



The Wisdom of Proverbs

Script References

Introduction

00:00–00:42

Jon: There are three books in the Bible that have come to be called the wisdom literature, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.

Tim: And all of these books are addressing the same set of questions. What kind of world are we living in? And what does it look like to live well in this world?

Jon: So, how to be good at life?

Tim: Yeah. So each of these books tackles these questions from a unique perspective, and it's important to understand all of them to get a fully biblical perspective on the good life. So, as a thought experiment, you could actually imagine each of these books as a person. So Proverbs would be like this brilliant young teacher, and Ecclesiastes, a sharp middle-aged critic, and Job would be this weathered old man who's seen a lot in his day.

The Brilliant Young Teacher

00:43–01:18

Jon: We're going to start by meeting the book of Proverbs, the brilliant young teacher. And she's not just smart, she's smart about everything—work, relationships, sex, spirituality. She has incredible insights—things you wouldn't see on your own.

Tim: Yeah. She would be the perfect friend to have around when you need really specific advice.

Jon: So what makes her so smart?

Tim: Well, Proverbs can see things that most people don't see. She believes that there is an invisible creative force in the universe that can guide people in how they should live. And you can't see it, just like you can't see gravity, but it affects everything that we do.

Jon: So what's this force?

***Hokhmah*, Lady Wisdom, and the Fear of the Lord**

01:19–03:09

Tim: Well, in Hebrew it's called *hokhmah*, and it usually gets translated into English as "wisdom." It's an attribute of God that God used to create the world, and *hokhmah* has been woven into the fabric of things and how they work. So wherever people are making good or just or wise decisions, they are tapping into *hokhmah*.

Jon: And whenever someone's making a bad decision, they're working against *hokhmah*.

Tim: Right, or as it says in Proverbs chapter 1, "The waywardness of fools will destroy them, but the one who listens to wisdom lives in security."¹

1. Proverbs 1:32

Jon: So it's like a moral law of the universe?

Tim: Yeah. It's a cause-effect pattern and no one can escape it. And Proverbs personifies all of this as a woman.

Jon: Yeah, Lady Wisdom.

Tim: Right, and she roams around the earth calling out and making herself available to anyone who is willing to listen to her and to learn, which leads to the second thing Proverbs believes—that anyone can access and interact with wisdom and use it to make a beautiful life for yourself or for others.

Jon: You can create with it like a designer?

Tim: Yes. In fact, *hokhmah* in Hebrew isn't simply intellectual knowledge. The word is also used to describe a skilled artisan who excels at their craft, like woodworking or stone masonry. So you show you possess *hokhmah* when you put it to work and develop the skill of making a good life.

Jon: Okay. That makes sense. So let's do this. Let's go find some wisdom.

Tim: But before you do, Proverbs has one more really important thing to consider. *Hokhmah* isn't some impersonal force—it's an attribute of God himself. And so in Hebrew thought, your journey to becoming wise has to begin with what Proverbs calls "the fear of the Lord."² It's this healthy respect for God's definition of good and evil, and true wisdom means learning those boundary lines and not crossing them.

2. Proverbs 1:7

Wisdom Applied in a Collection of Sayings

03:10–04:30

Jon: Now, all those ideas you just unpacked are in chapters 1 through 9 of Proverbs. But when I think of the book of Proverbs, I think of the collection of sayings—the proverbs themselves. Tell me about those.

Tim: Yeah. Those are what you find in chapters 10 on to the end of the book. It's a collection of hundreds and hundreds of proverbs about any and all aspects of life, and *hokhmah* gets applied to them, resulting in this wise guidance to help you find the path toward success in no matter what you do.

Jon: If I design my life with these sayings, life is going to be good.

Tim: Yeah. Or as Proverbs puts it, "It will give health to your bones, prosperity, a long, rich life."³

3. Proverbs 3:8

Jon: Which is a really big claim.

Tim: But you can see how it's often the case. Wise people, they tend to do better—things usually work out well for them in life. And so that is the promise and the wisdom of the book of Proverbs.

Jon: The book of Proverbs is really beautiful, but if we take a step back, some people would argue it's a little too simplistic. Because sometimes horrible things happen to really wise people, and sometimes foolish people get rewarded. It doesn't always work the way we think it should work.

Tim: That's right, which is why we need to go and listen to our next wise friend, Ecclesiastes the critic. Because he's wrestled with that very problem, and he's going to push us further in our journey to find the good life.