

# WEEK 37.

## Ecclesiastes, 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Proverbs, (Solomon Reflects)

### Sunday ([Ecclesiastes 1-3](#))

#### Title

1:1 The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem:

#### Introduction: Utter Futility

1:2 “Futile! Futile!” laments the Teacher, “Absolutely futile! Everything is futile!”

#### Futility Illustrated from Nature

1:3 What benefit do people get from all the effort which they expend on earth?

1:4 A generation comes and a generation goes, but the earth remains the same through the ages.

1:5 The sun rises and the sun sets; it hurries away to a place from which it rises again.

1:6 The wind goes to the south and circles around to the north; round and round the wind goes and on its rounds it returns.

1:7 All the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is not full, and to the place where the streams flow, there they will flow again.

1:8 All this monotony is tiresome; no one can bear to describe it: The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear ever content with hearing.

1:9 What exists now is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing truly new on earth.

1:10 Is there anything about which someone can say, “Look at this! It is new!”? It was already done long ago, before our time.

1:11 No one remembers the former events, nor will anyone remember the events that are yet to happen; they will not be remembered by the future generations.

## **Futility of Secular Accomplishment**

1:12 I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

1:13 I decided to carefully and thoroughly examine all that has been accomplished on earth.

I concluded: God has given people a burdensome task that keeps them occupied.

1:14 I reflected on everything that is accomplished by man on earth, and I concluded: Everything he has accomplished is futile – like chasing the wind!

1:15 What is bent cannot be straightened, and what is missing cannot be supplied.

## **Futility of Secular Wisdom**

1:16 I thought to myself, “I have become much wiser than any of my predecessors who ruled over Jerusalem; I have acquired much wisdom and knowledge.”

1:17 So I decided to discern the benefit of wisdom and knowledge over foolish behavior and ideas; however, I concluded that even this endeavor is like trying to chase the wind!

1:18 For with great wisdom comes great frustration; whoever increases his knowledge merely increases his heartache.

## **Futility of Self-Indulgent Pleasure**

2:1 I thought to myself, “Come now, I will try self-indulgent pleasure to see if it is worthwhile.”

But I found that it also is futile.

2:2 I said of partying, “It is folly,” and of self-indulgent pleasure, “It accomplishes nothing!”

2:3 I thought deeply about the effects of indulging myself with wine (all the while my mind was guiding me with wisdom) and the effects of behaving foolishly, so that I might discover what is profitable for people to do on earth during the few days of their lives.

## **Futility of Materialism**

2:4 I increased my possessions: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself.

2:5 I designed royal gardens and parks for myself, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

2:6 I constructed pools of water for myself, to irrigate my grove of flourishing trees.

2:7 I purchased male and female slaves, and I owned slaves who were born in my house; I also possessed more livestock – both herds and flocks – than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem.

2:8 I also amassed silver and gold for myself, as well as valuable treasures taken from kingdoms and provinces. I acquired male singers and female singers for myself, and what gives a man sensual delight – a harem of beautiful concubines!

2:9 So I was far wealthier than all my predecessors in Jerusalem, yet I maintained my objectivity:

2:10 I did not restrain myself from getting whatever I wanted; I did not deny myself anything that would bring me pleasure. So all my accomplishments gave me joy; this was my reward for all my effort.

2:11 Yet when I reflected on everything I had accomplished and on all the effort that I had expended to accomplish it, I concluded: “All these achievements and possessions are ultimately profitless – like chasing the wind! There is nothing gained from them on earth.”

### **Wisdom is Better than Folly**

2:12 Next, I decided to consider wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas. For what more can the king’s successor do than what the king has already done?

2:13 I realized that wisdom is preferable to folly, just as light is preferable to darkness:

2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also realized that the same fate happens to them both.

2:15 So I thought to myself, “The fate of the fool will happen even to me!

Then what did I gain by becoming so excessively wise?”

So I lamented to myself, “The benefits of wisdom are ultimately meaningless!”

2:16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be remembered for very long, because in the days to come, both will already have been forgotten. Alas, the wise man dies – just like the fool!

2:17 So I loathed life because what happens on earth seems awful to me; for all the benefits of wisdom are futile – like chasing the wind.

### **Futility of Being a Workaholic**

2:18 So I loathed all the fruit of my effort, for which I worked so hard on earth, because I must leave it behind in the hands of my successor.

2:19 Who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool?

Yet he will be master over all the fruit of my labor for which I worked so wisely on earth! This also is futile!

2:20 So I began to despair about all the fruit of my labor for which I worked so hard on earth.

2:21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; however, he must hand over the fruit of his labor as an inheritance to someone else who did not work for it. This also is futile, and an awful injustice!

### **Painful Days and Restless Nights**

2:22 What does a man acquire from all his labor and from the anxiety that accompanies his toil on earth?

2:23 For all day long his work produces pain and frustration, and even at night his mind cannot relax! This also is futile!

### **Enjoy Work and its Benefits**

2:24 There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in their work. I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God.

2:25 For no one can eat and drink or experience joy apart from him.

2:26 For to the one who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner, he gives the task of amassing wealth – only to give it to the one who pleases God. This task of the wicked is futile – like chasing the wind!

### **A Time for All Events in Life**

3:1 For everything there is an appointed time, and an appropriate time for every activity on earth:

3:2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted;

3:3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

3:4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

3:5 A time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

3:6 A time to search, and a time to give something up as lost; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

3:7 A time to rip, and a time to sew; a time to keep silent, and a time to speak.

3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

### **Man is Ignorant of God's Timing**

3:9 What benefit can a worker gain from his toil?

3:10 I have observed the burden that God has given to people to keep them occupied.

3:11 God has made everything fit beautifully in its appropriate time, but he has also placed ignorance in the human heart so that people cannot discover what God has ordained, from the beginning to the end of their lives.

### **Enjoy Life in the Present**

3:12 I have concluded that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they live,

3:13 and also that everyone should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all his toil, for these things are a gift from God.

### **God's Sovereignty**

3:14 I also know that whatever God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken away from it. God has made it this way, so that men will fear him.

3:15 Whatever exists now has already been, and whatever will be has already been; for God will seek to do again what has occurred in the past.

### **The Problem of Injustice and Oppression**

3:16 I saw something else on earth: In the place of justice, there was wickedness, and in the place of fairness, there was wickedness.

3:17 I thought to myself, "God will judge both the righteous and the wicked; for there is an appropriate time for every activity, and there is a time of judgment for every deed.

3:18 I also thought to myself, "It is for the sake of people, so God can clearly show them that they are like animals.

3:19 For the fate of humans and the fate of animals are the same: As one dies, so dies the other; both have the same breath. There is no advantage for humans over animals, for both are fleeting.

3:20 Both go to the same place, both come from the dust, and to dust both return.

3:21 Who really knows if the human spirit ascends upward, and the animal's spirit descends into the earth?

3:22 So I perceived there is nothing better than for people to enjoy their work, because that is their reward; for who can show them what the future holds?

## PRAYER

Lord, You are the source of appropriate pleasure and of wisdom. May I always look to You, rather than the world, so that my pleasures are blessed by You and my choices flow from Your wisdom. You have decided that You will allow humankind a free will in matters that are not reserved for Your sovereign will and therefore many of the activities of man are directed by man. May I be in constant communication with the Holy Spirit so that I will recognize the difference between Your moral will and Your sovereign will and give You the glory in both.

## SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Solomon began the lament of Ecclesiastes with a sweeping declaration ““Futile! Futile!” laments the Teacher, “Absolutely futile! Everything is futile!”“

He then stepped through a series of contexts where his thesis is supported:

“Futility Illustrated from Nature”

“Futility of Secular Accomplishment”

“Futility of Secular Wisdom”

“Futility of Self-Indulgent Pleasure”

“Futility of Materialism”

He paused to contrast wisdom with folly and found wisdom the better:

“Wisdom is Better than Folly”

Then he returned to his litany of futility:

“Futility of Being a Workaholic”

“Painful Days and Restless Nights”

And finally, at the conclusion of his first two chapters, he completed his summary with the discovery that the Lord God is the One Who gives meaning to appropriate pleasure.

“Enjoy Work and its Benefits”

Solomon declared that the Lord God allows for order – but that He has delegated much of that to humankind “For everything there is an appointed time, and an appropriate time for every activity on earth:”

He then provided a list of examples:

“A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted;”

“A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;”

“A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

“A time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;”

“A time to search, and a time to give something up as lost; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;”

“A time to rip, and a time to sew; a time to keep silent, and a time to speak.”

“A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.”

Solomon then observed that the Lord God has a perfect plan for each of us, but that he allows us to make our own choices, and therefore we are unaware of His big-picture plan, rather we wrestle with His moral preferences at every decision-point.

He repeated, from the Psalms, that humankind is expected to work hard and to reap benefits from their labors, and not to postpone all enjoyment for Heaven “... everyone should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all his toil, for these things are a gift from God”

Solomon then contrasted God’s Sovereignty with his just-described moral will.

He concluded the chapter in a pessimistic mood, wondering when he found injustice in the courts, and observing that both animal and man return to dust; then wondering if the human spirit rose toward heaven at death whereas those of animals descended.

## INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

### CONSIDER

Solomon's use of the phrase "like chasing the wind" is very similar to a phrase in the Book of Proverbs "grasping oil in your right hand". Both are impossible endeavors. His puzzled question re. The relative eternal destiny of animals versus humans is, of course, a wrong-headed postulate as animals have no eternal spirit and humans-alone will be divided between Heaven and Hell.

### DISCUSS

Why would Solomon, with all of his God-gifted wisdom, need to go through so much effort to discern that "There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in their work. I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God."? Also, is it possible to have a genuine two-way relationship if all of the meaningful decisions made by both parties to it are imposed by One?

### REFLECT

People in the secular world rise in the morning knowing that in the eyes of their peers, and apart from the Lord God, they have no inherent value, thus they spend their day trying to earn value in the eyes of others who also awoke feeling equally-empty and valueless. It is important to ponder the NET Translator's Notes explanation that the Lord God directs some activities but allows humankind to determine the "appointed time".

### SHARE

When have you experienced futility in the pursuit of worldly priorities? When have you experienced or observed the truth that enjoying the fruits of your honest labor proved a blessing of the Lord God?

## FAITH IN ACTION

### PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place in your life where you are striving toward worldly values rather than the Lord God's priorities, even in some small and unaware way, and also to reveal to you an activity about which timing you were troubled only to discover that it was all in the Lord God's perfect timing as He worked through humankind to guide the events.

### ACT

Today I will confess and repent, seek and receive the Lord God's forgiveness, and then act to alter the priorities of my life; great or small. It may be about my appearance, car, finances, home, power, prestige, or some other area. I will ask a fellow believer to assist me with accountability and prayers in-agreement. I will reflect and marvel, - then give thanks and praise to the Lord God.



Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

## **Monday ([Ecclesiastes 4-5](#))**

### **Evil Oppression on Earth**

4:1 So I again considered all the oppression that continually occurs on earth.

This is what I saw:

The oppressed were in tears, but no one was comforting them; no one delivers them from the power of their oppressors.

4:2 So I considered those who are dead and gone more fortunate than those who are still alive.

4:3 But better than both is the one who has not been born and has not seen the evil things that are done on earth.

### **Labor Motivated by Envy**

4:4 Then I considered all the skillful work that is done: Surely it is nothing more than competition between one person and another. This also is profitless – like chasing the wind.

4:5 The fool folds his hands and does no work, so he has nothing to eat but his own flesh.

4:6 Better is one handful with some rest than two hands full of toil and chasing the wind.

### **Labor Motivated by Greed**

4:7 So I again considered another futile thing on earth:

4:8 A man who is all alone with no companion, he has no children nor siblings; yet there is no end to all his toil, and he is never satisfied with riches. He laments, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is futile and a burdensome task!

### **Labor is Beneficial When Its Rewards Are Shared**

4:9 Two people are better than one, because they can reap more benefit from their labor.

4:10 For if they fall, one will help his companion up, but pity the person who falls down and has no one to help him up.

4:11 Furthermore, if two lie down together, they can keep each other warm, but how can one person keep warm by himself?

4:12 Although an assailant may overpower one person, two can withstand him. Moreover, a three-stranded cord is not quickly broken.

### **Labor Motivated by Prestige-Seeking**

4:13 A poor but wise youth is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive advice.

4:14 For he came out of prison to become king, even though he had been born poor in what would become his kingdom.

4:15 I considered all the living who walk on earth, as well as the successor who would arise in his place.

4:16 There is no end to all the people nor to the past generations, yet future generations will not rejoice in him. This also is profitless and like chasing the wind.

### **Rash Vows**

5:1 Be careful what you do when you go to the temple of God; draw near to listen rather than to offer a sacrifice like fools, for they do not realize that they are doing wrong.

5:2 Do not be rash with your mouth or hasty in your heart to bring up a matter before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth! Therefore, let your words be few.

5:3 Just as dreams come when there are many cares, so the rash vow of a fool occurs when there are many words.

5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in paying it. For God takes no pleasure in fools: Pay what you vow!

5:5 It is better for you not to vow than to vow and not pay it.

5:6 Do not let your mouth cause you to sin, and do not tell the priest, "It was a mistake!" Why make God angry at you so that he would destroy the work of your hands?"

5:7 Just as there is futility in many dreams, so also in many words. Therefore, fear God!

### **Government Corruption**

5:8 If you see the extortion of the poor, or the perversion of justice and fairness in the government, do not be astonished by the matter. For the high official is watched by a higher official, and there are higher ones over them!

5:9 The produce of the land is seized by all of them, even the king is served by the fields.

### **Covetousness**

5:10 The one who loves money will never be satisfied with money, he who loves wealth will never be satisfied with his income. This also is futile.

5:11 When someone's prosperity increases, those who consume it also increase; so what does its owner gain, except that he gets to see it with his eyes?

5:12 The sleep of the laborer is pleasant – whether he eats little or much – but the wealth of the rich will not allow him to sleep.

### **Materialism Thwarts Enjoyment of Life**

5:13 Here is a misfortune on earth that I have seen: Wealth hoarded by its owner to his own misery.

5:14 Then that wealth was lost through bad luck; although he fathered a son, he has nothing left to give him.

5:15 Just as he came forth from his mother's womb, naked will he return as he came, and he will take nothing in his hand that he may carry away from his toil.

5:16 This is another misfortune: Just as he came, so will he go. What did he gain from toiling for the wind?

5:17 Surely, he ate in darkness every day of his life, and he suffered greatly with sickness and anger.

### **Enjoy the Fruit of Your Labor**

5:18 I have seen personally what is the only beneficial and appropriate course of action for people: to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all their hard work on earth during the few days of their life which God has given them, for this is their reward.

5:19 To every man whom God has given wealth, and possessions, he has also given him the ability to eat from them, to receive his reward and to find enjoyment in his toil; these things are the gift of God.

5:20 For he does not think much about the fleeting days of his life because God keeps him preoccupied with the joy he derives from his activity.

### **PRAYER**

Lord, You teach us to be in balance, to enjoy every moment of life as a gift from You, and to share what we have as Your blessing through us to others. May I be generous, never envious of others, never coveting wealth for its own sake, and participate fully in each day – as tomorrow in this world is promised to no one.

## SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Solomon decided to “... again consider(ed) all the oppression that continually occurs on earth.” and in his flesh decided that due to the lack of compassion those who died were better-off than those who continued to live, and those who had never been born the most-blessed.

He considered the matter of balance in how one engaged in skilled work, observing that some acted from a heart of pride – competing against others – while others didn’t develop their skills at all. He concluded that a balance was necessary.

He considered a person who worked and lived alone, with no children or sibling(s), yet worked hard and then wondered to what purpose – for lack of someone to bless and to share. He then observed that two were likely to be more productive working in harmony, could help one-another when ill or injured, and could defend themselves better than if alone. He illustrated using the physics of a woven rope where two cords were stronger than one and three even stronger.

Solomon observed that an old king who had become unteachable, because he still longed for more-prestige, was less-valuable than a younger king with some humility.

He warned that one who rushed into the presence of God to make promises had best be careful that they are ones he can fulfill, otherwise he may anger the Lord God.

Solomon people to not be surprised by government corruption as foolishness and greed would lead them to confiscate the produce of fields whose produce was already theirs. He further observed that there may be some accountability found in levels of government.

He warned that when one coveted money it would always be spent as quickly as it was earned and would keep one awake worrying about the acquisition of more. This he contrasted with the peace of the one who worked to pay bills but who was not obsessed with greater and greater wealth.

Solomon observed that one who hoarded money for the sake of amassing wealth would find himself constantly-troubled by fear of its loss, and when lost through misfortune, discover an empty life was all that remained.

He concluded that one should enjoy what the Lord God has provided in each moment as a gift and not worry about the future.

## INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

### CONSIDER

When Solomon said that one should enjoy what the Lord God has provided in each moment as a gift and not worry about the future, he was not teaching carelessness and a failure to prepare, but rather was speaking about enjoying moments that would pass and never return.

### DISCUSS

Why would Solomon make such a big deal about money?

### REFLECT

In each illustration of Solomon is not the heart-condition of the person the primary determiner of wisdom versus foolishness?

### SHARE

When have you experienced or observed an obsession with competing with others, out or envy and pride, leading to an empty and troubled life?

## FAITH IN ACTION

### PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where you have become so worried about money that you've missed what is truly important and once-passed, irretrievable.

### ACT

Today I will confess and repent of my obsession or worries about money, ask and receive the Lord's forgiveness, then partner with a fellow-believer as I restructure my priorities based on trust in the Lord versus money.

Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

## Tuesday ([Ecclesiastes 6–7:14](#))

### Not Everyone Enjoys Life

6:1 Here is another misfortune that I have seen on earth, and it weighs heavily on people:

6:2 God gives a man riches, property, and wealth so that he lacks nothing that his heart desires, yet God does not enable him to enjoy the fruit of his labor – instead, someone else enjoys it! This is fruitless and a grave misfortune.

6:3 Even if a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years – even if he lives a long, long time, but cannot enjoy his prosperity – even if he were to live forever – I would say, “A stillborn child is better off than he is!”

6:4 Though the stillborn child came into the world for no reason and departed into darkness, though its name is shrouded in darkness,

6:5 though it never saw the light of day nor knew anything, yet it has more rest than that man –

6:6 if he should live a thousand years twice, yet does not enjoy his prosperity. For both of them die!

6:7 All of man’s labor is for nothing more than to fill his stomach – yet his appetite is never satisfied!

6:8 So what advantage does a wise man have over a fool?

And what advantage does a pauper gain by knowing how to survive?

6:9 It is better to be content with what the eyes can see than for one’s heart always to crave more.

This continual longing is futile – like chasing the wind.

### **The Futile Way Life Works**

6:10 Whatever has happened was foreordained, and what happens to a person was also foreknown. It is useless for him to argue with God about his fate because God is more powerful than he is.

6:11 The more one argues with words, the less he accomplishes. How does that benefit him?

6:12 For no one knows what is best for a person during his life – during the few days of his fleeting life – for they pass away like a shadow. Nor can anyone tell him what the future will hold for him on earth.

### **Life is Brief and Death is Certain!**

7:1 A good reputation is better than precious perfume; likewise, the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth.

7:2 It is better to go to a funeral than a feast. For death is the destiny of every person, and the living should take this to heart.

7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter, because sober reflection is good for the heart.

7:4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of merrymaking.

## Frivolous Living Versus Wisdom

7:5 It is better for a person to receive a rebuke from those who are wise than to listen to the song of fools.

7:6 For like the crackling of quick-burning thorns under a cooking pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This kind of folly also is useless.

## Human Wisdom Overturned by Adversity

7:7 Surely oppression can turn a wise person into a fool; likewise, a bribe corrupts the heart.

7:8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning; likewise, patience is better than pride.

7:9 Do not let yourself be quickly provoked, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

7:10 Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these days?" for it is not wise to ask that.

## Wisdom Can Lengthen One's Life

7:11 Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing; it benefits those who see the light of day.

7:12 For wisdom provides protection, just as money provides protection. But the advantage of knowledge is this:

Wisdom preserves the life of its owner.

## Wisdom Acknowledges God's Orchestration of Life

7:13 Consider the work of God: For who can make straight what he has bent?

7:14 In times of prosperity be joyful, but in times of adversity consider this: God has made one as well as the other, so that no one can discover what the future holds.

## PRAYER

Lord, Your message is consistent and simple – if we look toward Your perfect will for our lives and live through the wisdom that You provide we may expect a better result than if we disobey and foolishly disregard Your perfect wisdom. May my heart be submitted to You, no matter what.

## SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Solomon argued that a man may be given, by the Lord God, everything that his heart desires but may not find joy in it. The things of his hearts-desires may bring him little joy, and at his passing be given to others who do find joy. Under these circumstances his life is worse than one never born. [The text does not clearly explain but it seems that the man was irresponsible and/or ungrateful with what he had been given. The text following suggests that the problem was an absence of being content with that he had and therefore obsessed with the constant acquisition of more.]

He then argued that it was pointless for the man to argue with the Lord God about his fate because everything was "... foreordained, and what happens to a person was also foreknown." This sounds like fatalism but really represents covenant-related outcomes based upon choices. If the man is ungrateful and obsessed with the endless pursuit of wealth then he has no expectation of the Lord God's blessing. If the man is grateful and content with has been given him by the Lord then he will be blessed. The consequences of his choices have foreordained consequences and God's knowledge is not time-bound.

Solomon taught that "A good reputation is better than precious perfume;", which means that an morals-based ethical lifestyle was very important, and "[...likewise](#), the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.", because one no longer had to strive to keep a good reputation.

He declared "It is better to go to a funeral than a feast. For death is the destiny of every person, and the living should take this to heart ...Sorrow is better than laughter, because sober reflection is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of merrymaking." because the ones left behind could find value in the study of the life of the recently deceased. The mourners could also recognize that they would not live forever and should bring closure to things they had left undone and/or unsaid and/or unreconciled.

Solomon returned to a theme of Proverbs, warning that one who lived a shallow and meaningless life will have wasted his or her life.

He then warned that one who appeared wise, based on mere human knowledge and philosophy, would abandon their prideful-certainty in times of trouble. He also warned that looking back upon human achievements and worldly history and declaring the "old days" better than today was foolish.

Solomon taught that wisdom preserved life, because it protected one from foolish choices, and wisdom also acknowledged God's involvement in life based upon man's heart-centered choices to obey or disobey – and the consequences of those choices.

He concluded that one must at all times be joyful that one belongs to the Lord God, be those times good or difficult, because one cannot know what things lie ahead nor why, and one often cannot change them, so one must trust the Lord to make it through.

**INTERACT WITH THE TEXT**

**CONSIDER**



Accepting that the Lord God has the big-picture under control, and that He does all things for His perfectly-good purpose, makes dealing with worldly imperfections more bearable.

### **DISCUSS**

Why did Solomon repeat the phrase that death was often better than life?

### **REFLECT**

As is the consistent teaching throughout the Bible, the Lord God knows our hearts, so He knows why we do what we do. It does not matter to Him if we manage to create the appearance of wisdom or foolishness in the eyes of fellow human beings.

### **SHARE**

When have you observed someone with many blessings from the Lord God still waste their life in striving because they were never satisfied?

### **FAITH IN ACTION**

### **PRAY**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you an opportunity to celebrate the promise of Heaven, and the many gifts of the Lord God, even in the midst of difficulty.

### **ACT**

Today I will take the time to remember all that the Lord God has done for me and I will praise Him. I will also seek what I may learn from any present difficulty and praise Him for maturing me. Finally, I will allow Him to be my comfort and strength and I will praise Him for that.

Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

## **Wednesday ([Ecclesiastes 7:15-8](#))**

### **Exceptions to the Law of Retribution**

7:15 During the days of my fleeting life I have seen both of these things: Sometimes a righteous person dies prematurely in spite of his righteousness, and sometimes a wicked person lives long in spite of his evil deeds.

7:16 So do not be excessively righteous or excessively wise; otherwise you might be disappointed.

7:17 Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool; otherwise you might die before your time.

7:18 It is best to take hold of one warning without letting go of the other warning; for the one who fears God will follow both warnings.

#### Wisdom Needed Because No One is Truly Righteous

7:19 Wisdom gives a wise person more protection than ten rulers in a city.

7:20 For there is not one truly righteous person on the earth who continually does good and never sins.

7:21 Also, do not pay attention to everything that people say; otherwise, you might even hear your servant cursing you.

7:22 For you know in your own heart that you also have cursed others many times.

#### Human Wisdom is Limited

7:23 I have examined all this by wisdom; I said, "I am determined to comprehend this" – but it was beyond my grasp.

7:24 Whatever has happened is beyond human understanding; it is far deeper than anyone can fathom.

#### True Righteousness and Wisdom are Virtually Nonexistent

7:25 I tried to understand, examine, and comprehend the role of wisdom in the scheme of things, and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the insanity of folly.

7:26 I discovered this: More bitter than death is the kind of woman who is like a hunter's snare; her heart is like a hunter's net and her hands are like prison chains. The man who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is captured by her.

7:27 The Teacher says: I discovered this while trying to discover the scheme of things, item by item.

7:28 What I have continually sought, I have not found; I have found only one upright man among a thousand, but I have not found one upright woman among all of them.

7:29 This alone have I discovered: God made humankind upright, but they have sought many evil schemes.

#### Human Government Demonstrates Limitations of Wisdom

8:1 Who is a wise person? Who knows the solution to a problem?

A person's wisdom brightens his appearance, and softens his harsh countenance.

8:2 Obey the king's command, because you took an oath before God to be loyal to him.

8:3 Do not rush out of the king's presence in haste – do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he can do whatever he pleases.

8:4 Surely the king's authority is absolute; no one can say to him, "What are you doing?"

8:5 Whoever obeys his command will not experience harm, and a wise person knows the proper time and procedure.

8:6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, for the oppression of the king is severe upon his victim.

8:7 Surely no one knows the future, and no one can tell another person what will happen.

8:8 Just as no one has power over the wind to restrain it, so no one has power over the day of his death. Just as no one can be discharged during the battle, so wickedness cannot rescue the wicked.

8:9 While applying my mind to everything that happens in this world, I have seen all this: Sometimes one person dominates other people to their harm.

### **Contradictions to the Law of Retribution**

8:10 Not only that, but I have seen the wicked approaching and entering the temple, and as they left the holy temple, they boasted in the city that they had done so. This also is an enigma.

8:11 When a sentence is not executed at once against a crime, the human heart is encouraged to do evil.

8:12 Even though a sinner might commit a hundred crimes and still live a long time, yet I know that it will go well with God-fearing people – for they stand in fear before him.

8:13 But it will not go well with the wicked, nor will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God.

8:14 Here is another enigma that occurs on earth: Sometimes there are righteous people who get what the wicked deserve, and sometimes there are wicked people who get what the righteous deserve. I said, "This also is an enigma."

### **Enjoy Life In Spite of Its Injustices**

8:15 So I recommend the enjoyment of life, for there is nothing better on earth for a person to do except to eat, drink, and enjoy life. So joy will accompany him in his toil during the days of his life which God gives him on earth.

## Limitations of Human Wisdom

8:16 When I tried to gain wisdom and to observe the activity on earth – even though it prevents anyone from sleeping day or night –

8:17 then I discerned all that God has done: No one really comprehends what happens on earth. Despite all human efforts to discover it, no one can ever grasp it. Even if a wise person claimed that he understood, he would not really comprehend it.

## PRAYER

Lord, You see endless details that we fail to notice, let alone understand. May I simply trust You and not try to understand everything about You with my limited human capacity.

## SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Solomon warned that attempting, in the flesh, to be at an extreme of righteousness or unrighteousness would likely have a bad outcome; in the first case a lack of joy and a disappointing ending, in the second foolishness that could lead to an early demise after a pointless and destructive existence.

He observed that none go without sinning therefore wisdom is necessary to restore them to right-thinking and acting. He also warned that the compliments of other people might lead one to a distorted self-image.

Solomon confessed that he tried to understand the dilemma of too-righteous versus too-unrighteous, having declared “I am determined to comprehend this”, only to discover “... it was beyond my grasp. Whatever has happened is beyond human understanding; it is far deeper than anyone can fathom ... This alone have I discovered: God made humankind upright, but they have sought many evil schemes.”

He taught that one way to discern a “wise person” who may know “the solution to a problem” one might observe that a “... person’s wisdom brightens his appearance, and softens his harsh countenance.”

He further instructed “Obey the king’s command, because you took an oath before God to be loyal to him.” with the qualifier that while the king did not know the future, he had power over your immediate future – so obey and stay out of trouble with him – disobey and risk great trouble.

In the context of kings [and others with authority] Solomon shared the warning “Sometimes one person dominates other people to their harm.”

He struggled with what he called “the law of retribution”, which he had believed to mean that evil was always punished “... I have seen the wicked approaching and entering the temple, and as they left the holy temple, they boasted in the city that they had done so. This also is an enigma.”

Solomon warned “When a sentence is not executed at once against a crime, the human heart is encouraged to do evil.”

He recognized the power of forgiveness as part of the Lord God’s grace toward those who surrender to Him “Even though a sinner might commit a hundred crimes and still live a long time, yet I know that it will go well with God-fearing people – for they stand in fear before him.”

He also recognized that the unrepentant would face an angry God “But it will not go well with the wicked, nor will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God.”

Solomon was puzzled because he could not see as the Lord God sees and thus it appeared to him that “Sometimes there are righteous people who get what the wicked deserve, and sometimes there are wicked people who get what the righteous deserve.”

He taught “So I recommend the enjoyment of life, for there is nothing better on earth for a person to do except to eat, drink, and enjoy life. So joy will accompany him in his toil during the days of his life which God gives him on earth.”

Solomon concluded that trying “... to gain wisdom and to observe the activity on earth ... would prevent one “... from sleeping day or night”, because “... all that God has done” is beyond “... all human efforts to discover it, no one can ever grasp it. Even if a wise person claimed that he understood, he would not really comprehend it.”

## INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

### **CONSIDER**

One has to stuff the Lord God into a man-sized box in order to comprehend Him, all that He has done, and the reasons why. He simply does not fit into our boxes nor are we capable of fully perceiving either God or His absolute knowledge..

### **DISCUSS**

Where might Solomon have come up with the notion of “the law of retribution”?

### **REFLECT**

If Solomon, with the gift of extraordinary wisdom, could not comprehend all of the Lord God how could any other person imagine they could do so better? “7:29 This alone have I discovered: God made humankind upright, but they have sought many evil schemes.” The Fall poisoned all – no one can point to anything in this world that is the same as the original Creation – not a single thing. As someone quipped “God don’t make junk.”

## **SHARE**

When have you experienced or observed the forgiveness and grace of the Lord God that overcame a long history of sin?

## **FAITH IN ACTION**

## **PRAY**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where you may not be enjoying the gifts of the Lord God fully because you are too troubled with attempting to understand all of the details.

## **ACT**

Today I will pause to enjoy the gifts of the Lord God and I will give thanks.

Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

## **Thursday ([Ecclesiastes 9-12](#))**

### **Everyone Will Die**

9:1 So I reflected on all this, attempting to clear it all up.

I concluded that the righteous and the wise, as well as their works, are in the hand of God; whether a person will be loved or hated – no one knows what lies ahead.

9:2 Everyone shares the same fate – the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the ceremonially clean and unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

What happens to the good person, also happens to the sinner; what happens to those who make vows, also happens to those who are afraid to make vows.

9:3 This is the unfortunate fact about everything that happens on earth: the same fate awaits everyone.

In addition to this, the hearts of all people are full of evil, and there is folly in their hearts during their lives – then they die.

### **Better to Be Poor but Alive than Rich but Dead**

9:4 But whoever is among the living has hope; a live dog is better than a dead lion.

9:5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead do not know anything; they have no further reward – and even the memory of them disappears.

9:6 What they loved, as well as what they hated and envied, perished long ago, and they no longer have a part in anything that happens on earth.

### **Life is Brief, so Cherish its Joys**

9:7 Go, eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, because God has already approved your works.

9:8 Let your clothes always be white, and do not spare precious ointment on your head.

9:9 Enjoy life with your beloved wife during all the days of your fleeting life that God has given you on earth during all your fleeting days; for that is your reward in life and in your burdensome work on earth.

9:10 Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might, because there is neither work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, the place where you will eventually go.

### **Wisdom Cannot Protect against Seemingly Chance Events**

9:11 Again, I observed this on the earth: the race is not always won by the swiftest, the battle is not always won by the strongest; prosperity does not always belong to those who are the wisest, wealth does not always belong to those who are the most discerning, nor does success always come to those with the most knowledge – for time and chance may overcome them all.

9:12 Surely, no one knows his appointed time!

Like fish that are caught in a deadly net, and like birds that are caught in a snare – just like them, all people are ensnared at an unfortunate time that falls upon them suddenly.

### **Most People Are Not Receptive to Wise Counsel**

9:13 This is what I also observed about wisdom on earth, and it is a great burden to me:

9:14 There was once a small city with a few men in it, and a mighty king attacked it, besieging it and building strong siege works against it.

9:15 However, a poor but wise man lived in the city, and he could have delivered the city by his wisdom, but no one listened to that poor man.

9:16 So I concluded that wisdom is better than might, but a poor man's wisdom is despised; no one ever listens to his advice.

### **Wisdom versus Fools, Sin, and Folly**

9:17 The words of the wise are heard in quiet, more than the shouting of a ruler is heard among fools.

9:18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much that is good.

10:1 One dead fly makes the perfumer's ointment give off a rancid stench, so a little folly can outweigh much wisdom.

### **Wisdom Can Be Nullified By the Caprice of Rulers**

10:2 A wise person's good sense protects him, but a fool's lack of sense leaves him vulnerable.

10:3 Even when a fool walks along the road he lacks sense, and shows everyone what a fool he is.

10:4 If the anger of the ruler flares up against you, do not resign from your position, for a calm response can undo great offenses.

10:5 I have seen another misfortune on the earth: It is an error a ruler makes.

10:6 Fools are placed in many positions of authority, while wealthy men sit in lowly positions.

10:7 I have seen slaves on horseback and princes walking on foot like slaves.

### **Wisdom is Needed to Avert Dangers in Everyday Life**

10:8 One who digs a pit may fall into it, and one who breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

10:9 One who quarries stones may be injured by them; one who splits logs may be endangered by them.

10:10 If an iron axhead is blunt and a workman does not sharpen its edge, he must exert a great deal of effort; so wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

10:11 If the snake should bite before it is charmed, the snake charmer is in trouble.

### **Words and Works of Wise Men and Fools**

10:12 The words of a wise person win him favor, but the words of a fool are self-destructive.

10:13 At the beginning his words are foolish and at the end his talk is wicked madness,

10:14 yet a fool keeps on babbling. No one knows what will happen; who can tell him what will happen in the future?

10:15 The toil of a stupid fool wears him out, because he does not even know the way to the city.



## **The Problem with Foolish Rulers**

10:16 Woe to you, O land, when your king is childish, and your princes feast in the morning!

10:17 Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time – with self-control and not in drunkenness.

10:18 Because of laziness the roof caves in, and because of idle hands the house leaks.

10:19 Feasts are made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything.

10:20 Do not curse a king even in your thoughts, and do not curse the rich while in your bedroom; for a bird might report what you are thinking, or some winged creature might repeat your words.

## **Ignorance of the Future Demands Diligence in the Present**

11:1 Send your grain overseas, for after many days you will get a return.

11:2 Divide your merchandise among seven or even eight investments, for you do not know what calamity may happen on earth.

11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they will empty themselves on the earth, and whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, the tree will lie wherever it falls.

11:4 He who watches the wind will not sow, and he who observes the clouds will not reap.

11:5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind, or how the bones form in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and do not stop working until the evening; for you do not know which activity will succeed – whether this one or that one, or whether both will prosper equally.

## **Life Should Be Enjoyed Because Death is Inevitable**

11:7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for a person to see the sun.

11:8 So, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all, but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many – all that is about to come is obscure.

## **Enjoy Life to the Fullest under the Fear of God**

11:9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.

Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes, but know that God will judge your motives and actions.

11:10 Banish emotional stress from your mind. and put away pain from your body; for youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

### **Fear God Now Because Old Age and Death Come Quickly**

12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth – before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”;

12:2 before the sun and the light of the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds disappear after the rain;

12:3 when those who keep watch over the house begin to tremble, and the virile men begin to stoop over, and the grinders begin to cease because they grow few, and those who look through the windows grow dim,

12:4 and the doors along the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding mill grows low, and one is awakened by the sound of a bird, and all their songs grow faint,

12:5 and they are afraid of heights and the dangers in the street; the almond blossoms grow white, and the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper berry shrivels up – because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about in the streets –

12:6 before the silver cord is removed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the well, or the water wheel is broken at the cistern –

12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the life’s breath returns to God who gave it.

### **Concluding Refrain: Qoheleth Restates His Thesis**

12:8 “Absolutely futile!” laments the Teacher, “All of these things are futile!”

### **Concluding Epilogue: Qoheleth’s Advice is Wise**

12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught knowledge to the people; he carefully evaluated and arranged many proverbs.

12:10 The Teacher sought to find delightful words, and to write accurately truthful sayings.

12:11 The words of the sages are like prods, and the collected sayings are like firmly fixed nails; they are given by one shepherd.

Concluding Exhortation: Fear God and Obey His Commands!

12:12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. There is no end to the making of many books, and much study is exhausting to the body.

12:13 Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion: Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.

12:14 For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

## PRAYER

Lord, everyone will one day die, and so what is in this world will one day pass away. May I remember that this time is brief and temporary compared to eternity with You my Lord. You desire that we enjoy the gifts You give us in this life, but in the context of what is honoring to You – and you want us to know that You see everything. May I be constantly aware of Your presence, so that when I enjoy Your gifts, I do not lose perspective and dishonor You in my flesh.

## SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Solomon acknowledged; drawing upon all of his God-gifted wisdom, and after all of his flesh-driven research, that everyone dies. He further qualified this “... the hearts of all people are full of evil, and there is folly in their hearts during their lives, then they die.”

He then observed, from a flesh-based perspective, that once-dead a person has no value in this world – so from a flesh-based perspective any living being has more value than any dead one. He encouraged the living to enjoy the positive things of this life fully as they are gone at death.

Solomon reported his observation that neither the wise or the foolish can control their future, either may dies in a sudden event.

He observed that wisdom is superior to might but “... a poor man’s wisdom is despised; no one ever listens to his advice.”, so those who will not listen – based only on the external appearance – become fools, absent the wisdom they missed.

Solomon taught that one foolish person in the wrong position of authority can overwhelm the wisdom of the wise and that those in power should be very careful whom they choose.

Likewise, he taught that in everyday life wisdom can protect us from trouble; e.g. falling in the hole we are digging, working around places where there may be snakes, avoiding injury from stones and logs in the workplace.

Solomon contrasted the positive reputation of the wise person with the worthless words and deeds of a fool. He also observed that leaders needed to be wise for if they are foolish they will also be worthless to themselves and the people.

Solomon shared his learning that one must invest in diverse enterprises as one cannot be certain that any single investment will prosper, he further shared that one should start work early on a good weather day and continue throughout as one could not know what tomorrow might bring.

He advised “Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes, but know that God will judge your motives and actions.” because life is short, and also to avoid emotional stress and physical pain [presumably via the application of wisdom].

Solomon counseled “So remember your Creator in the days of your youth – before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no pleasure in them” ... and the dust [from which you came] returns to the earth as it was, and the life’s breath returns to God who gave it.”

There is some scholarly debate as to the meaning of the phrase “Qoheleth’s Advice is Wise”, especially as to the identity of Qoheleth. The most-common thought is that it referred to Solomon but the phraseology that follows implies more than one person is intended as the source of the wisdom writings. “Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught knowledge to the people; he carefully evaluated and arranged many proverbs. The Teacher sought to find delightful words, and to write accurately truthful sayings. The words of the sages are like prods, and the collected sayings are like firmly fixed nails; they are given by one shepherd.” [Clearly the “one shepherd” is the Lord God.]

He concluded with the stern advice to not accept anything external to the wisdom teaching as equivalent because such would cause endless “... study” which would be “... exhausting to the body.” He also advised “Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

## INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

### CONSIDER

The death that comes to all proves that the things of this earth are not to be considered nearly as important as the things of the Lord God. Diversification of investments has become a modern practice but Solomon recommended it long ago.

### DISCUSS

Why might it have been so difficult for Solomon to see the truth that death is ‘the great equalizer’? Does it not seem that Pharisees and Saducees ignored Solomon’s warning to avoid adding to the wisdom teaching, because the additions would become burdensome, which is precisely what happened?

### **REFLECT**

When leaders unwisely choose the unwise as advisers it goes badly for everyone. The balance between following “... the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes” while remaining constantly aware (and therefore guided by the knowledge) that “... God will judge your motives and actions.” remains a challenging one.

### **SHARE**

When have you experienced, or observed, an unwise leader surround himself with fools? When have you struggled with the balance between following “... the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes” and living righteously before the Lord God?

### **FAITH IN ACTION**

### **PRAY**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you someone from whom you would not usually seek wisdom but who has some for you and to reveal to you a place where you have become out of balance in your walk; following “... the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes” too far from the path of righteousness.

### **ACT**

Today I will humbly seek-out the one whom the Holy Spirit designates and ask them to share what the Lord God has gifted them to share. I will confess and repent of my flesh-driven drift from righteousness, seek and accept forgiveness from the Lord God, and adjust my walk in the direction of righteousness and away from the things of the flesh.

Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

## **Friday ([1 Kings 10–11](#), [2 Chronicles 9](#))**

1 Kings

### **Solomon Entertains a Queen**

10:1 When the queen of Sheba heard about Solomon, she came to challenge him with difficult questions.  
10:2 She arrived in Jerusalem with a great display of pomp, bringing with her camels carrying spices, a very large quantity of gold, and precious gems. She visited Solomon and discussed with him everything

that was on her mind. 10:3 Solomon answered all her questions; there was no question too complex for the king. 10:4 When the queen of Sheba saw for herself Solomon's extensive wisdom, the palace he had built, 10:5 the food in his banquet hall, his servants and attendants, their robes, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings which he presented in the Lord's temple, she was amazed. 10:6 She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your wise sayings and insight was true! 10:7 I did not believe these things until I came and saw them with my own eyes. Indeed, I didn't hear even half the story! Your wisdom and wealth surpass what was reported to me. 10:8 Your attendants, who stand before you at all times and hear your wise sayings, are truly happy! 10:9 May the Lord your God be praised because he favored you by placing you on the throne of Israel! Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he made you king so you could make just and right decisions." 10:10 She gave the king 120 talents of gold, a very large quantity of spices, and precious gems. The quantity of spices the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon has never been matched. 10:11 (Hiram's fleet, which carried gold from Ophir, also brought from Ophir a very large quantity of fine timber and precious gems. 10:12 With the timber the king made supports for the Lord's temple and for the royal palace and stringed instruments for the musicians. No one has seen so much of this fine timber to this very day.) 10:13 King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba everything she requested, besides what he had freely offered her. Then she left and returned to her homeland with her attendants.

### Solomon's Wealth

10:14 Solomon received 666 talents of gold per year, 10:15 besides what he collected from the merchants, traders, Arabian kings, and governors of the land. 10:16 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; 600 measures of gold were used for each shield. 10:17 He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold; three minas of gold were used for each of these shields. The king placed them in the Palace of the Lebanon Forest.

10:18 The king made a large throne decorated with ivory and overlaid it with pure gold. 10:19 There were six steps leading up to the throne, and the back of it was rounded on top. The throne had two armrests with a statue of a lion standing on each side. 10:20 There were twelve statues of lions on the six steps, one lion at each end of each step. There was nothing like it in any other kingdom.

10:21 All of King Solomon's cups were made of gold, and all the household items in the Palace of the Lebanon Forest were made of pure gold. There were no silver items, for silver was not considered very valuable in Solomon's time. 10:22 Along with Hiram's fleet, the king had a fleet of large merchant ships that sailed the sea. Once every three years the fleet came into port with cargoes of gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

10:23 King Solomon was wealthier and wiser than any of the kings of the earth. 10:24 Everyone in the world wanted to visit Solomon to see him display his God-given wisdom. 10:25 Year after year visitors brought their gifts, which included items of silver, items of gold, clothes, perfume, spices, horses, and mules.

10:26 Solomon accumulated chariots and horses. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses. He kept them in assigned cities and in Jerusalem. 10:27 The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones; cedar was as plentiful as sycamore fig trees are in the lowlands. 10:28 Solomon acquired his horses from Egypt and from Que; the king's traders purchased them from Que. 10:29 They paid 600 silver pieces for each chariot from Egypt and 150 silver pieces for each horse. They also sold chariots and horses to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of Syria.

### **The Lord Punishes Solomon for Idolatry**

11:1 King Solomon fell in love with many foreign women (besides Pharaoh's daughter), including Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. 11:2 They came from nations about which the Lord had warned the Israelites, "You must not establish friendly relations with them! If you do, they will surely shift your allegiance to their gods." But Solomon was irresistibly attracted to them.

11:3 He had 700 royal wives and 300 concubines; his wives had a powerful influence over him. 11:4 When Solomon became old, his wives shifted his allegiance to other gods; he was not wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord his God, as his father David had been. 11:5 Solomon worshiped the Sidonian goddess Astarte and the detestable Ammonite god Milcom. 11:6 Solomon did evil in the Lord's sight; he did not remain loyal to the Lord, like his father David had. 11:7 Furthermore, on the hill east of Jerusalem Solomon built a high place for the detestable Moabite god Chemosh and for the detestable Ammonite god Milcom. 11:8 He built high places for all his foreign wives so they could burn incense and make sacrifices to their gods.

11:9 The Lord was angry with Solomon because he had shifted his allegiance away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him on two occasions 11:10 and had warned him about this very thing, so that he would not follow other gods. But he did not obey the Lord's command. 11:11 So the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you insist on doing these things and have not kept the covenantal rules I gave you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 11:12 However, for your father David's sake I will not do this while you are alive. I will tear it away from your son's hand instead. 11:13 But I will not tear away the entire kingdom; I will leave your son one tribe for my servant David's sake and for the sake of my chosen city Jerusalem."

11:14 The Lord brought against Solomon an enemy, Hadad the Edomite, a descendant of the Edomite king. 11:15 During David's campaign against Edom, Joab, the commander of the army, while on a mission to bury the dead, killed every male in Edom. 11:16 For six months Joab and the entire Israelite army stayed there until they had exterminated every male in Edom. 11:17 Hadad, who was only a small boy at the time, escaped with some of his father's Edomite servants and headed for Egypt. 11:18 They went from Midian to Paran; they took some men from Paran and went to Egypt. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, supplied him with a house and food and even assigned him some land. 11:19 Pharaoh liked Hadad so well he gave him his sister-in-law (Queen Tahpenes' sister) as a wife. 11:20 Tahpenes' sister gave birth to his son, named Genubath. Tahpenes raised him in Pharaoh's palace; Genubath grew up in Pharaoh's

palace among Pharaoh's sons. 11:21 While in Egypt Hadad heard that David had passed away and that Joab, the commander of the army, was dead. So Hadad asked Pharaoh, "Give me permission to leave so I can return to my homeland." 11:22 Pharaoh said to him, "What do you lack here that makes you want to go to your homeland?" Hadad replied, "Nothing, but please give me permission to leave."

11:23 God also brought against Solomon another enemy, Rezon son of Eliada who had run away from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah. 11:24 He gathered some men and organized a raiding band. When David tried to kill them, they went to Damascus, where they settled down and gained control of the city. 11:25 He was Israel's enemy throughout Solomon's reign and, like Hadad, caused trouble. He loathed Israel and ruled over Syria.

11:26 Jeroboam son of Nebat, one of Solomon's servants, rebelled against the king. He was an Ephraimite from Zeredah whose mother was a widow named Zeruah. 11:27 This is what prompted him to rebel against the king: Solomon built a terrace and he closed up a gap in the wall of the city of his father David. 11:28 Jeroboam was a talented man; when Solomon saw that the young man was an accomplished worker, he made him the leader of the work crew from the tribe of Joseph. 11:29 At that time, when Jeroboam had left Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the road; the two of them were alone in the open country. Ahijah was wearing a brand new robe, 11:30 and he grabbed the robe and tore it into twelve pieces. 11:31 Then he told Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces, for this is what the Lord God of Israel says: 'Look, I am about to tear the kingdom from Solomon's hand and I will give ten tribes to you. 11:32 He will retain one tribe, for my servant David's sake and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. 11:33 I am taking the kingdom from him because they have abandoned me and worshiped the Sidonian goddess Astarte, the Moabite god Chemosh, and the Ammonite god Milcom. They have not followed my instructions by doing what I approve and obeying my rules and regulations, like Solomon's father David did. 11:34 I will not take the whole kingdom from his hand. I will allow him to be ruler for the rest of his life for the sake of my chosen servant David who kept my commandments and rules. 11:35 I will take the kingdom from the hand of his son and give ten tribes to you. 11:36 I will leave his son one tribe so my servant David's dynasty may continue to serve me in Jerusalem, the city I have chosen as my home. 11:37 I will select you; you will rule over all you desire to have and you will be king over Israel. 11:38 You must obey all I command you to do, follow my instructions, do what I approve, and keep my rules and commandments, like my servant David did. Then I will be with you and establish for you a lasting dynasty, as I did for David; I will give you Israel. 11:39 I will humiliate David's descendants because of this, but not forever.' 11:40 Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam escaped to Egypt and found refuge with King Shishak of Egypt. He stayed in Egypt until Solomon died.

### **Solomon's Reign Ends**

11:41 The rest of the events of Solomon's reign, including all his accomplishments and his wise decisions, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of Solomon. 11:42 Solomon ruled over all Israel



from Jerusalem for forty years. 11:43 Then Solomon passed away and was buried in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam replaced him as king.

## 2 Chronicles

### Solomon Entertains a Queen

9:1 When the queen of Sheba heard about Solomon, she came to challenge him with difficult questions. She arrived in Jerusalem with a great display of pomp, bringing with her camels carrying spices, a very large quantity of gold, and precious gems. She visited Solomon and discussed with him everything that was on her mind. 9:2 Solomon answered all her questions; there was no question too complex for the king. 9:3 When the queen of Sheba saw for herself Solomon's extensive wisdom, the palace he had built, 9:4 the food in his banquet hall, his servants and attendants in their robes, his cupbearers in their robes, and his burnt sacrifices which he presented in the Lord's temple, she was amazed. 9:5 She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your wise sayings and insight was true! 9:6 I did not believe these things until I came and saw them with my own eyes. Indeed, I didn't hear even half the story! Your wisdom surpasses what was reported to me. 9:7 Your attendants, who stand before you at all times and hear your wise sayings, are truly happy! 9:8 May the Lord your God be praised because he favored you by placing you on his throne as the one ruling on his behalf! Because of your God's love for Israel and his lasting commitment to them, he made you king over them so you could make just and right decisions." 9:9 She gave the king 120 talents of gold and a very large quantity of spices and precious gems. The quantity of spices the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon has never been matched. 9:10 (Hiram's servants, aided by Solomon's servants, brought gold from Ophir, as well as fine timber and precious gems. 9:11 With the timber the king made steps for the Lord's temple and royal palace as well as stringed instruments for the musicians. No one had seen anything like them in the land of Judah prior to that.) 9:12 King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba everything she requested, more than what she had brought him. Then she left and returned to her homeland with her attendants.

### Solomon's Wealth

9:13 Solomon received 666 talents of gold per year, 9:14 besides what he collected from the merchants and traders. All the Arabian kings and the governors of the land also brought gold and silver to Solomon. 9:15 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; 600 measures of hammered gold were used for each shield. 9:16 He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold; 300 measures of gold were used for each of those shields. The king placed them in the Palace of the Lebanon Forest.

9:17 The king made a large throne decorated with ivory and overlaid it with pure gold. 9:18 There were six steps leading up to the throne, and a gold footstool was attached to the throne. The throne had two armrests with a statue of a lion standing on each side. 9:19 There were twelve statues of lions on the six steps, one lion at each end of each step. There was nothing like it in any other kingdom.

9:20 All of King Solomon's cups were made of gold, and all the household items in the Palace of the Lebanon Forest were made of pure gold. There were no silver items, for silver was not considered very valuable in Solomon's time. 9:21 The king had a fleet of large merchant ships manned by Hiram's men that sailed the sea. Once every three years the fleet came into port with cargoes of gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

9:22 King Solomon was wealthier and wiser than any of the kings of the earth. 9:23 All the kings of the earth wanted to visit Solomon to see him display his God-given wisdom. 9:24 Year after year visitors brought their gifts, which included items of silver, items of gold, clothes, perfume, spices, horses, and mules.

9:25 Solomon had 4,000 stalls for his chariot horses and 12,000 horses. He kept them in assigned cities and in Jerusalem. 9:26 He ruled all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines as far as the border of Egypt. 9:27 The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones; cedar was as plentiful as sycamore fig trees are in the lowlands. 9:28 Solomon acquired horses from Egypt and from all the lands.

### Solomon's Reign Ends

9:29 The rest of the events of Solomon's reign, from start to finish, are recorded in the Annals of Nathan the Prophet, the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the Vision of Iddo the Seer pertaining to Jeroboam son of Nebat. 9:30 Solomon ruled over all Israel from Jerusalem for forty years. 9:31 Then Solomon passed away and was buried in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam replaced him as king.

### PRAYER

Lord, the blessings of Israel through Solomon were amazing, a testament to Your fulfillment of Your promise. May I remind people of this time in Biblical history whenever doubt is raised as to Your faithfulness. You have made it clear since the Garden of Eden that rebellion is forbidden, and the consequences are severe. May I have accountability and prayer-partners to help me to avoid drifting into even the smallest area of rebellion.

### SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

The queen of Sheba had heard stories about Israel under the leadership of king Solomon and how the Lord God had blessed him with extraordinary wisdom, and the nation with wealth, so she traveled to see for herself.

The queen was amazed both by the degree to which Solomon's wisdom extended across her many questions and the level of wealth. She shared massive gifts of spices from her home country as well as gold and jewels.

King Hiram of Tyre apparently arrived during her visit bring exotic wood and more gold, the wood was added to the interior of the Temple and palace and some used to make stringed instruments for the musicians. The gold was added to the treasury.

Solomon had so much gold that he covered everything with it, even his throne, and meanwhile he spread silver around to the people, along with great quantities of cedar.

Visitors were arriving constantly to hear Solomon's wisdom and to view the great display of wealth and artistic creativity. Traders used silver to acquire horses and chariots and ships brought home more treasures.

Solomon's appetite for the pleasures of the flesh extended to women whom he found attractive, without regard to their national or religious affiliation, and too often this was in direct disobedience to the clear commandment of the Lord God.

As an old man he sought to please these foreign women by building places for them to worship their false gods and then by worshiping them himself.

God informed Solomon that due to his rebellion He would remove all but one tribe from his son, and that only to preserve Jerusalem, and that the peace the kingdom had enjoyed would be lost immediately.

Hadad the Edomite, the only male (then a very young child) who escaped David and Joab's effort to exterminate the Edomites, returned from exile in Egypt with a small force of fighters. Also, Rezon son of Eliada, who had run away to Damascus and eventually took control of Syria began raids on Israel.

Jeroboam, son of Nebat and Ephramite from the tribe of Joseph was informed by the prophet Ahijah that he was to become king over nine of the tribes, and so he rebelled against Solomon and when Solomon tried to kill him he escaped to Egypt until Solomon's death.

After a forty year reign King Solomon died and his son Rehoboam took the throne.

## INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

### **CONSIDER**

The story of Solomon's kingship begins to have a circus-like feeling to it, people traveling to hear his wisdom in-person, and to view all of the gathered riches. Despite the gift of great wisdom Solomon's flesh overwhelmed his wisdom and he foolishly turned away from the Lord God because of it.

### **DISCUSS**

Should Solomon have worried that such a extravagant display of wealth might encourage invasion or rebellion from jealous men? Were not the warning signs of Solomon's imbalanced priorities present

somewhat early in his reign as he built his personal palace larger than God's Temple, when he covered everything in sight with gold, and he built lavishly like the pagan Pharaohs of Egypt?

## **REFLECT**

Solomon appeared to share the wealth with the people through the distribution of cedar and silver, spreading the Lord God's blessing, and building loyalty.

## **SHARE**

When have you observed someone with a unique gift or great wealth become a celebrity, with that attention and those resources becoming an unhealthy influence on them after a while? When have you observed someone who seemed to have it all make such foolish choices that they lost most or all of it?

## **FAITH IN ACTION**

## **PRAY**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the wealth of resources and wisdom (knowledge + understanding) He has given to you and to reveal to you a place in your life where you are allowing the lust of the flesh to draw you away from Him.

## **ACT**

Today I will praise the Lord God for His good gifts and seek a practical way to share them. I will gratefully accept the chastising and instruction of the Holy Spirit so that now matter how small I may extinguish the seed of rebellion in my life. I will ask a fellow believer to be my accountability and to pray in-agreement as I walk through the process of repentance and restoration to a personal revival.

Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

## **Saturday ([Proverbs 30-31](#))**

The Words of Agur

30:1 The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh; an oracle:

This man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and to Ukal:

30:2 Surely I am more brutish than any other human being, and I do not have human understanding;

30:3 I have not learned wisdom, nor do I have knowledge of the Holy One.

30:4 Who has ascended into heaven, and then descended?

Who has gathered up the winds in his fists?

Who has bound up the waters in his cloak?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is his name, and what is his son's name? – if you know!

30:5 Every word of God is purified; he is like a shield for those who take refuge in him.

30:6 Do not add to his words, lest he reprove you, and prove you to be a liar.

30:7 Two things I ask from you; do not refuse me before I die:

30:8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; do not give me poverty or riches, feed me with my allotted portion of bread,

30:9 lest I become satisfied and act deceptively and say, "Who is the Lord?"

Or lest I become poor and steal and demean the name of my God.

30:10 Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you are found guilty.

30:11 There is a generation who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.

30:12 There is a generation who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not washed from their filthiness.

30:13 There is a generation whose eyes are so lofty, and whose eyelids are lifted up disdainfully.

30:14 There is a generation whose teeth are like swords and whose molars are like knives to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among the human race.

30:15 The leech has two daughters: "Give! Give!"

There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, "Enough" –

30:16 the grave, the barren womb, land that is not satisfied with water, and fire that never says, "Enough!"

30:17 The eye that mocks at a father and despises obeying a mother – the ravens of the valley will peck it out and the young vultures will eat it.

30:18 There are three things that are too wonderful for me, four that I do not understand:

30:19 the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship in the sea, and the way of a man with a woman.

30:20 This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, "I have not done wrong."

30:21 Under three things the earth trembles, and under four things it cannot bear up:

30:22 under a servant who becomes king, under a fool who is stuffed with food,

30:23 under an unloved woman who is married, and under a female servant who dispossesses her mistress.

30:24 There are four things on earth that are small, but they are exceedingly wise:

30:25 ants are creatures with little strength, but they prepare their food in the summer;

30:26 rock badgers are creatures with little power, but they make their homes in the crags;

30:27 locusts have no king, but they all go forward by ranks;

30:28 a lizard you can catch with the hand, but it gets into the palaces of the king.

30:29 There are three things that are magnificent in their step, four things that move about magnificently:

30:30 a lion, mightiest of the beasts, who does not retreat from anything;

30:31 a strutting rooster, a male goat, and a king with his army around him.

30:32 If you have done foolishly by exalting yourself or if you have planned evil, put your hand over your mouth!

30:33 For as the churning of milk produces butter and as punching the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.

### **The Words of Lemuel**

31:1 The words of King Lemuel, an oracle that his mother taught him:

31:2 O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my vows,

31:3 Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which ruins kings.

31:4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to crave strong drink,  
31:5 lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and remove from all the poor their legal rights.  
31:6 Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitterly distressed;  
31:7 let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.  
31:8 Open your mouth on behalf of those unable to speak, for the legal rights of all the dying.  
31:9 Open your mouth, judge in righteousness, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

### **The Wife of Noble Character**

31:10 Who can find a wife of noble character? For her value is far more than rubies.  
31:11 The heart of her husband has confidence in her, and he has no lack of gain.  
31:12 She brings him good and not evil all the days of her life.  
31:13 She obtains wool and flax, and she is pleased to work with her hands.  
31:14 She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.  
31:15 She also gets up while it is still night, and provides food for her household and a portion to her female servants.  
31:16 She considers a field and buys it; from her own income she plants a vineyard.  
31:17 She begins her work vigorously, and she strengthens her arms.  
31:18 She knows that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out in the night.  
31:19 Her hands take hold of the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle.  
31:20 She extends her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hand to the needy.  
31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all of her household are clothed with scarlet.  
31:22 She makes for herself coverlets; her clothing is fine linen and purple.  
31:23 Her husband is well-known in the city gate when he sits with the elders of the land.

31:24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.

31:25 She is clothed with strength and honor, and she can laugh at the time to come.

31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue.

31:27 She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

31:28 Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also praises her:

31:29 “Many daughters have done valiantly, but you surpass them all!”

31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised.

31:31 Give her credit for what she has accomplished, and let her works praise her in the city gates.

## PRAYER

Lord, You cause us to learn from the past and you tell us of things that are important to our present and our future, and all the while You remind us of Jesus. May I take heed of Your Word and center my life upon it! You lead a mother to counsel her son with wisdom that applies to all sons, and which elevates the status and value of women who belong to You to the level of value You desire for them. May I see women through Your eyes and respect them as You have instructed.

## SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

There is much scholarly debate as to the authorship of the Thirtieth Proverb. There is no reference to Agur, or his father Jakeh, elsewhere in the Word of God. Some have speculated that the name Agur was an assumed name used by Solomon for some reason, others that it was indeed another person, just as some of the Psalms were not of David. The Book was included in the Biblical canon at the prompting of Holy Spirit – so it matters not who was the human scribe.

Proverbs Thirty begins with a parable of a sort “This man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and to Ukal: Surely I am more brutish than any other human being, and I do not have human understanding; I have not learned wisdom, nor do I have knowledge of the Holy One.” It then continues with a litany of the things about the Lord God which “This man” does not understand.

[Note: This was written a very long time before the birth of Jesus.]

“Who has ascended into heaven, and then descended?

Who has gathered up the winds in his fists?



Who has bound up the waters in his cloak?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is his name, and what is his son's name? – if you know!"

The sanctity of the Word of God was emphasized: "Every word of God is purified; he is like a shield for those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he reprove you, and prove you to be a liar."

The NET Translator's Notes explain that one should understand the term "generation" in the following texts to refer to a subpopulation in the society and time of the author "There is a generation who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. There is a generation who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation whose eyes are so lofty, and whose eyelids are lifted up disdainfully. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords and whose molars are like knives to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among the human race."

It was common in ancient times, from Biblical and extra-Biblical writings, to use an incremental phrase which began with one number for a list and to then expand it "There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, "Enough" – the grave, the barren womb, land that is not satisfied with water, and fire that never says, "Enough!" ... There are three things that are too wonderful for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship in the sea, and the way of a man with a woman ... Under three things the earth trembles, and under four things it cannot bear up: under a servant who becomes king, under a fool who is stuffed with food, under an unloved woman who is married, and under a female servant who dispossesses her mistress ... There are four things on earth that are small, but they are exceedingly wise: ants are creatures with little strength, but they prepare their food in the summer; rock badgers are creatures with little power, but they make their homes in the crags; locusts have no king, but they all go forward by ranks; a lizard you can catch with the hand, but it gets into the palaces of the king ... There are three things that are magnificent in their step, four things that move about magnificently: a lion, mightiest of the beasts, who does not retreat from anything; a strutting rooster, a male goat, and a king with his army around him."

The warning of Solomon to recognize that choices have consequences was continued here: "If you have done foolishly by exalting yourself or if you have planned evil, put your hand over your mouth! For as the churning of milk produces butter and as punching the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife."

There is considerable scholarly debate as to the authorship of this Proverb. Some insist that Lemuel is a forgotten synonym for Solomon; making the "mother" Bathsheba. Some insist that it is the name of a non-Jewish king of a non-Jewish nation whose writing was believed to have been prompted by the Lord God. And some insist that it is a latter king, and again, Lemuel would be a forgotten synonym for their Biblically-recorded name.

There is one other possibility, it could be Solomon, and he could have been using synonyms for all kings (“my son”) and for wisdom (“mother”) which had previously been characterized or humanized as “she” [e.g. [Prov. 1:20](#)].

What all of these speculations have in common is that the object of the mother’s writing is a son whom she anticipates will become king, and who at the time of his written recollections of her teaching, is indeed a king (literally or rhetorically).

An additional perspective, as one reads the text, is that the context of the man in relationship with his lifestyle choices and his wife is therefore initially that of a king-in-waiting, and then the context of the king with a wife. The lingering question is, therefore, to what degree may the instructions of the text be extrapolated to non-royalty?

Prior to his marriage, and perhaps even his kingship, the son is warned to be cautious about his choices “Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which ruins kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to crave strong drink, lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and remove from all the poor their legal rights.”

Once he has become king the son is to be an advocate for justice “Open your mouth on behalf of those unable to speak, for the legal rights of all the dying. Open your mouth, judge in righteousness, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”

If a man is to marry then there are some characteristics of a wife which wisdom defines and in this fallen world ones which are exceptional “Who can find a wife of noble character? For her value is far more than rubies. The heart of her husband has confidence in her, and he has no lack of gain. She brings him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

The characteristics of the women were further detailed; she is competent in the acquisition of resources and not afraid of hard and humble labor “She obtains wool and flax, and she is pleased to work with her hands.”

She has servants, yet she chooses to rise early to see that they and the rest of her household has food (though it does not say that she prepares it – she “provides” it) “She also gets up while it is still night, and provides food for her household and a portion to her female servants.”

She is an entrepreneur who is allowed to engage in commerce “She considers a field and buys it; from her own income she plants a vineyard.”

The clothing she makes, or perhaps causes to be made, bear the colors of royalty and of wealth “She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all of her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes for herself coverlets; her clothing is fine linen and purple.”

One did not sit with the “elders of the land” at the “city gate” unless one has standing in the community and, as the NET Translator’s Notes explains, they were there to judge the people and he would have been a peer – a judge – as well “Her husband is well-known in the city gate when he sits with the elders of the land.”

She is a woman of confidence, of integrity, and of substance “She is clothed with strength and honor, and she can laugh at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.”

She has earned the respect of her children and of her husband “Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also praises her: “Many daughters have done valiantly, but you surpass them all!”“

Because she belongs to, and obeys, the Lord God she is found worthy of approval by the judges at the “city gates” - it is the “works” that flow from her faithfulness that they judge – and they find nothing in her ‘resume’ to hold against her “Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised. Give her credit for what she has accomplished, and let her works praise her in the city gates.”

## INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

### CONSIDER

Whether written by Solomon, at the behest of the Lord God, or by another these Proverbs bring great wisdom. It would be a considerable stretch to make of [Proverbs 31](#) a pure riddle, within which one must find alternative meanings for every detail, but some have done so. It seems more probable that the descriptions are intended to be more generic, describing the practical living-out of wisdom in the life of the man (the son and later the husband), and of the wife.

### DISCUSS

How could anyone observe these examples in Creation, despite the ravages of the Fall, and not see the Hand of the Lord God? “... ants are creatures with little strength, but they prepare their food in the summer; rock badgers are creatures with little power, but they make their homes in the crags; locusts have no king, but they all go forward by ranks; a lizard you can catch with the hand, but it gets into the palaces of the king”? If one accepts the high-value and huge-freedom granted to the woman, with the praise of the judges at the city gates, how is it that religious leaders later chose to make of women something much less?

### REFLECT

The problem of the subpopulation of rebellious people in the author’s time remains a problem in ours as well. Also, would the author’s son have been worthy of marriage to this remarkable woman had he failed to live in the wisdom of his mother?

## **SHARE**

When have you closely-observed the activities of ants and marveled at Creation? When have you experienced or observed the wisdom of the Lord God poured-out through a mother? [Consider the mother and aunt of Paul's NT protege Timothy.]

## **FAITH IN ACTION**

## **PRAY**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you something that is "... so wonderful in your eyes" that it causes you to look to the Lord God in awe, and also to reveal to you a young person with whom you might share this Proverb.

## **ACT**

Today I will take the time to pause and study Creation all-around me. I will then give praise to the Lord God for His mighty works. I will share [Proverbs 31](#) with the one whom the Holy Spirit has directed. My purpose will be to focus them on the working-out of wisdom that may occur in their lives and the positive fruit of that wisdom.

Be Specific \_\_\_\_\_

All Bible text is from the NET unless otherwise indicated - <http://bible.org>

Note 1: These Studies often rely upon the guidance of the NET Translators from their associated notes. Careful attention has been given to cite that source where it has been quoted directly or closely paraphrased. Feedback is encouraged where credit has not been sufficiently assigned.

Note 2: When NET text is quoted in commentary and discussion all pronouns referring to God are capitalized, though they are lower-case in the original NET text.

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