

Understanding the Wisdom Books in the Old Testament

"Basically, wisdom is the intensely practical art of being skillful and successful in life."

William Dyrness

"Wisdom is the ability to make godly choices in life."

Fee & Stuart

DAY 27

Generally speaking, wisdom lit asks the kinds of questions that all humans have asked: what is this all about? The books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastics deal with the issue of meaning and meaning-making (how one understands, interprets, and makes sense of life).

- **Proverbs:** statistical likelihoods
- **Ecclesiastics:** because wisdom concepts aren't promises, these outcomes aren't guaranteed.
- **Job:** regardless of whether we understand the why of it all, life is a gift from God to be enjoyed and used to worship him.

1

Avoid viewing statements as personal promises (especially for Proverbs).



Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

2

Don't view imperatives as binding commands



Proverbs 26:4-5 "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

3

Look for the principle the imagery points to, not the specifics of the image.



Proverbs 22:11 "One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace will have the king for a friend."

4

Not everything stated in God's word is God's perspective or reflects propositional truth.

Example: "Everything is meaningless."

5

Reading wisdom literature requires keeping the movement of the whole work in mind. Trying to interpret small sections out of the overall context has a higher likelihood of producing incorrect understandings.

6

Remember, wisdom/poetry literatures are different than every other genre in that they are meant to be felt more than understood. They are intended to evoke feelings and force you to ask questions. So, feel and ask. Don't be afraid of that.

What is your one takeaway from this session?

