

H2R Wisdom E4 Final

Proverbs: Lady Wisdom & Lady Folly

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Jon: Hi, this is Jon at The Bible Project. Today on the podcast, we continue a conversation, learning how to read books in the Bible called the wisdom books. Today we're looking at one of those books, the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a very approachable book. It's full of wise sayings that you can pick and choose from. But Proverbs and all the books in the wisdom literature do much more. They're developing an important theme central to the story of the Bible.

Tim: The isolation of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job from the rest of the Old Testament doesn't allow you to see the full set of relationships. The Book of Proverbs is designed as this retro reflection on Genesis 1 through 3, that you go back and you look and you see, wow, I can now see new things in Genesis 1 through 3 through the lens of Proverbs that were there all along just waiting to be activated.

Jon: Proverbs isn't just a nice collection of wise sayings. It's continuing the narrative of Adam and Eve, and their quest to rule the world with wisdom.

Tim: The misguided quest for wisdom ends up with humans divided with each other, and separated from God, creating by their own wisdom, pain and hurt, and violence and death in the world. And that leaves unrealized the ideal of the two of them united in love, vulnerability, co-ruling in the land of abundance, living by God's commands and wisdom.

Jon: In Genesis 2, the humans have a choice to choose life or choose death. In Proverbs, we get a parallel, but new image.

Tim: So that gives you the wise woman and the foolish woman, the wise man and the foolish man, and the two paths that those represent.

Jon: So today, we discuss the two paths in Proverbs - the path of the wise and the path of the foolish. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

We're talking about how to read the books in what we call the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible, which is actually a modern construct which we talked about.

Tim: The isolation of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job from the rest of the Old Testament as if they're a unique group having their own party in the Bible, that's a modern phenomenon that I think I have realized is skewed and kind of distorted my understanding of them. That's a negative way of saying it. But a more positive way is keeping those three books in quarantine from the rest of the Old Testament doesn't allow you to see the full set of relationships that they're meant to have within the Old Testament.

Jon: Cool. And we're also adding Song of Songs to the mix.

Tim: We're adding Song of Songs because once you see how the books of Solomon are hyperlinked into the storyline, the Song of Songs fits right alongside Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Jon: We've done three hours preamble, I suppose, which is all setting us up to then just get into the books, and talk about how they contribute. And maybe today we're going to get into it.

Tim: We're going to briefly go through each of the wisdom books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs of Songs and Job.

Jon: But it was essential to talk through the story of the Hebrew Bible, focusing on the question of how do humans attain wisdom, and seeing how that's like the essential quest of humanity. So quick recap: God created humans as His image-bearers, be His image. Both male and female together are the image of God. And that purpose has a calling attached to it, which is to rule the world with God.

If that's the case, then we're going to need to know how to rule well, and do it wisely and to create goodness when we rule. In fact, you can kind of see what happens very clearly when humans do a bad job of ruling. It creates a lot of pain and suffering, a lot of headaches, and a lot of violence and corruption. So how do you rule wisely? And how do you create good?

What you see when you start reading the creation narrative in Genesis 1 is that God is creating good - *Tov* in Hebrew. There's seven-part refrain and God saw that it was good. And so He's creating good, He's evaluating it as good. So you see God with His power and wisdom creating goodness. Then He creates humans to rule with Him, and that's good. He brings Adam into the creation process of naming animals and puts them in this beautiful garden. But the first thing that's not good is that Adam is alone. And so God gives Adam - what's the Hebrew word?

Tim: An ezer.

Jon: An ezer. Which is unfortunately translated "helper." That's only unfortunate to the degree that helper is such a soft neutered word. An ezer is an essential helper - someone who could do something for you that you can't do for yourself.

Tim: Yes, that's right.

Jon: And so God is an ezer to us.

Tim: Yes. God is the only other ezer in the Hebrew Bible. God and then Eve.

Jon: So the human is given this essential other. And they're two, but they're called to be one. And that oneness represents the image of God, which is to multiply, subdue the earth, and rule it. And how are you going to do that? You got to do it with wisdom.

One thing the narrative doesn't tell you is that God's going to help them grow in their wisdom. But you can kind of see, you infer that that was the plan. Because the alternative is God has a tree that represents the ability for them to go take their own path, and not find wisdom through their relationship with him but on their own terms.

Tim: To do what is good in their own eyes.

Jon: To do what is good in their own eyes. The tree is called the knowing of good and bad. The knowing of tov and ra, it's usually translated good and evil. But evil has a moral component to it where ra doesn't always have that.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: The Hebrew word "ra" can mean morally evil, but then it could also just mean sucky.

Tim: Unfortunate, disastrous, harmful.

Jon: And so this tree represents the knowing of good and bad. And by knowing, again, unfortunate word, because it's not a cerebral exercise of rationally being able to say, "Oh, that's good and that's bad." Actually Eve did that. She looked at the tree, and she's like, "Oh, it looks good." Being able to do that isn't the point of the tree. The point of the tree is seizing it. And "knowing" in Hebrew is this very experiential charged word of participating and connecting in an intimate way. It's the word used for intercourse.

So the narrative goes on to show that Eve is deceived by the snake, she sees that the fruit is good and beautiful and desirable. She desires it, and then she goes a step too far, and she takes it. And it's the taking of the fruit which then represents this whole unraveling of the partnership.

Tim: That's right. Because they were given two commands. Enjoy everything...

Jon: That's a great command.

Tim: Second command, don't take of this knowing of good and evil for yourself because when you do that, you'll die.

Jon: So then Eve gives it to Adam, Adam takes it. And that's another kind of interesting texture to the narrative is that when Eve is represented, she's the essential other. She's Adam salvation so that they can rule together. But then in Genesis 3, she's now this new portrait of Eve, which is the deceived deceiver who becomes the downfall. Adam takes the fruit from her, eats of it as well, they both now realize like, "Oh, no, I'm naked. I don't trust you. I'm afraid of God."

And the fear that they have of God isn't a good fear because that phrase "fear of the Lord" is going to come really important in the wisdom literature. But it's a fear of, "I can't be near you because I'll be destroyed." Because they know that God said, "You eat this fruit, you're going to die." So they're hiding. They're scared. God's like, "What did you do?" And God doesn't kill them, but the consequence is death, and He exiles them into death. But He provides for them and He shows a lot more mercy than you would expect.

So there in this narrative, we see this idea of the quest for wisdom on our own terms played out, and that becomes this essential theme that continues. And we see it in Abraham.

Tim: The misguided quest for wisdom ends up with humans divided with each other, and separated from God, creating by their own wisdom, pain and hurt, violence and

death in the world. And that leaves unrealized the ideal of the two of them united in love, vulnerability, co-ruling in the land of abundance, living by God's commands and wisdom, which is their true wisdom.

Jon: Two halves of the whole.

Tim: So that gives you the wise woman and the foolish woman, the wise man and the foolish man, and the two paths that those represent.

Jon: And choosing wisdom, how do you choose wisdom? How do you find wisdom? How do you live a good life? These were the questions then the what we call the wisdom books are exploring. Not only are they exploring those, but they're riffing off of the story of the quest of wisdom, of eating of the tree, of finding Lady Wisdom, of avoiding Lady Folly. All of these things will then kind of unravel from this point and create these portraits.

We also talked about, just briefly, Abraham and how he echoes these same themes. And then more particularly, Solomon, who is...Oh, yeah. So after they leave the garden, exiled, God...

Tim: He curses the ground and the snake and informs them of unfortunate future that's ahead of them. He never curses the people.

Jon: He doesn't curse the people.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: That's a good insight. One of the curses and this was really interesting, I never thought about before was a woman who would desire the man to rule over her, which is not...

Tim: It's not one of the curses. He only curses the snake and he curses the ground.

Jon: What is it? What would you call it?

Tim: It's the consequences. Here's the sad reality that you've now created for yourself.

Jon: Got it. One of the sad realities is her desire for the husband to rule over here?

Tim: It's poetic line. "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." It's actually capable of about four different nuances of meaning, logically, that are possible. But well, it's important in that that's the opposite of what page 1 ideal was. It was of a man and a woman united. Now it's man and woman at odds with each other. Again, this isn't just commentary on the world in general. This is giving you the framework of everything that's about to happen in the narrative, which is going to be story after story of men and women at odds with each other, creating messes together as they try to power-play each other.

Jon: God curses the snake, curses the ground, lays out the consequences, but then He also gives a promise that a seed of the woman will come and will take care of the evil. And then as we trace this idea of the seed, we know comes to Abraham. And

not only will it be a blessing for him, but for all the nations and will restore this Eden co-ruling in God's presence over creation. We trace that seed to David and then to his son, Solomon. And in the story of Solomon, we get such a cool portrait of a man who...

Tim: He's given this opportunity to rule.

Jon: Like Adam, he is appointed to rule and he's given the opportunity to ask for anything. God says, "What do you want? I'll give it to you." And he asks for wisdom. In there are echoes of...

Tim: Wisdom to discern between tov and ra.

Jon: What does it say - something about knowing the heart of God?

Tim: To have a heart that listens so that I may discern between tov and ra.

Jon: And where does the phrase listen to my voice?

Tim: That comes out of the garden narrative. But then a heart that listens is language from the Shema. To listen and love with all your heart. He has a heart that listen.

Jon: So where Adam and Eve made the wrong call, He made the right call.

Tim: Correct. That's the point.

Jon: And God says, "That is so beautiful and good." Or He says it's good. "And I'm going to hook you up. And things are going to go so well for you, but you got to keep making this call. You got to keep at it."

Tim: Every day.

Jon: Every day. There's not one and done, as he said. Unfortunately, but kind of maybe more realistically, he's not a perfect dude. In fact, there's a whole portrait of him where you see him making all these decisions that shows that he is eating of the tree of knowing good and evil.

Tim: But remember it's balanced. It's like there was land and abundance and eating, drinking, rejoices. Everybody sat under their own fig tree, but he built it all on the backs of slaves and storage cities just like Pharaoh. He has lots of gold but he imported it all. He was back and forth.

Jon: This cool portrait of the Queen of Sheba coming to visit him. She's a powerhouse in her own right. You got this powerful woman. She's coming to test him. And you're like, "Oh, how's this going to go down?" And he wows her, and she just realizes like, "This is it. Eden is arriving here."

Tim: She blesses the God of Israel.

Jon: She praises the God of Israel with him. And you just get this picture of like, "Ah, the man and the woman together in God's presence, praising him, ruling the world."

Tim: Yeah, they are both rulers.

Jon: They're both rulers. You're like, "This is awesome." But then the next chapter, you realize he's got a thousand of these women and it's just not good. So that's where we left off. We also just showed how these four books are all connected to Solomon. And so we'll go into that more. Is there any other highlights to mention?

Tim: I think the highlight then is to say, the books of Solomon - let's start with those three, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job - what they represent is they invite the reader to sit down at the feet of this success and failure of a Solomon. He's now going to tell you as the next generation that you have in front of you the same choice that he had, which is the same choice that Adam and Eve had. Every human sits in front of the tree of knowing good and bad, and you have your own choice to make. And so, you can talk about it as different trees. You can talk about it as two ways to paths. You can talk about it as embracing two kinds of women, Eve and the Queen of Sheba, right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The wise woman leads to live or foolish Eve and the foreign women of Solomon that lead you to exile and death. But the point is, is these books universalize the Adam and Eve story and the Solomon story to see yourself now within it. That you're up to bad. When you read these books, they're trying to guide you to the right path. That's more Proverbs. Ecclesiastes is going to problematize the path, and Song of Songs is something we'll talk about. So anyway, that's the idea.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: But this is the biblical context for the three books of Solomon. That's the story that they're plugging you into. And that's why I said earlier, when we abstract out Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job and disconnect them from the storyline and just make them like philosophical essays about the good life, we miss all of that. This is the story that the hyperlinks of these books are trying to plug these books into, so that you see yourself replaying the Garden of Eden in your own life.

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Tim: Proverbs opens with a paragraph that's truly like the publisher's blurb on the back of a book. It tells you why the book exists - verses 1-7, in particular. Do you want to do the honors?

Jon: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice, and equity; To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear, my son..."

Tim: And then the first speech begins.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "Hear, my son."

Jon: Got it.

Tim: So notice every one of those, you have the little opening hyperlink, a collection of Proverbs of Solomon. Do you remember he wrote over 3,000 of these we're told?

Jon: Yeah.

Jon: One thousand and five songs.

Tim: And now you read this line, you're like, "Oh, okay, this is a selection of those thousands of Proverbs that I heard about in 1 Kings." Because that's what a wise human would do. A wise human would collect wisdom. s

Jon: Yeah, it has little wisdom memes.

Tim: Verses 1 through 6 are all a bunch of incomplete sentences. Did you see that?

Jon: Yeah. It is awkward to read.

Tim: These are purposed statements. What is the book in front of you for? To know wisdom, to give prudence, to understand. These are purpose statements for the scroll in front of you. So I read the scroll in front of me, what am I going to learn? There's all these different wisdom words, wisdom, instruction. I'm going to receive instruction and wise choices to give to the naive. That word "prudence" is what the snake was in Genesis 3.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Arum. It's the same root word. So again, remember because knowledge and wisdom is neutral, you can put it to ra purposes, you can put it to tov purposes.

Jon: Good and death.

Tim: And look at vs 6. Then it's just playing. It's just saying, "Okay, all of the above is wisdom. Here's what else this book's going to teach you about proverbs is the word Mishlei. A comparison to Mashal is to compare two things. One who grabs the ear of an angry dog is like one who gets involved in the quarrel of another.

Jon: That's a good one.

Tim: So Mashal, comparing two things. But then figures and riddles and the words of the wise, to read Proverbs, especially in Hebrew is to get an education in Hebrew word plays, and puns and words with double meaning, and riddles, cryptic sayings that you have to ponder for a long... riddles. And dude, welcome to the Hebrew Bible. It's part of how it works. Then vs 7 gives you your true north. Because remember, you can be wise and still go down two paths. So what's the baseline?

Jon: How do you know you're on the right path?

Tim: Correct. The fear of Yahweh, which means doing what he says. God says to Abraham, "Now I know that you fear Yahweh because you..."

Jon: Practically it means doing what He says. But does it mean something more than that, that results in?

Tim: The result is doing what He says. I think it's trusting Him and then honoring His wisdom and authority from a place of reverence and awe because He can make a universe and I can't. That's the idea.

Jon: The phrase kind of stuck with me when we talked about this - I don't know if it was the last episode - but how Adam feared the Lord but it was too late. And he was fearing because he was afraid.

Tim: Because he thought God was going to kill him.

Jon: But how up until then everything he would know about God was just good. It's all the good things. And so the phrase that got stuck with me is like "fear the Lord before you need to be afraid of the Lord."

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Oh, that's good.

Jon: Something like that.

Tim: I like that.

Jon: It kind of helps you realize like, okay, there's a difference between being afraid and fearing the Lord. There is. But the difference is subtle because there's something, the weightiness and reverence of being in the presence of something so powerful would create something that feels the same as being afraid of death, but different because what you know of God is good.

Tim: So then that's the baseline. So that little line, Proverbs 1:7, is linking you back into the Solomon story. Remember, Solomon, his folly was to reject all of the wise laws about how the kings of Israel should rule. The last law in Deuteronomy 17 was to be a Bible nerd, have your own Torah copy that you study, so that he may learn to fear the Lord. So fear of the Lord is important in the Solomon story. It's important in the Eden narrative.

So this becomes a way of saying, this book is to teach the sons of Solomon, so it's Solomon speaking to his sons is how it's framed here, but to learn wisdom. But not just to learn wisdom, because anybody can acquire that, but to learn the wisdom based on Vs 7, the fear of Yahweh. So that introduction is anchoring that in the Solomon and Eden story.

Then in vs 8, the speaker says, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, don't forsake your mother's teachings." So that's what's interesting is the Proverbs, little two liners, don't start until chapter 10. What follows in Proverbs 1-9 are 10 speeches, from a father to a son that also incorporate a bunch of other speeches

about two women called Lady Wisdom or Lady Folly. You have Solomon speaking to "my sons."

So within the narrative frame of the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs is addressed to the line of David. It's Solomon speaking to "my sons." Narratively to the future seed of David. Calling the future seed of David to keep away from Lady Folly, and to embrace Lady Wisdom. And you the reader imaginatively set yourself at the foot of Solomon as if you are among the seed of David. But it also means to read a book that says, By Solomon, the son of David...

Jon: And he starts addressing his sons.

Tim: He starts addressing "my son," and I meant to see myself imaginatively among the seed of David. And I say that was a wink because this is where the whole Hebrew Bible is going - the Messianic seed.

Jon: Who we are brothers.

Tim: I mean, even just within the book of Isaiah, the messianic seed boils down to one representative person who is able to open up the way for many to become a part of that messianic seed through his vicarious life and death and resurrection. That's just the book of Isaiah. So the sons of David is a kind of, like, quote marks around. You come sit at the foot. And it's all about these two ways and these two women.

On the next page is just a chart just charting out. This is one of my nerd charts. So there are 10 speeches from a father to a son, four speeches about a woman called Wisdom, and then there are also four speeches about what's called the foolish woman, the strange woman, the adulterous woman. And again, remember, this is all about the two portraits of Eve. Ideal righteous, wise Eve, deceived deceiver Eve.

Jon: Well, this is all about God's wisdom.

Tim: Well, sorry, I'm saying it's beginning there. Then you have Queen of Sheba and the foreign women for Solomon.

Jon: This is like metaphoric template.

Tim: Before all of us is a wise woman and foolish woman who choose who...

Jon: Which is a great metaphor when you're talking to sons.

Tim: Correct. And that's the imaginative setting here, is Solomon speaking to the future line of David.

[00:27:13]

Tim: So Proverbs 1-9 it just explores all of this, but comes to its culmination in chapter 9 with these two... There's a short little summary about Lady Wisdom and a short little summary about Lady Folly. It begins in Proverbs 9. I'll just kind of read and point some things out.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So Proverbs 9 begins, "Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars;" She has a seven pillared house. Seven should make us think of Genesis 1. Lady wisdom just finished in the previous chapter telling us about how...

Jon: She was part of creation.

Tim: ...she was the means by which God architected the cosmos. So she's hewn out her house on seven pillars. All of creation finds order in her house. "She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table;" She's inviting you to a feast. "She has sent out her maidens, and calls from the tops of the high places to the city; "Whoever is naive, come on in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine. Forsake your folly and live." Find life.

Jon: That rings a lot of like Jesus, right?

Tim: Yes, totally.

Jon: Of like, "Comes to me all ye who are hungry and thirsty."

Tim: That's right. The celebratory meals. Yes. So she also sounds a lot like Moses at the end of Deuteronomy, summoning the people into the promised land to live by the wisdom of the Torah, so that you may live. Contrast to that party, you can go to that party, or you can go vs 13. The woman of folly, she's boisterous.

Jon: Boisterous. That's a great word.

Tim: She is naive. She knows nothing. She also sits at the door of her house on a seat by the high places of the city calling to those passing by who are trying to make their path straight.

Jon: She's deceiving

Tim: Yeah. And then it's this copy and paste. This exactly what Lady Wisdom said, "Whoever's naive, come on in here. Whoever lacks understanding she says, stolen water is sweet, bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But the one entering her house doesn't know that the dead are there and her guests are the depths of the grave."

Jon: Wow.

Tim: Two ladies. First of all, just the sheer imagination involved here to develop out these poetic scenes of wisdom as this gracious host inviting everyone into the Garden of Eden meal versus...

Jon: And then the parody of her.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Her inverted self. These are just the summaries. There are all these other scenes about the seductive woman who goes out looking to seduce versus

Lady Wisdom who goes out to saying, "People, come to me and you'll find life." It's really remarkable. These are wonderful poems, Proverbs 1-9.

Check this out. This is in Proverbs 3. This is Solomon speaking to my son, the seed of David. "My son, don't forget my teaching, let your heart keep my commandments: For length of days and years of life and Shalom will be added to you." Life. Everlasting life. "Don't let kindness and truth leave you; bind these, my teaching and commands, bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart." Writing on the heart.

Jon: Is that Jeremiah?

Tim: Yes. Remember Moses?

Jon: Moses says that bind them around your head, right?

Tim: Yeah. So, dude, this is the language of the Shema. So after you say the Shema, it says, "Let these words... Here, hold on. After Moses says the Shema, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one,' he says, "Bind these words as a sign on your hand and as symbols on your forehead." Here, Solomon is saying, "Bind my wisdom around your neck and like a necklace and write them on the tablet of your heart." So he's telling the seed of David to do with his wisdom what Moses said to do with the Shema with your home and your children.

Jon: Wrap yourself in it.

Tim: Why? So that you'll find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. So just think through the Solomon story and the Eden story here. "Trust in Yahweh with all of your heart; don't lean on your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge him, he will make your paths straight. Don't be wise in your own eyes."

Jon: That's pretty clear.

Tim: It's all the vocabulary of the Genesis 3:6, fall moment, right? She saw that it was good, good to her eyes. So don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear Yahweh. Turn away from ra. What better summary of Genesis 3 is there? And if you do that, what was the result? Healing to your body, refreshment to your bones. It's like a superhuman.

Vs 13 "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding. Her profit is better than silver, her gain is better than gold." Think of the Solomon story. "She's more precious than jewels, nothing you desire compares with her." Look at this. "Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand or riches and honor." Remember what God said to Solomon.

Jon: Because you chose wisdom.

Tim: Because you chose wisdom and didn't ask for long life, riches or honor...

Jon: I'm going to give it to you.

Tim: I'm going to give you them anyway. Then here's Solomon saying: "choose Lady Wisdom..."

Jon: And you'll get it both.

Tim: It's exactly the same list of things.

Jon: Don't seek out long life and riches; seek wisdom and you will get both.

Tim: And you'll get those things. Seeking long life and riches and honor become a way of taking from the tree. But the moment I hands-off and seek wisdom, I'll get knowledge of good and evil.

Jon: It kind of smacks the seek first God's kingdom and then all these things will be added to you.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, totally. The kicker. "Her ways, the ways of Lady Wisdom are pleasant, all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to all who take hold of her. Happy are all who embrace her."

Jon: So now she's a tree?

Tim: Now she's a tree. Look at how the symbols can swap here. So we had two ladies. Now, the wise lady becomes the tree of life. And taking from the tree of life is like embracing Lady Wisdom, which is like Adam and Eve ruling together in the wisdom and love of God in the garden. Isn't that amazing?

Proverbs 3, I remember reading this as a brand new Christian, I didn't know any of this. I was just like, "That's cool. I want to live in the fear of the Lord." But all this vocabulary is teed into these other narratives, and it becomes so rich.

Jon: Totally. When I've read this without all that in mind, it's like, "Oh, yeah, that's nice. It's a tree and it's a lady and it's better than gold and silver." Like, I can kind of work myself up until like, cool.

Tim: "All right. I want to be wise today."

Jon: But as you see how this is all riffing off of and developing these metaphors out of this narrative and mixing it up, even like...

Tim: Creative mixing of analogies and metaphors.

Jon: Which makes you then think back to the story and go, "Oh, that's a new nuance to the story." Eating of the tree of life is actually connected to the idea of seeking God's wisdom. That's all sudden becomes more clear. Seeking God's wisdom is in some way compared to the pursuit of a woman. I want to explore that more.

Tim: That's right. But remember, in the garden, if Adam and Eve were living by God's wisdom and eating from the tree of life, it's the man and the woman in love, together ruling the world. So the image of peace and love vulnerability between the man and the woman. Because if they had eaten from the tree of life and not taken from the

good and bad, they would be there still naked and in love and happy and ruling the world in all the splendor.

Jon: Like take Adam, let's say, and they are in the goodness together, ruling. And then you gave him the metaphor of "Hey, you know, trusting in God's wisdom is like pursuing your wife." He would kind of be like, "Oh, I thought of those things as separate. I love my wife, and we rule together, but the way that I engage her is different than the way I pursue God's wisdom. But you want me to see those as the same thing?"

Tim: Do you remember that opening and closing frame of the Solomon story? Solomon loves Yahweh, and that's when he asked for wisdom.

Jon: And then he loves the lady.

Tim: And then in the story, he loves the ladies more than he loves Yahweh. But what it's saying is they're comparable to each other. The way you would pursue and love Yahweh and his wisdom is comparable and connected to how a man or a woman pursues another. And then Paul says...

Tim: Yeah, dude, we're getting to it.

Jon: We're getting to it.

Tim: That's right. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, when he is talking about marriage...

Jon: Yeah, he's talking about marriage.

Tim: ...and then he says, "You know what, I'm really talking about is the Messiah and the Messiah is people to church."

Jon: Our relationship with the Messiah.

Tim: "That's what I'm really talking about. But also husband should love his wife." Get him to talk about...

Jon: A husband loving his wife is really talking about the Messiah loving the church. But you're not. Those are two different things. But then in some way, they're connected...

Tim: They are connected.

Jon: ...in Paul mind in a way that just jumped to him and be like, "This is what I'm really talking about."

Tim: It's about Adam loving Eve, and both of them, together, loving God.

Jon: I don't understand it.

Tim: Well, we'll map it out a little more. But you're right to say that this pursuit of the woman here in Proverbs, this is what the Song of Songs is doing in the Hebrew

Bible. This is why it's there. It's set in the context of the Eden and the Solomon story, and then these speeches in Proverbs.

Jon: All to say too is that, you know, we talked about the Bible is meditation literature, and this is really just pops with it. When I read this and then I think back to Solomon and I think back to the garden narratives, and now they're playing off of each other and I'm thinking about them in new ways.

Tim: Correct. That's right. In other words, for all the world, the book of Proverbs is designed as this retro reflection on Genesis 1 through 3, that you go back and you look and you see, "Oh, wow, I can now see new things in Genesis 1 through 3 through the lens of the Proverbs in the Solomon story that were there all along just waiting to be activated."

[00:39:15]

Tim: One last thing before we say goodbye to Proverbs. We've spent a lot more. Go to the last chapter Proverbs. Proverbs 31 introduces you to a king named "The words of King Lemuel." Nowhere named elsewhere in the Bible. I'm convinced there's some wordplay or pun here that I don't know. But the first chapter...

Jon: I know is English, not Hebrew, but Lamuel sounds like a Lamech a little bit.

Tim: Oh, got it. Well, the word "El" is the word for God. And Lemu, there are lots of different theories on what that's about. The Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, their gloss for it is "belonging to God." One who belongs to God. But what we're also told is these are his words. They're the words that his mother taught him. Interesting. And it's this poem about, "Hey, my son, my royal son."

So the book begins with Proverbs 1 through 9 the King telling his sons to choose Lady Wisdom. The book ends with a king's mom telling her son a couple of things. First of all, vs 3, "Don't give your strength to many women." You're like, "Man, Solomon can could've used a mom like that." First of all, don't give your strength to many women because that will destroy kings. And the second is don't drink a lot, it'll impair your ability to rule well.

Jon: Sound advice.

Tim: So alcohol and many women, stay away. That's the first thing. The second thing, what comes after that is the Proverbs 31 woman. An eshet chayil, a woman of valor or an ability who can find? She is worth more than jewels. You know who else is worth more than jewels?

Jon: Lady Wisdom.

Tim: Lady Wisdom. Verbatim. It's copy and paste from those. So the book ends with a mom telling her royal son to stay away from many women and to choose the one priceless woman. And then it's Proverbs 31 which is about this amazing, industrious woman who is a source of blessing and abundance to her family and her community and the poor. She is a woman who has embraced Lady Wisdom, so to speak.

Jon: And we talked about a productivity that brings blessing.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: And she just like...

Tim: She is the incarnation. She is like the incarnation of Lady Wisdom.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Totally. So there's no coincidence in that Proverbs 1 through 9. Then the last chapter of Proverbs is framed with all this imagery from the Eden story and Solomon story about the man pursuing the woman, the seed of David pursuing the Lady Wisdom. And if that happens, life and abundance for everybody in Garden of Eden. So that's the frame around the middle of the Proverbs, which is all the little two liners.

Jon: Ten through 30.

Tim: So you have to ask yourself, what's the book doing in the Bible? It's not just there to give you some tricks of the trade. It's all framed in the cosmic storyline of humanity's choice and how they're going to rule and about the hope for a messianic seed from the line of David and Solomon that will embrace Lady Wisdom to bring Eden back to the world. Proverbs. It's like a messianic reading of Proverbs.

Jon: Very cool. Now, I mentioned this in the last episode. Solomon's writing to his sons so it makes sense for the metaphor to be about a woman that you're pursuing. And maybe this is why men like the book of Proverbs so much. It's written for men in a way. But that can't be so that women...it's not a book for women. But you just made the insight the Song of Songs is really more about the pursuit of a woman. Woman pursuing a man.

Tim: The main voice, representative voice is the woman's voice from her perspective. Proverbs is told from the male Solomon's to the seed of David perspective. Where Songs of Songs then flips it from the female perspective.

Jon: It's interesting.

Tim: It is interesting. Dude the Song of Songs, holy cow.

Jon: Is that we'll talk about next?

Tim: Yeah, I think so. I think that's what we should do.

Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. We've got a couple more episodes in this series left. And we want to take some time now to let you know that we're going to do a Q&R at the end of this series, and we'd love to hear your questions. So if you've been listening and you have some thoughts or ideas, or questions come to mind, feel free to record those and send them to us. Send it to info@jointhebibleproject.com. Try to keep it to 20 seconds or so. Let us know your name and where you're from.

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Reggie: Hi, this is Reggie Abraham. I'm from Portland, Oregon. I first heard about The Bible Project when the first video came out and I got hooked. I use The Bible Project in my church, as I'm a pastor, for my own personal development, but also as I'm teaching and discipling people. My favorite thing about The Bible Project are the podcast where we can go in-depth on these topics and learn so much more and dive into the universe of the Scriptures. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We're a crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos, study notes, podcasts and more at thebibleproject.com.