



Reading Psalms and Wisdom Literature¹

Overview:

This series will focus on how we got the Bible, why we can trust it, and what's most important as we study, interpret, and apply what we read. These weekly discussion and reflection guides will each center around a genre of scripture. As you learn about each genre, we'll provide sample texts that illustrate some of the uniquenesses about that genre. We hope this study helps you go deeper in your bible study skills and provides helpful context and application for the broader topics in the sermons.

Group Objectives:

Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purpose of community groups.

- Reflect on this week's texts and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- To practice reading and interpreting psalms and wisdom literature.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We encounter the Father daily.* God the Father speaks to us through the Bible, and we commune with him through prayer.

Conversation Starters:

- What is the most memorable advice you've received in your life? What is a life lesson you learned "the hard way" because you wouldn't listen to advice?
- What stood out to you from this week's sermon?

Listening to God

- Where did you see God at work last week? How were you able to join him?

Learning about God's word: Psalms and Wisdom Literature

This genre provides language for worship and wisdom for life. They help us apply truth to our existence in light of others' experience. Psalms is full of poetry, much of which includes "wise sayings." Traditionally, the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, (and often Song of Solomon) are classified as "Wisdom literature." These books help us to formulate plans that produce God-centered "success," with the caveat that worldly success often looks very different. Any given proverb cannot describe all possible life circumstances; they are not meant to be read as promises, but simply comments about how life tends to work out in God's world, all other things being equal. When used rightly, they can provide practical advice for daily living in the community of God's people.

Learning from God's Word: Bible Study Discussion

¹ This discussion guide was written by Cameron Booze and Karl Pagenkemper and edited by Dawn Gentry.

While Psalms and wisdom literature may seem intimidating, one major emphasis of these books is relationships. In the book of Psalms, we learn how to pray and relate to God through honest expressions of our heart. In Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and Song of Songs, we learn how to live a life in right relationship with God, ourselves, and those around us. Each book reveals the importance of having a right relationship with God and other humans. As you read the scriptures below, note the unique character of the books and how they accomplish the task of teaching about relationships.

- **Read Proverbs 8-9**
 - How is Wisdom characterized in these chapters? How does Folly differ from Wisdom?
 - Does the portrait of wisdom in these chapters match our contemporary understanding of what wisdom is? Why or why not?
 - In your own words, describe the biblical understanding of wisdom and foolishness.
 - Now, what would someone's relationships with God and others look like if they were characterized by wisdom as described in these chapters?
 - Where have you seen these traits manifest in your own relationships?
- **Read Psalm 1 & 2**
 - Psalms 1 and 2 introduce themes of reflecting on scripture and God's Kingship, respectively. Take time to consider and discuss how the "characters" (righteous, wicked, God, etc.) relate to each other in these psalms.
 - Based on Psalm 1, what should our relationship to God's word be? What is the fruit of that relationship?
 - Based on Psalm 2, what should our relationship be to God as our King? How do the kings of this world choose to relate to God?
 - Considering the themes in these two psalms, how might they instruct our prayer life?
- **Read Ecclesiastes 3**
 - Summarize this chapter in your own words. What is the central theme of this chapter?
 - What does this chapter teach about our relationship with creation and time?
 - How does this chapter challenge the assumptions of our "on-demand" culture?
 - In a culture that emphasizes our jobs as part of our value as people, how does this passage challenge that understanding?

Leaning into Obedience:

- Over the next month, read a chapter of Proverbs each day. From the chapter choose a proverb, phrase, or concept to reflect on throughout your day. How is God using these wise sayings to convict you, to encourage you, or to open your eyes to something new? Share what you are learning with a friend, spouse, or member of your community group.
- Serve at a Second Saturday Serve. Be thoughtful and intentional while treating each person with the love and dignity they deserve as image bearers of God.

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of the group to share requests.
- Take time as a group to reflect on your relationships with God and others.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal areas in your relationships that aren't "right." Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you His wisdom to begin relating to these people the way God desires.

For further study:

- See our online resources, *Reading Guide to the Psalms* or *Reading Guide to Job*, to go deeper on these genres.
- N. T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*, HarperOne, 2013.
- Bible Project videos
 - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/how-to-read-biblical-poetry/>
 - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/book-of-psalms/>
 - <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-job/>
- Francis Chan also has a new video series on JOB available on RightNowMedia – it includes a free downloadable study guide: <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/770978>