mediated the proverbs and sayings, which were originally addressed to historical narrates such as Ithiel and to the universal covenant community, the implied readers, and the Holy Spirit sanctioned the book as canonical. More specifically, according to the book’s preamble it is addressed to gullible youths (1:4) and wise children (1:5, 8) to enable them to attain wisdom and be safeguarded against the world-and-life views of the impious and unethical in any age.

3. SETTING AND PURPOSE

Estes writes that, “Because proverbial literature reflects observation of universal human experience, it is difficult or perhaps difficult to determine accurately the original setting of the book.”²²

For instance, try looking up the phrase, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” and find all the arguments for its origin or even its original setting and you can see the difficulty in tracing these types of sayings back to their original context.

¹⁸ Waltke, *Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, NICOT, 31-36.

¹⁹ Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 215.

²⁰ Waltke, *Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* NICOT, 37.

²¹ Ibid. See also; D. Howard Jr., *Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1993), 51.

²² Estes, *Handbook*, 217.

The various settings that have been proposed by scholars are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Again, the reality is that the wisdom literature encompasses all these settings depending on the particular passage or proverb you are dealing with. The scope of the wisdom literature encompasses every facet of life and living.

The book of Proverbs begins with an explicit purpose statement in 1:2-6.²³

^{NIV} Proverbs 1:1-6 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ² for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; ³ for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; ⁴ for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young-- ⁵ let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance-- ⁶ for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Estes writes that the main verb that is central to this passage is the verb to "hear." ²⁴ (Compare this with Deuteronomy 6:4-5, The "Shema" of Israel).

Based on this passage, the four purposes for "hearing" are:

1. To _____ (2a)
2. To _____ (2b)
3. To _____ (3)
4. To _____ (4)

²³ Estes, *Handbook*, 218.

²⁴ Ibid.

Proverbs frequently uses the address, "my son," implying the nature of the teacher-student relationship as they were being prepared to meet the dynamics of life as prepared and as open-eyed as possible. Often in Proverbs we see the way of wisdom being contrasted with the way of folly.

Because of the nature of this relationship, and the overall tone of the book, many scholars have stressed the theme of moral character as being the main objective of the book.

Fox writes the following observation:²⁵

Based on this premise of moral character Brown highlights three elements that make up "character."²⁶

1. _____
_____ is more than simple observation; it involves the selective
_____ and _____ of events, thereby giving shape to
the way people experience events and render them meaningful. _____
is therefore the essence of _____; in relation to the _____
world, including God, and to the history and pattern of one's choices.
The ancient sages who espoused wisdom perceived the world and all things being
subject to and ordered by God's will, be it discernable or inscrutable.
In other words, _____.

2. _____
_____ consists of "_____"; they express
the _____ side of character. Through _____, the language of
character casts the self as having _____ and _____, the
_____.

²⁵ Michael V. Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1997, 116:613-633.

²⁶ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 6-12.

3. _____
 _____ is a _____, which denotes the pattern of choices an individual makes. _____ comprise persistent _____ or " _____ " of the heart and mind that _____ one to a consistency of certain _____ and _____.
 _____ is both a _____ and a _____; it is based on _____ and the source of _____. These are dynamic and can be acquired through _____ and _____.

Out of the Wisdom literature of Proverbs, four "virtue themes" arise.²⁷

1. _____
 Denotes _____ that ensures the _____ of desired _____ and _____. It can connote prosperity (Prov 17:8), as well as that which brings prosperity, such as reputation and good sense (Prov. 3:4; 12:8; 13:15). Other noted examples would be _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____. It is also _____ and refined from well-tested _____ and _____.

^{NIV} Proverbs 12:8 A man is praised according to his wisdom, but men with warped minds are despised.

²⁷ Ibid., 25-28.

^{NIV} Proverbs 13:15 Good understanding wins favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard.

2. _____

These carry distinct _____ as well as _____ connotations, especially in the realm of _____. All three are items of praise in relation to the character of God, and all three reflect the way _____ are to be _____.

^{NIV} Proverbs 2:9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair-- every good path.

3. _____ and _____

_____ is contrasted with those who are _____. The _____ person heeds admonition, is cautious, and does not believe everything like the _____ do. They ignore insults rather than becoming inflamed with anger, understand and avoid danger, and are endowed with knowledge but do not flaunt it.

^{NIV} Proverbs 27:12 The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

^{NIV} Proverbs 12:16 A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

4. _____²⁸

²⁸ The Hebrew term for this conveys the image of a rope used for the purpose of steering a ship. We would understand this image colloquially today by the phrase, "learning the ropes."

The term denotes the art of _____ and _____ that face individuals as they navigate life. It is seen in the arenas of battle strategy, diplomacy, and negotiation to the more mundane and pedestrian _____ ones; like household and personal to name a couple.

This entails a constellation of " _____ ", from the _____ to the _____.

^{NIV} Proverbs 22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.

^{NIV} Proverbs 11:14 For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

4. THE NATURE OF PROVERBS

As highlighted in the textbook, Wisdom Literature is found throughout the writings of the ancient world, with the greater influences on the Biblical Wisdom Literature coming from Egypt and Mesopotamia.²⁹ Though the genre of "wisdom" is found throughout the Ancient Near East, Biblical Wisdom Literature developed upon a theological continuum distinct from the nations around them, even though they may have borrowed some of its forms.³⁰

What is a Proverb?

"A proverb is a brief _____ crystallizing _____." ³¹

It is not intended to be a _____ statement that can be taken as a _____ or an _____, but instead is a general principle crafted to be _____.

²⁹ Many, in an attempt to posit a "late dating" for the Wisdom Literature of the Bible, contend for Hellenistic influences to validate their position. These may simply be remnants of the editorial process that may have been done during a time of Hellenistic influence, but arguments for the thesis above has much stronger historical, linguistic, and cultural force to back it.

³⁰ This would be similar to the early Hymn writers borrowing the tunes of the drinking songs commonly sung in pubs and reframing them with "Christian" lyrics.

³¹ Estes, *Handbook*, 219.

Fee and Stuart define them further:³²

"A proverb is a brief, particular expression of truth. The briefer a statement is, the less likely it is to be totally precise and universally acceptable. We know that long, highly qualified, detailed statements of fact are not only often difficult to understand but virtually impossible for most people to memorize. So, the proverbs are phrased in a catchy way, so as to be learnable by anyone."

Waltke renders another aspect of proverbs in terms of their relationship to biblical theology.³³

The meaning of Eng. "proverbs" differs somewhat from the Hebrew term as used in Proverbs...in English a proverb refers to a short, pithy saying that has popular currency, but the *masal* refers to an apothegm that has currency among those *who fear the Lord*.³⁴

Apart from the shorter proverbial sayings that have become so popular with the Book of Proverbs, there are sections of longer "narratives" that have been classified as "admonitions" or "extended instructions" (as primarily found in chapters 1-9).

- The book of Proverbs provides wise sayings and observations designed to develop proper _____ and godly _____.

Handling the Wisdom Literature has often been an area of contention for many believers. How do we apply this genre of proverbial literature to the present world in which we live? Here are some general principles.

They are not:

1. _____
2. _____

Though, not "Law" per se, yet both "torah" and "wisdom" have significant parallels as matters that must be preserved as instructions for the next generation; notice the similarities between Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and Proverbs.³⁵

³² Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, 217-218.

³³ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 56.

³⁴ A *masal* is the Hebrew word for "proverb." An apothegm is a short, pithy, instructive statement.

Deut 6:6-9	Proverbs			
These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.	My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart (3:1)	My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight (3:21)	My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching (6:20)	My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. ² Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye (7:1-2)
Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.	For they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity (3:2)	Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble; when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet (3:23-24)	When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you (6:22)	
Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.	Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart (3:3)	They will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck (3:22)	Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck (6:21)	Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart (7:3)

How, then do we handle the apparent promises?

1. _____
2. _____

The following are some general principles for handling proverbs:³⁶

³⁵ Gary Edward Schnittjer, *The Torah Story; An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 491.

³⁶ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, 203.

1. Proverbs are often _____, i.e. figurative, pointing _____ themselves.
2. Proverbs are intensely _____, not theoretically _____.
3. Proverbs are worded to be _____, not technically _____.
4. Proverbs are not designed to support _____ - rather, the opposite.
5. Proverbs often need _____ into our _____.
6. Proverbs are not _____ from God, rather they are _____ for _____.
7. Proverbs may use various forms of _____.
8. Proverbs are not _____ in their coverage.
9. Rightly used, they will provide _____ for daily living.

Discussion Point:

How do we apply the principles outlined above to the following proverbs?

^{NIV} Proverbs 16:3 Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

^{NIV} Proverbs 22:26 Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; ²⁷ if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.

The Gospel writers portray Jesus as a Wise Sage; mimicking the portrait that is depicted in the Book of Proverbs (see Matt 7:24; 11:19; 12:42; 13:52; Luke 16:8).

Note the following examples:

^{NIV} Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

^{NIV} Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." 'But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

^{NIV} Matthew 12:42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

^{NIV} Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

5. CHARACTER STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The following is a list of contrasts between the wise and the foolish:³⁷

Passage	The Wise	The Foolish
<i>Characteristics</i>		
10:21	Helps others with good _____	Lacks _____
10:23	Enjoys _____	Enjoys _____
14:15	Cautious with _____	_____
15:12		Avoids the _____
15:14	Seeks _____	Feeds on _____
16:16	Values wisdom above _____	
16:22	Receives _____	Receives _____
17:10	Responds to _____	Responds to _____
17:24	Pursues _____	Pursues _____ dreams Blames failure on _____
19:3	Profits from _____	An _____ to others

³⁷ Life Applications Bible Studies, *Proverbs*, 27.

21:24		Are _____ and _____
23:9		Scorns good _____
26:7		Makes truth _____
26:11		Repeats _____
28:26	Trusts in _____	Trusts in _____
29:11	_____ anger	_____ anger
<i>Reputation</i>		
10:13	Admired as _____	_____ as servants
14:18	Rewarded with _____	Inherits _____
22:10		Causes _____ and _____
26:1		Receives no _____
29:8	Keeps _____	Stirs up _____
<i>Results</i>		
15:21	Stays on _____ paths	Goes the _____ way
17:12		_____ when discovered
18:6, 7		_____ by own words
21:22	Wisdom conquers others _____	
22:5	Avoids _____ path	Walks a _____ path
24:5	Has great _____	
24:7		Never chosen as _____
26:3		Must be guided by _____
27:22		Persists in _____
Notes:		

Other Character Profiles in Proverbs

THE SIMPLE		
God	Believes in anything	14:15
Self	Fails to see danger	22:3; 27:12
Speech		
Others	Recruited by the foolish	9:16
Knowledge	Lacks judgment	7:7; 9:4, 16
Response to Teachers	Love simple ways	1:22
Future	Inherits folly Waywardness	14:18 1:32
Responding to the Simple		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appeal to them to gain wisdom and understanding (9:4) 2. Call them to gain prudence (1:4; 8:5) 3. Teach them through the disciplining of the mocker (19:25) 		

THE LAZY		
God		
Self	A lazy sluggard Strong cravings Sleepiness	20:4 21:25, 26 19:15
Speech	Wise in their own eyes Excuses	26:16 22:13; 26:13
Others	Leads to bondage Untrustworthy	12:24 10:26
Knowledge	Lacks judgment	24:30
Response to Teachers	Slack in their work Lacks ambition	18:9 19:24
Future	Poverty and scarcity Killed by cravings	24:34 21:25
Responding to the Lazy		

1. Teach them (6:6)
2. Confront them (6:9)
3. Allow consequential deprivation (13:4)

THE MOCKER		
God		
Self	Proud and arrogant Delights in mockery	21:24 1:22
Speech	Insulting	9:7
Others	Behaves with boundless arrogance	21:24
Knowledge	Will not consult the wise	15:12
Response to Teachers	Insults the corrector Hates rebuke	9:7 9:8
Future	Detested by others	24:9
Responding to the Mocker		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be aware of their response to rebuke (9:7, 8) 2. Discipline them to teach the simple (19:25) 3. Penalize them (19:29) 4. Separate them from others (22:10) 		

THE WICKED		
God	Far from God Detested by God	15:29 15:8, 9, 26
Self	Craves evil Fearful Lacks discipline	21:10 28:1 5:23
Speech	Gushes evil Perverse Violent	15:28 10:32 10:6, 11
Others	Cruel Deceitful Violent	12:10 12:5 21:7

Knowledge	Led astray by their own folly Forsakes the Law	5:23 28:4
Response to Teachers	Abuses rebuker Detests the Upright	9:7 29:27
Future	Cursed by God Filled with trouble	3:33; 10:27; 14:11 12:21
Responding to the Wicked		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid their influence (4:14) 2. Be aware of their abusiveness (9:7) 3. Do not favour them (18:5) 4. Do not fret because of them (24:19) 5. Keep them from corrupting leadership (25:5) 6. Expose them to the assembly (26:26) 		

Notes:

Discussion Point - The Role of Parental Discipline in Proverbs?

^{NIV} **Proverbs 3:11-12** My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 4:3-6** When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, ⁴ he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. ⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. ⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 5:21-23** For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. ²² The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. ²³ He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 13:24** He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 14:26** He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 15:5** A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 19:18** Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 20:7** The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 20:11** Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 22:6** Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 22:15** Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 23:13** Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 29:17** Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.

Notes:

JOB

"Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? ²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. ²² Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' ²³ God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells,

^{NIV} Job 28:20-23

1. OUTLINE OF JOB

Part One: The Dilemma of Job (1:1–2:13)

- I The Circumstances of Job 1:1–5
- II The First Assault of Satan 1:6–22
- III The Second Assault of Satan 2:1–10
- IV The Arrival of Job's Friends 2:11–13

Part Two: The Debates of Job (3:1–37:24)

- I The First Cycle of Debate 3:1–14:22
 - A Job's First Speech 3:1–26
 - B Eliphaz's First Speech 4:1–5:27
 - 1 Eliphaz Believes the Innocent Do Not Suffer 4:1–21
 - 2 Eliphaz Calls Job Foolish 5:1–7
 - 3 Eliphaz Encourages Job to Appeal to God 5:8–16
 - 4 Eliphaz Encourages Job to Despise Not God's Discipline 5:17–27
 - C Job's Reply to Eliphaz 6:1–7:21
 - 1 Job's Deep Anguish 6:1–13
 - 2 Job Seeks His Friends' Sympathy 6:14–30
 - 3 Job Questions God's Continuing Trials 7:1–21
 - D Bildad's First Speech 8:1–22
 - E Job's Response to Bildad 9:1–10:22
 - 1 Job Argues His Case 9:1–35
 - 2 Job Questions His Oppression 10:1–22
 - F Zophar's First Speech 11:1–20
 - G Job's Response to Zophar 12:1–14:22
 - 1 Job Tells His Friends Only God Knows 12:1–25
 - 2 Job Begs God to Speak to Him 13:1–28
 - 3 Job Mourns That Man Has Only One Life 14:1–22
- II The Second Cycle of Debate 15:1–21:34
 - A Eliphaz's Second Speech 15:1–35

- 1 Job's Mouth Condemns Him 15:1–13
 - 2 The Wicked Suffer 15:14–35
 - B Job's Response to Eliphaz 16:1–17:16
 - 1 Job Calls His Friends Miserable Comforters 16:1–5
 - 2 Job Laments His Situation 16:6–14
 - 3 Job Defends His Innocence 16:15–22
 - 4 God Makes Job a Byword 17:1–16
 - C Bildad's Second Speech 18:1–21
 - D Job's Response to Bildad 19:1–29
 - E Zophar's Second Speech 20:1–29
 - F Job's Response to Zophar 21:1–34
- III The Third Cycle of Debate 22:1–26:14
- A Eliphaz's Third Speech 22:1–30
 - B Job's Response to Eliphaz 23:1–24:25
 - 1 Job Will Come Forth as Gold 23:1–17
 - 2 God Seems Indifferent to the Wicked 24:1–25
 - C Bildad's Third Speech 25:1–6
 - D Job's Response to Bildad 26:1–14
- IV The Final Defense of Job 27:1–31:40
- A Job's First Monologue 27:1–28:28
 - 1 Job Affirms His Righteousness 27:1–23
 - 2 Job Observes That Man Cannot Discover Wisdom 28:1–28
 - B Job's Second Monologue 29:1–31:40
 - 1 Job Remembers His Happy Past 29:1–25
 - 2 Job Describes His Present Humiliation 30:1–31
 - 3 Job Defends His Innocency 31:1–34
 - a Innocent of Sensual Sins 31:1–12
 - b Innocent of Abusing His Power 31:13–23
 - c Innocent of Trusting in His Wealth 31:24–28
 - d Innocent of Not Caring for His Enemies 31:29–34
 - 4 Job Pleads to Meet God and Defend Himself 31:35–40
- V The Solution of Elihu 32:1–37:24
- A Elihu Intervenes in the Debate 32:1–22
 - B Elihu's First Rebuttal 33:1–33
 - 1 Elihu Challenges Job to Debate 33:1–7
 - 2 Elihu Quotes Job's Complaints 33:8–11
 - 3 Elihu Answers Job's Complaints 33:12–33
 - C Elihu's Second Rebuttal 34:1–37
 - 1 Elihu Challenges Job to Debate Again 34:1–4
 - 2 Elihu Quotes Job's Complaints 34:5–9
 - 3 Elihu Answers Job's Complaints 34:10–37
 - D Elihu's Third Rebuttal 35:1–16
 - E Elihu's Conclusion 36:1–37:24
 - 1 Elihu Believes That God Is Disciplining Job 36:1–21
 - 2 Elihu Reminds Job of the Greatness of God 36:22–37:24

Part Three: The Deliverance of Job (38:1–42:17)

- I The First Controversy of God with Job 38:1–40:5
 - A God's First Challenge to Job 38:1–40:2
 - 1 God Questions Job from the Realm of Creation 38:1–38
 - 2 God Questions Job from the Realm of Animals 38:39–39:30
 - 3 God Demands an Answer to His Questions 40:1–2
 - B Job's First Answer to God 40:3–5
- II The Second Controversy of God with Job 40:6–42:6
 - A God's Second Challenge to Job 40:6–41:34
 - 1 God Tells Job to Save Himself 40:6–14
 - 2 God Compares the Power of Job with That of the Behemoth 40:15–24
 - 3 God Compares the Power of Job with That of the Leviathan 41:1–34
 - B Job's Second Answer to God 42:1–6
 - 1 Job Confesses Lack of Understanding 42:1–3
 - 2 Job Repents of His Rebellion 42:4–6
- III The Deliverance of Job and His Friends 42:7–17³⁸

2. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

This is one of the most difficult issues concerning the book. Three major views for dating the book are presented.

The Period of the Patriarchs has long been the traditional view. It was written c. 2000 B.C. by an unknown author or Job himself. The evidence for the book's antiquity is supported by the following factors:

1. No _____ or _____ (1:5).
2. His _____ of _____ is matched by the patriarchs (42:16).
3. The descriptions of his _____, like Abraham and Jacob, are _____ (1:3).
4. His _____ were subject to _____ of tribesmen (1:15-17).

³⁸ Wilkinson, B., & Boa, K. 1983. *Talk thru the Bible*. T. Nelson: Nashville

The problem with this view is that no other biblical document that we know was written outside a constituted people of God who would have received the book and thus canonized it. In a traditional understanding of the formation of Scripture, it is difficult to separate the issues of inspiration, canon, and community.

Some scholars have posited arguments for an early date for Job because of its similarity to other wisdom literature of the Ancient Near East.³⁹

Parallel literature from Egypt:

- "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant" (dated to 21st century B.C.).
- "The Admonitions of Ipu-wer."
- "A Dispute over Suicide" (3rd millennium B.C.)

Parallel literature from Mesopotamia:

- "Man and His God (2nd millennium B.C.)
- "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom" (The most famous parallel, also known as "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer," or "The Babylonian Job", 1st millennium B.C.).
- "The Babylonian Ecclesiastes" (Or "A Dialogue about Human Misery" ca. 1000 B.C.).
- An untitled text; only present in fragments (16th century B.C.).

All of these texts deal in some way with the theme of suffering, and have, at certain points, some affinity to Job, whether in subject matter, or in the predisposition of divine involvement.

Others point to the time of the Monarchy as a possible date for Job. Because Job is such an extraordinary example of the wisdom genre, many contend that its composition must have been borne during the period of Israel's history when wisdom literature was at its zenith.

Some of the reasons given are as follows:

1. Solomon's era was a _____ one, filled with _____ and _____ pursuits.
2. The age of Solomon was particularly interested in _____, especially as they pertained to the discipline of "_____."
3. There are many allusions to _____ religion, as well as similarities between _____

³⁹ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 6-11.

_____ and _____ literature; a time where Israel was flirting with _____ and other forms of idolatry that were rampant before the Exile.⁴⁰

4. The similarity of texts such as _____ and _____. Hartley in his commentary argues for a _____ dating of the book based on the number of affinities that Job has with other Old Testament books.⁴¹

A note of caution; because a book is set in a particular time period, does not mean that was when the composition was written.

Lastly, some have proposed an exilic/post-exilic date, somewhere between 500 and 450 B.C. There is no internal evidence that points to a late date and there is no other biblical wisdom literature dating from this era.

Some validate their positions by arguing over the following features:

- Similarity to the _____ language.
- The figure of _____.
- The insistence of a _____ for the universe.
- A developed theme of _____.

These arguments are all debatable when scrutinized, which leaves an exilic/post-exilic dating the least likely of the three options.

As far as authorship of the book, the author is anonymous. The names of Moses and Solomon have been presented as possible authors but there is no unanimity of opinion when it comes to the matter of authorship or dating for that matter.

Hartley does though, present us with some insights into the character of the author and his findings are presented here:⁴²

⁴⁰ Ugarit was an ancient Canaanite city located in modern Syria. The excavations there have unearthed a treasure house of comparable literature that has shed much light concerning the Baal religion so condemned by the biblical writers.

⁴¹ See Hartley, Job, pgs. 11-15. The list of affinities given by the author are Proverbs, Psalms, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Malachi, Genesis, 1 Kings, and Isaiah. Hartley places particular value on the Job-Isaiah connection due to the number of "thematic" parallels common among both books.

⁴² Ibid., 15-17.

1. He was a _____, committed to the principle of "_____."
2. A keen interest in the _____ of other nations.
3. An intimate knowledge of _____.
4. Interested in human _____.
5. Informed about other _____ and _____.
6. An interest in _____.
7. The _____ as primary to the issues of life.

3. Setting and Purpose

Another debatable issue concerning Job is its setting. The physical location for Uz ranges from Egypt, Arabia, Edom, to Israel. Due to parallel language of Lamentations 4:21, and that proper names in Job are drawn from the genealogy of Esau in Genesis 36 have led some to suggest Edom as the backdrop of the story.

Others yet argue for somewhere in Northern Arabia (adjacent to Edom). Some of the reasons are:

1. The LXX refers to it as the land of Aisitai, a people whom Ptolemy (the geographer) locates in the Arabian desert next to Edom.
2. Eliphaz came from Edom (Teman).
3. Elihu came from the Buzites, where it is believed they lived in NE Arabia near Babylon.

It would appear that Uz was somewhere south and east of Israel.

What is significant to note is that the setting of the book may well have been a deliberate attempt to present the problem of evil in general terms by placing the story in a non-Israelite setting.⁴³

The Book of Job does not explicitly state its purpose, though clues are found throughout the text. Estes lists the following:⁴⁴

⁴³ Estes, *Handbook*, 22. As discussed earlier in the section on dating, some hold to a patriarchal date for the writing of the book. The setting of the book has been used by those who subscribe to an early date.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 23-24.

1. To challenge the mistaken notion that _____ is always the cause of _____.
2. To explore the human _____ in probing the issue of _____.
3. To reveal that God, as sovereign ruler of the universe, is _____ and _____.
4. To explore the nature of the _____ relationship.

4. THE NATURE OF JOB

Job reflects on the universal scope of Old Testament wisdom - probing the deepest theological and philosophical questions.

Job, in relation to other literature of its genre from the Ancient Near East towers above them in terms of its depth and breadth. Apart from its literary excellence, its theological contributions and insights have been celebrated throughout the ages.

The issues raised by the book are some of the most profound and difficult of human existence. In order to wrestle through these the author frames the story in the context of suffering; thereby stripping away anything that would impede the questions from gaining our full and undivided attention.

There are two questions that are crucial for understanding the nature of the book which help to frame the various events, speeches, and dialogues.⁴⁵

The first question comes in the form of a challenge by Satan:

^{NIV} Job 1:9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

⁴⁵ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 122-123.

The issue that is raised by this challenge is this: As creatures that are wholly dependent on God for our well-being; will we love God purely for himself or only for his benefits?

The second question is one that the author himself asks:

^{NIV} Job 28:12 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? (see also 28:20)

- The issue that is raised by this question is this: As creatures endowed with creaturely wisdom, are the godly willing to live within the bounds of _____ wisdom (which is to be one who "fears God and shuns evil," 1:8; 2:3; 28:28), or will they demand to participate as _____ in God's wisdom?
- Therefore, these two issues will dominate the various speeches that will bring these matters to the fore; issues that at the core question how to reconcile _____ suffering with a God who is both _____ and _____.

In this, each of the participants plays a role in the unfolding of the drama:

Satan (or "The Satan")

- He plays the crucial role of "_____." Here, his fundamental character and nature as an _____ is fully exploited as he attempts to call into question the _____ of humans such as Job who seek to live honorable lives before God. In other words, Satan is relying on the human tendency towards _____.
- As the prologue demonstrates, one source of suffering is the _____ activity of Satan. Undoubtedly suffering is one weapon Satan uses to _____ of God's people.

- Job's wife acts as the _____ of Satan on earth when she admonishes her husband to " _____ " (2:9). What is telling is Job's response, which seems to imply that her _____ and _____ has prompted her to act somewhat out of _____. Her actions then, serve as a kind of _____ for Satan's accusation to God; that once divine blessing is removed, his creatures will respond in _____.
- Satan's questioning of Job's character also serves to point an accusing finger toward God. Satan is accusing God of _____ Job which shields his true _____ and preempts any degree of personal _____. Satan therefore is accusing God of affording Job and his family special protection and affecting their _____. God does not _____ these charges.⁴⁶

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar

- These three friends of Job portray the purveyors of " _____ " wisdom. They are often appalled at Job's insistence of his _____ that they accuse him of _____.
- In their _____ theological arguments, _____ is the result of human _____, therefore, there is no such thing as _____ suffering. Job, then, should own up and confess his sin so that he will be _____.
- Their _____ advice and conclusions serve as a foil for God's _____.

Elihu

⁴⁶ Brown, *Character*, 53.

- He plays the role of the _____ of youth who consider themselves _____ than their _____.
- Ironically, even though he covers similar arguments of Job's three friends, he makes an additional point; that beyond Job's _____ punishment there is a _____ value to such punishment that Job ought to be willing to accept.

Job

- He believes that his calamity is from God, yet there is no clear _____ and _____ correlation. This in essence smacks against his _____, which was introduced in the prologue as a characteristic recognized by God. For Job to confess to sins not actually committed would be occasion to lose his _____; something he values more than life itself. His speeches then, are often pleas for the right to _____ himself before God.
- Job serves as an example to the _____ of life. All along he vehemently defends himself, especially when everything in the human realm seems in direct opposition to his claims.⁴⁷ By all human accounting, and by the presuppositions of the four "comforters," Job had to be either _____ or _____ outright.
- Job also addresses a key dilemma of _____. Estes presents an observation from McCann concerning this issue:⁴⁸

It seems that human beings, including those who explicitly identify themselves as God's people, have an inevitable propensity to want to tame God, to contain God in neat and tidy retributational schemes-in short to turn theology into anthropology. For this is precisely what

⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that in Scripture, those individuals who demonstrated a degree of "righteousness and holiness" in their lives, suffered to one extent or another. Only a few garnered lives of relative ease by comparison, for instance, Noah, Abraham, David, and Solomon. But, for others, the measure of their suffering was great and, in some sense, equal in proportion to Job. The notables here would be Joseph, the Disciples, and the ultimate example, Jesus himself.

⁴⁸ Estes, *Handbook*, 26.

the traditional theory of retribution does. Ironically, in attempting to assert God's sovereignty, it removes the necessity of talking about God at all, since everything is really determined finally by *human* behavior. God loses His freedom, and it simply becomes impossible to speak of anything like grace - a major dilemma!

- Job's integrity is validated by his _____ and _____ when God finally arrives in the closing chapters of the book.

God

- _____ is the key figure in the story. He initiates it by calling attention to Job. It was not Satan that brought Job into the discussion, yet in the end the tables were turned completely.
 - With regards to the question, "_____?" The answer is in _____ only. By the end, God had _____ all the voices that were insisting that he explain himself to them. What begins as an apparent _____ (where humans put God on trial insisting He explain His actions), turns out to be a deep theology on the nature of God and His relationship to His creatures. God ends up putting the human beings on trial; a trial that is mitigated on the fact of whether or not God will be trusted even though no immediate benefits are forthcoming.
 - This leads to the second question on whether one will _____ God without _____ gets answered with a resounding _____!
- In the end, God _____ Job and puts the situation into perspective, but also _____ Job over the apparent "_____ " of his friends.

5. STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JOB

In the following passages, what are the key theological truths being presented and what are the relevant applications of those truths?

^{NIV} Job 16:18-22 "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest! ¹⁹ Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. ²⁰ My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; ²¹ on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend. ²² "Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return.

Notes:

^{NIV} Job 28:12-28 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? ¹³ Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. ¹⁴ The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.' ¹⁵ It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. ¹⁶ It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires. ¹⁷ Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. ¹⁸ Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. ¹⁹ The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold. ²⁰ "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? ²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. ²² Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' ²³ God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, ²⁴ for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. ²⁵ When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, ²⁶ when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, ²⁷ then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. ²⁸ And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

Notes:

^{NIV} Job 42:1-7 Then Job replied to the LORD: ² "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ⁴ "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' ⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." ⁷ After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

Notes:

6. SUMMARY

The author of Job sets his theology in the context of suffering, refusing to resolve the problem of evil by insisting on rigid retribution, or diminishing God's goodness, or reducing God's power, the book leaves this problem squarely in the mysteries of God that cannot be discerned by finite human minds.⁴⁹

God's answer to Job does not explain why righteous people suffer, because the cosmos is not designed to prevent righteous people from suffering. Job questioned God's design, and God responded that Job had insufficient knowledge to do so. Job questioned God's justice, and God responded that Job needs to trust him, and that he should not arrogantly think that God can be domesticated to conform to Job's feeble perceptions of how the cosmos should run. God asks for trust, not understanding, and states the cosmos is founded on his wisdom, not his justice. [John Walton - adapted quote]⁵⁰

Job is a classic examination of the problems of evil and human suffering. Its conclusion is that people can understand only what God chooses to reveal to them (Job 28:20–28).

In doing so, the Book of Job directs us back to God, all the while demonstrating the inadequacy of human wisdom, or philosophical meanderings that do not find their roots in a reverent "Fear of God."

⁴⁹ Ibid. 28.

⁵⁰ <https://bibleproject.com/blog/gods-gives-job-tour-wise-world/>

ECCLESIASTES

I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."¹⁷ Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.¹⁸ For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

^{NIV} Ecclesiastes 1:16-18

1. OUTLINE OF ECCLESIASTES

Part One: The Thesis that "All Is Vanity" (1:1–11)

- I Introduction of Vanity 1:1–3
- II Illustrations of Vanity 1:4–11

Part Two: The Proof that "All Is Vanity" (1:12–6:12)

- I Proof of "All Is Vanity" from Experience 1:12–2:26
 - A Vanity of Striving after Wisdom 1:12–18
 - B Vanity of Striving after Pleasure 2:1–3
 - C Vanity of Great Accomplishments 2:4–17
 - D Vanity of Hard Labor 2:18–23
 - E Conclusion: Be Content 2:24–26
- II Proof of "All Is Vanity" from Observation 3:1–6:12
 - A Immutability of God's Program 3:1–22
 - 1 God Predetermines the Events of Life 3:1–9
 - 2 God Predetermines the Conditions of Life 3:10–15
 - 3 God Judges All 3:16–22
 - B Inequalities of Life 4:1–16
 - 1 Evil Oppression 4:1–3
 - 2 Folly of Hard Work 4:4–12
 - 3 Transience of Popularity 4:13–16
 - C Insufficiencies of Human Religion 5:1–7
 - D Insufficiencies of Wealth 5:8–20

- 1 Wealth Does Not Satisfy 5:8–12
- 2 Wealth Brings Difficulties 5:13–17
- 3 Wealth Comes Ultimately from God 5:18–20

- E Inescapable Vanity of Life 6:1–12
- 1 No Satisfaction in Wealth 6:1–2
 - 2 No Satisfaction in Children 6:3–6
 - 3 No Satisfaction in Labor 6:7–8
 - 4 No Satisfaction in the Future 6:9–12

Part Three: The Counsel for Living with Vanity (7:1–12:14)

I Coping in a Wicked World 7:1–9:18

- A Wisdom and Folly Contrasted 7:1–14
- B Wisdom of Moderation 7:15–18
- C Strength of Wisdom 7:19–29
- D Submit to Authority 8:1–9
- E Inability to Understand All God's Doing 8:10–17
- F Judgment Comes to All Men 9:1–6
- G Enjoy Life While You Have It 9:7–12
- H Value of Wisdom 9:13–18

II Counsel for the Uncertainties of Life 10:1–12:8

- A Wisdom's Characteristics 10:1–15
- B Wisdom Related to the King 10:16–20
- C Wisdom Related to Business 11:1–6
- D Wisdom Related to the Youth 11:7–12:8
 - 1 Rejoice in Your Youth 11:7–10
 - 2 Remember God in Your Youth 12:1–8

III Conclusion: Fear God and Keep His Commandments 12:9–14⁵¹

2. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The title of the book is derived from the opening verse of the book,

^{NIV} Ecclesiastes 1:1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

The Hebrew word here for "teacher" is קֹהֵלֶת - Qohelet. It comes from the root "to assemble, to gather," and its form in 1:1 is a feminine participle.⁵² The name is therefore a title, rather than a

⁵¹ Wilkinson, B., & Boa, K. 1983. *Talk thru the Bible*. T. Nelson: Nashville

proper name, which has led some commentators to suggest that the author envisioned in this book is a teacher who has convened people in order to instruct them.⁵³

The English title comes to us by way of the Septuagint (*ekklēsiastes*), and the Vulgate (*Liber Ecclesiastes*).

Traditional Jewish and Christian interpreters have claimed that the author of the book was Solomon, yet that conclusion has been rejected by almost every scholar since the seventeenth century.

Some of the arguments levied against Solomon as author are:⁵⁴

1. The book only indirectly infers Solomon as author, as opposed to the direct statements of Solomon authorship given in Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1.
2. Ecc 1:16 becomes an awkward statement for Solomon to make.
3. Ecc. 3:16 and 5:8 concerns corrupt rulers and suggest that the author is powerless to correct them; a surprising statement if Solomon the king was speaking. (See also 4:1-3 and 10:20. The association between Qohelet and Solomon is only inferred in the first three chapters but completely disappears in the remainder of the book, making the connection between Solomon and the king more tenuous).
4. Some see the statement in 2:12 as evidence of someone other than Solomon.

^{NIV} Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the *king's* successor do than what has already been done?

Some of the arguments in favour of Solomon as author are:

1. The heading found in 1:1, "son of David, king in Jerusalem."
2. The ethos of the first two chapters is that of Solomon, in that he possessed unrivaled wisdom (1:16), ample opportunities for sensual pleasure (2:3), extensive building activities (2:4-6), and unequalled wealth (2:8). Those who support Solomon would argue that no one would have had the breadth of experience in these matters like Solomon in order to be able to write on them with any authority.

Whoever the author was, he was a keen observer of life and enjoyed a moderate position of affluence and privilege in Israel.

Some, like Tremper Longman III posits that a person, calling himself "Qohelet," uses the persona of Solomon in order to demonstrate that if Solomon cannot find satisfaction and meaning in life in these areas, then no one can.⁵⁵

⁵² The form of the feminine participle is used to denote an office as in Ezra 2:55, 57; Neh 3:57, 59; 7:59.

⁵³ Estes, *Handbook*, 271.

⁵⁴ This section compiled from Estes, *Handbook*, 271-272 and Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2-9.

⁵⁵ Longman, *Ecclesiastes*, 7.

The following arguments are presented for the dating of the book.⁵⁶

The 10th Century B.C.- During the time of Solomon

1. Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom literature which corresponds to the biblical wisdom books are from this period (Sumer, Babylon, Egypt).
2. Linguistic similarities to Aramaic which ties it to Phoenicia and Syria; two nations that Solomon maintained relations with.
3. The absence of Hebrew vowels, suggesting at least a date prior to the 8th century when final vowel letters first appeared.

Circa 5th Century B.C. - During the Persian Period

1. The similarities found in other late date biblical books, i.e., Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
2. The implied commercial economy parallels the prophetic concerns of Malachi.

The 3rd Century B.C. and Earlier - The Hellenistic Period

1. The book presupposes a time of great economic activity and social turmoil which fits this time period.
2. Several examples of late words and grammatical features that were transitional forms of post biblical Hebrew.
3. The autonomy of individual reason was prevalent in Greek philosophy and Qohelet adapts this tenet.
4. The features of the Solomonic persona in 1:12-2:11 parallels the activities and luxuries of the Hellenistic courts.

The latter dating is the majority view of scholars with some even contending for the period of 152-145 B.C. for composition.

3. SETTING AND PURPOSE

Many of the arguments that have been put forward in the prior section on dating dealt also with the matter of setting. The particular setting of the book or the one which is adopted by the reader determines the relative dating of the book.

Many question why a book like Ecclesiastes is included in the canon of Scripture. Estes gives the following purposes that are intrinsic to the book:⁵⁷

1. It satisfies the basic human _____ to see how the _____ of
life fits into a _____ pattern.

⁵⁶ Estes, *Handbook*, 273-276.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 280-281.

2. To challenge the _____ to _____ on the core _____
and choose to live in _____ to _____.
3. To demonstrate that life can be _____ and _____.
4. To act as an "_____."

Ecclesiastes offers a philosophical discussion of the _____ of _____ without _____ (Eccl. 1:2, 14).

In dealing with the subject of "purpose," it is useful to discern between philosophy and religion; and the insights of Peter Kreeft are helpful here:⁵⁸

The difference between philosophy and religion is the difference between speaking and listening, between man's speaking about God and God's speaking about man with man listening. This is the difference between reason and faith. Philosophy is man's search for God; the Bible is the story of God's search for man. Philosophy is words flying up; the Bible is the Word sent down. Ecclesiastes is the only book in the Bible in which God is totally silent. The author appeals to no divine revelation, only to natural human reason and sense observation. God is only the object of his quest, not the subject...

Kreeft, as he expands on these thoughts likens Ecclesiastes with the Book of Job in that except for the beginning and ending sections of Job, God is completely silent otherwise. But because of those two passages it makes all the difference between Job and Ecclesiastes. Because God speaks, Job has everything though he has nothing. Because God is silent, Ecclesiastes has nothing even though he has everything.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies of Life* (San Francisco; Ignatius Press, 1989), 22-23.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Kreeft's contrasts between Job and the writer of Ecclesiastes is interesting in that he sees the writer of Ecclesiastes as a type of Socrates, whereas Job is more like Christ. Both present the vast diversity of wisdom as they seek to encapsulate the broad aspects of life's experiences.

All the Bible is divine revelation, divine speech; but God never speaks in Ecclesiastes. It is an ongoing monologue but never a dialogue, but inspired monologue, nonetheless.

Excursus on the Hebrew word, "Hebel."

The term *hebel* הֶבֶל occurs 36 times in Ecclesiastes. Below is the partial entry for the word from the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.⁶⁰

There are three basic categories or contexts in which *hebel* is used. First, it is used as a designation for false gods worshipped by the people of God and hence is usually translated in this context by the RSV as "idols": Deut 32:21; 1Kings 16:13, 26; 2Kings 17:15; Jer 2:5; Jer 8:19 (parallel to *pesel*); Jer 10:8, 15; Jer 51:18; Jon 2:9; Psa 31:6.

Secondly, the term represents the individual and sometimes exasperating sentiments of individuals: Isa 49:4 where the servant Israel says, "I have labored in vain (*rîq*), I have spent my strength for nothing (*toehû*) and vanity (*hebel*)." Job complains about the brevity and uncertainty of his life (Job 7:16). Cf. the similar idea in the Psalter: Psa 39:5, 6, 11; Psa 62:9; Psa 78:33 (in which *hebel* is parallel to *behlâ*, from the root *bhal* "to hasten"): Psa 94:11; Psa 144:4 (*hebel* parallel to *sel*). Hence, *hebel* seems to mean here "short-lived."

Third is the cluster of references found in Ecclesiastes (thirty-six). These may be grouped into several subdivisions. First are those passages in which the author states his inability to find fulfillment in work, both in his failure to be creative and in his lack of control over the privilege of free disposition of his possessions; this is "vanity": Eccl 2:11, 19, 21, 23; Eccl 4:4, 8; Eccl 6:2. Second are those verses in which the author struggles with the idea that the connection between sin and judgment, righteousness and final deliverance is not always direct or obvious. This is an anomaly about life and it is "vanity": Eccl 2:15; Eccl 6:7-9; Eccl 8:10-14. The meaning of *hebel* here would be "senseless." Thirdly are those verses in which the author laments the shortness of life; this is "vanity": Eccl 3:19; Eccl 6:12; Eccl 11:8, 10. Life, in its quality, is "empty" or "vacuous" (and thus unsubstantial), and in its quantity is "transitory."

The noun form of the word "*hebel*" is also found in Genesis 4 and the following entry is again instructive:⁶¹

The proper name, Abel, the second son of Adam, is also written *hebel*. Whether or not there is a connection between this and the substantive under discussion is another matter. Most of the Hebrew lexicons have connected "Abel" with the cognate Akkadian word *ablu/ aplu* "son." One will note that Abel is named in Gen 4 without any explanation, a fact that can hardly be without significance since almost all the proper names in Genesis are explained by assonances.

⁶⁰ Bibleworks 6.

⁶¹ Ibid.

The abstract uses of the word therefore are superficial, ephemeral, insubstantial, incomprehensible, enigmatic, inconsistent, or contradictory.

Commentators attempt to find the right nuance of the word to bring its full import to the text. Unfortunately, no single term can adequately encompass the sense of this key term in Ecclesiastes.

The term "*hebel*" then has the following implications that help us to understand its full meaning in light of the book:⁶²

1. It has a _____ connotation.
2. It portrays the _____ of life and leads to many _____ and _____ questions that must be recognized by the person of faith.

Like Job, the book of Ecclesiastes confirms the notion that the _____ defines _____ life.

4. THE NATURE OF ECCLESIASTES

Solomon gives five reasons for his major premise, that everything "under the sun" is vain. These five are described by Kreeft as cancers that extend their tendrils into every corner of our lives, and any one of them is enough to kill meaning; life is infected with all five. They are:⁶³

1. The _____ and _____ of all things.
2. _____ as the _____ and _____ of life.
3. _____ as a _____ of endless _____.

⁶² Estes, *Handbook*, 281-285.

⁶³ Kreeft, *Three Philosophies of Life*, 45-51.

4. _____ as the _____ and _____ problem.

5. _____ as an _____ mystery.

5. THE EPILOGUE OF ECCLESIASTES

- The epilogue presents the key _____ - because the _____ theology of the book is not the _____ voice.
- Both Job and Ecclesiastes can be compared here
 - All commentators recognize an opening prologue and a closing section that frame in the body of both texts.
 - Both books contain dubious teaching when judged alongside other Scripture.
 - For instance, the arguments of the three friends, Elihu, and even Job concerning the reasons for his suffering are too narrow in their understanding; therefore, all of them misunderstand God's relationship to Job.
 - Not that everything they say is wrong, but much of what they say is out of step with the divine perspective revealed at the end of the book.

One of the great fallacies of our modern culture is the relegating of the past and the wisdom of the ages to the heap pile of insignificance and uselessness. This is especially true in the way that the Bible is treated today. Yet, a Book such as Ecclesiastes demonstrates the power of Scripture to communicate the essential truths about life that need to be asked and answered in light of faith and reason.

Kreeft gives seven reasons why Ecclesiastes is a "modern" book, because of its ability to speak to the very heart of the modern issues we face.⁶⁴

1. It is an _____ book, a book about _____.

⁶⁴ Kreeft, *Three Philosophies of Life*, 20-22

2. It show's _____ greatest _____.
3. It shares the _____ and the _____ of the modern _____.
4. It answers the question about the _____ of _____.
5. It challenges _____.
6. It speaks to a _____ world.
7. It challenges how we understand _____.

Because the modern world does not have answers to the biggest and most obvious questions of all, they participate in what Kreeft calls, The Five Ways to Hide an Elephant:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. The _____ of _____
5. _____

6. STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES

Discussion Point: How Are We to Understand Qohelet's Theology of God?

As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. It is evil to make mindless offerings to God. 2 Don't make rash promises, and don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few. 3 Too much activity gives you restless dreams; too many words make you a fool. 4 When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. 5 It is better to say nothing than to make a promise and not keep it. 6 Don't let your mouth make you sin. And don't defend yourself by telling the Temple messenger that the promise you made was a mistake. That would make God angry, and he might wipe out everything you have achieved. 7 Talk is cheap, like daydreams and other useless activities. Fear God instead. (Ecc. 5:1-7)

Notes:

¹⁰ Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! ¹¹ The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth—except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers!

¹² People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich seldom get a good night's sleep.

¹³ There is another serious problem I have seen under the sun. Hoarding riches harms the saver. ¹⁴ Money is put into risky investments that turn sour, and everything is lost. In the end, there is nothing left to pass on to one's children. ¹⁵ We all come to the end of our lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day we were born. We can't take our riches with us.

¹⁶ And this, too, is a very serious problem. People leave this world no better off than when they came. All their hard work is for nothing—like working for the wind. ¹⁷ Throughout their lives, they live under a cloud—frustrated, discouraged, and angry. (Ecc. 5:10-17 NLT)

Notes:

There are no direct quotations of Ecclesiastes in the New Testament. There is one allusion though and it is found in Romans 8:18-21.

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.
(Romans 8:18-21 NLT)

What is the relationship between Ecclesiastes and this passage in Romans?

Notes:

SONG OF SONGS

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. ⁷ 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.

^{NIV} Song of Songs 8:6-7

1. OUTLINE OF SONG OF SONGS⁶⁵

I The Beginning of Love 1:1–5:1

A Falling in Love 1:1–3:5

- 1 Bride's Longing for Affection 1:1–8
- 2 Expressions of Mutual Love 1:9–2:7
- 3 Visit of the King to the Bride's Home 2:8–17
- 4 Bride's Dream of Separation 3:1–5

B United in Love 3:6–5:1

- 1 Wedding Procession 3:6–11
- 2 Bride's Beauty Is Praised 4:1–15
- 3 The Marriage Is Consummated 4:16–5:1

II Broadening of Love 5:2–8:14

A Struggling in Love 5:2–7:10

- 1 Bride's Second Dream of Separation 5:2–7
- 2 Bridegroom's Handsomeness Is Praised 5:8–6:3
- 3 Bride's Beauty Is Praised 6:4–7:10

B Growing in Love 7:11–8:14

- 1 Bride's Desire to Visit Her Home 7:11–8:4
- 2 Journey and Homecoming 8:5–14

⁶⁵ Wilkinson, B., & Boa, K. 1983. *Talk thru the Bible*. T. Nelson: Nashville

2. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

This is by all accounts, one of the most mysterious and most beautiful books in the Bible. But due to its mysterious quality, it has provoked debate for centuries as to how the book should be interpreted.

The Song of Songs, strictly speaking, should not be classified as wisdom literature. Its dominant form is love poetry, not instruction or debate. It likely became connected to Solomon and came within the wisdom circles and was studied alongside the other literature that constitutes the wisdom corpus.⁶⁶ But, by recognizing love and marriage as gifts from God and a norm for life, the book falls into the ethos of the wisdom literature. On the whole, the Song of Songs emphasizes the values that are primary in wisdom thought.

The discussion of authorship begins with the book's superscription in 1:1:

^{NIV} Song of Solomon 1:1 Solomon's Song of Songs.
שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמֹה

Firstly, in Hebrew this is the typical way of expressing the superlative.⁶⁷ Other examples are:

- Holy of Holies (Ex. 26:33)
- Vanity of vanities (Ecc. 1:2)
- Slave of slaves (Gen. 9:25)

This then, is Solomon's best song.

The preposition *le* (ל) that is connected to Solomon's name can be understood in a number of ways:

- To Solomon - the book is dedicated to Solomon
- By Solomon - written by Solomon
- Concerning Solomon - Solomon as the main subject of the book
- Solomonic - meaning that the book is part of the literature considered to be in the tradition of Solomonic wisdom

There is little doubt that traditionally, the book was understood to be written by Solomon. The Midrash Rabbah, for instance, talks of the three main contributions of Solomon - Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes - as belonging to three phases of life.⁶⁸ It explains it this way:

"when a man is young he composes songs; when he grows older he makes sententious remarks; and when he becomes an old man he speaks of the vanity of things."

⁶⁶ Lasor, et al., *Old Testament Survey*, 512.

⁶⁷ An example of the superlative in English is: good, better, best.

⁶⁸ The word Midrash comes from the Hebrew root 'darash', meaning to search or investigate. There are many different collections of Midrash. The largest collection is called Midrash Rabbah (The Great Midrash), which consists of a number of volumes.

Therefore, the Song is thought to be composed by Solomon in his youth, not only when his sexual energy was high, but also before his apostasy, which was motivated in large part by his lust.⁶⁹

Some of the internal evidence for Solomonic authorship is:

1. The name of Solomon appears six times in the book (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12).
2. Verse 1:9 refers to the chariots of Pharaoh. Solomon relied heavily on horses from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28).
3. The luxury, affluence, and international trade speaks of the Solomonic era.
4. Solomon wrote many songs (1 Kings 4:32).
5. Though not a wisdom book technically, its inclusion is likely due to its relationship to its author, Israel's purveyor of the wisdom genre; Solomon.

The arguments against his authorship are as follows:

1. The relative pronoun *ser* (who, which) in the title when *se* is used in the book.
2. Solomon is spoken of in the second and third persons, not first.
3. the tone and subject matter is unsuitable for Solomon. Song of Songs extols an exclusive, committed relationship while Solomon's reputation here is dubious at best.
4. The Hebrew is Mishnaic, not biblical.⁷⁰
5. There are Aramaisms as well as Greek and Persian loan words.

As concerns dating, acceptance of Solomonic authorships rests the book in the tenth century B.C.

Early Jewish tradition from the Babylonian Talmud attributed the Songs to Hezekiah and his scribes around 700 B.C.⁷¹

Many scholars place the Songs to a very late date in the history of Israel. But as Estes writes; "no one as yet has argued convincingly enough to produce a consensus about who wrote Song of Songs, and when.

An interesting school of thought that has been forwarded is that the Song of Songs may have been authored by a woman poet. One of the factors of this view is that the woman's voice dominates the Song. Some of the arguments for a female author are:⁷²

1. Out of one hundred and seventeen verses in the Song, the woman speaks sixty-one and a half of them.

⁶⁹ Tremper Longman III, *Songs of Songs*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 2.

⁷⁰ Mishnaic Hebrew is a later form of Hebrew also known as Rabbinic Hebrew.

⁷¹ The Talmud is a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history.

⁷² Longman, *Song of Songs*, 7-9.

2. If not an exclusive female composition, then it is possible that a woman co-authored sections. Reasoning here states that sections are so feminine that a male could hardly imitate their tone and texture successfully.
3. There are references to women singing in the Scriptures (2 Sam 1:20, 24; Jer 9:17, 20; Ezek 32:16) as well as quotations from their songs (Judges 5; 1 Sam 18:6-7). Therefore, it is not outside the realm of possibility that this is part of the long tradition of women singing and what we have here is a "recording" of that material.
4. Others hold to female authorship because it would be natural for Solomon, the great lover of women, to bring female singers into his court for him to enjoy the best of Israelite love poetry.

3. SETTING AND PURPOSE

As with the issues of authorship and dating, the setting of the book has been an issue of argumentation for centuries.

Most hold that the setting for the book is the celebration at a marriage feast. Twenty-four of the thirty-nine units that divide the book refer to aspects of an Israelite wedding.⁷³

Others are more cautious; yet attribute parts of the book to the marriage feast, all to varying degrees of acceptance.

Regardless of what the original setting of the book, commentators agree that the collection of love poems that predominate the book find themselves applicable to any setting which may be associated with the relationship of lovers.⁷⁴

For most, who hold to a literal interpretation of the book, the most obvious purpose is that it extols the richness of human erotic love as a gift from God.

There are some commentators who argue strenuously that the Song even celebrates and champions sexual expression outside the bonds of marriage. The key is in understanding the setting of 4:1-5:1. If this passage is in fact representing the wedding of the couple, then a strong exegetical case can be made and sustained for the book being a celebration of sexual intimacy within the marriage covenant.

The purposes of the book are the following:⁷⁵

1. An _____ and _____ of the _____ nature of _____

⁷³ Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, Vol. xiii, *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 103-104.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 380-381.

human beings created _____ and _____ by God.

2. It extols the God-ordained _____ and _____ of _____ between a man and woman united in _____ (2:3-7, 16; 7:9-12).
3. It views _____ through " _____ "- like an extended commentary of _____.
4. It serves as an _____ against the _____ of _____ and _____ of the _____ of _____.
5. Though _____ is important for the _____ of the human race, the Song indicates that _____ enjoyed by husband and wife is appropriate in themselves for mutual _____ and _____ and for the _____ and _____ of the relationship (6:2-3; 7:10-13; 8:1-3).
6. It affirms the _____ of _____ for young _____ (4:12; 6:3; 7:10-13; 8:10).
7. The love demonstrated in the Song exudes _____, _____, _____, and _____ (4:12-16; 7:11-14; 8:10-12).
8. It celebrates _____, rather than simple _____ expression.

9. It serves as a picture of _____ love, with strong parallels to the love that _____. (cf. Eph 5:21-33).

4. THE NATURE OF SONG OF SONGS

This book, along with the Book of Esther, makes no mention of God.⁷⁶

In the Hebrew ordering of the books, the placement of Song of Songs is more strategic than in the English versions.

Job

Proverbs - ends with the Proverbs 31 woman (A Wife of Noble Character)

Ruth - Ruth exemplifies the characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman. She is a woman of covenant loyalty.

Song of Songs - Covenant loyalty results in covenantal love as expressed by the partners in this story. Not only are there echoes of Solomon, but of Ruth and Boaz as well.

Ecclesiastes

For many commentators, the love story of Songs essentially depicts two dimensions;

_____ and _____, _____ and _____.

In seeing the book this way, it explores the full dimensions of the character and nature of love because it is an intrinsic component of God's character (1 John 4:16), therefore, we who are made in His image, reflect the nature of His love, albeit in fallen form.

⁷⁶ Due to some ambiguity in the original Hebrew, some translations insert the word *Yahweh* in 8:6.

Because of the diversity of opinion concerning how to interpret the Song of Songs, it has initiated a number of ecclesiastical practices.

Below is a summary of some of the historical implications that certain interpretations of this book have had on the practices of the church over the centuries.⁷⁷

1. In 325 at the Council of Nicea, a proposal was made that all clergy give up cohabitation with their wives. A negative view of marriage had arose at this time. The motion did not carry but the perspective that it represented did. Pope Siricius in 386 commanded that clergy live celibate lives. Many priests at the time were married. Leo the Great (440-61) was concerned for these wives and ordered that they not be put away, but insisted that the priest and his wife live together as brother and sister.
2. The church then insisted that a married man could not be ordained unless he and his wife exchanged vows of restraining from sexual involvement. This ultimately led to a refusal to ordain anyone to the priesthood who was married. Celibacy became the reigning symbol for piety.
3. Marriage began to be seen as a concession to human weakness and was needed to continue the human race, though now it was reserved for those weaker and worldlier believers.
4. Augustine was a key influence in this. He taught that since the Fall, man was unable to enter into a sexual relationship without lusting. This lusting led to defilement, and although marriage is good, the lusting that goes along with it was not. Since Christ had come, celibacy should be urged on all to escape the inevitable sin of lust. Christ alone should be our bride.
5. Because of this perspective, the medieval church had a love affair with Song of Songs. The book received great attention from Augustine to Luther. What Galatians was to the Reformers, Song of Songs was to the church for a thousand years?

⁷⁷ Dennis F. Kinlaw, "Song of Songs" vol. 5., The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 1207-1208.

5. STUDIES IN SONG OF SONGS

How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. ² Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. ³ Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate. ⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. ⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. ⁶ Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. ⁷ All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you.

^{NIV} Song of Solomon 4:1-7

Notes:

APPLYING WISDOM TODAY

The following are not in order of priority or importance.

- Wisdom is a _____ discipline
- Wisdom is often, _____
- Wisdom is an _____ part of God's _____ and _____
- _____ is an expression of God's wisdom, not just his _____
- Wisdom is primarily borne out of a _____ relationship with God, not from _____ or _____ pursuits
- Wisdom puts _____ in its place. Understanding the "_____" properly becomes a complement of _____, not an _____
- _____ demands _____, which demands _____
- Wisdom is the natural _____ of a faithful and obedient life, not the _____
- Wisdom helps to create _____ and _____ from the _____ and _____
- Wisdom helps _____ us in the _____ of an ever-changing _____
- Wisdom is a universal _____ and _____ for the reality of God
- The Wisdom literature forces us to become more _____ – of _____, _____, and _____ (_____)

- Wisdom guards us from mindless _____ and mindless _____
Wisdom should breed _____
- Wisdom is often experienced in the practical _____ of our _____
- Wisdom helps to temper _____ and _____ extremes –
like love, greed, anger, jealousy, laziness, etc. – by prompting us to _____
our _____
- Wisdom promotes the notion of _____ – to stay on the _____
of _____
- Wisdom helps us to _____ every _____ of life – from _____
to _____
- The Wisdom literature gives _____ guidance for all _____
relationships
- Wisdom helps us _____ against life's great _____
- Wisdom helps _____ the _____ and _____ God
has entrusted to us
- Wisdom helps protect us from the _____ and _____ things
- Jesus is the _____ of wisdom – expressed by _____ and _____
- God does not want us to live lives of _____
- There are two ways to live under the power of the _____

- The first is the most _____ – miracles, answered prayers, open doors, feelings of presence, manifestations of the gifts
- The second is by living _____ – this is the most _____
- Wisdom is about a life of _____, not of questioning _____
- Remember...

_____ determines _____
 and
 _____ determines _____

- There is basically 2 ways to live life:
 1. _____
 2. _____ and _____
- The 3 Pillars of Wisdom. God defines:
 1. _____ (_____ and _____)
 2. _____
 3. _____ and _____
- Lastly, the most powerful question for your life, “_____?”
 Wisdom creates a framework for good _____