

PROMISED LAND 2: Lesson Six,
Books of Poetry and Wisdom Literature
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs

Subject: The Old Testament contains five books of poetry and wisdom literature.

Main Idea: The wise person is one who knows God's truth and lives according to it.

Principles:

1. *The truly wise trust God, even when life does not make sense.*
2. *God's deep, abiding love is one of the reasons we can trust Him.*

Introduction

The search for wisdom is probably as ancient as mankind. Eve ate the forbidden fruit of Eden, believing that it would open her eyes to good and evil (Genesis 3:4). In our last lesson, we learned that Solomon was granted wisdom that exceeded that of the wise men of other nations (1 Kings 4:29-34). Interestingly, archaeology has confirmed the existence of a significant ancient wisdom tradition. The historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament make reference to wise men from Edom, Phoenicia, Syria, Persia, Egypt, and Babylon (2 Kings 6:8, Ezra 7:14-15, Isaiah 19:11-13, Jeremiah 50:35, Ezekiel 28:2, Obadiah 8). Some think these wise men may have formed an international guild. Most likely, their teaching occurred in professional schools (no hard evidence for this has yet been uncovered) but was also transmitted within homes, families, or tribes. Of the five poetic books of the Old Testament, three of them fall into the category of wisdom literature: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Although the books of the Psalms and Song of Songs technically fall into the genre of poetry, Psalms contains wisdom literature and Song of Songs is similar in its form and function¹.

In the first part of Solomon's reign, he exhibited the ability to apply the great wisdom he possessed. Later, he did not. As the teachings of the wise confirm, true wisdom is not *truth alone* but the ability to *live according to that truth*. In the New Testament, James puts it this way: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22).

For a number of weeks now, you have been answering the questions in your *Promised Land 2* lessons, some of which require you to apply God's word to your life in personal ways. It is certainly tempting to answer these questions with what we *ought* to do or by vague generalizations. However, the word of God is not meant only to be *known* but to be *applied*. There is a vast difference between *knowing* what to do and *doing* it, isn't there? The wise person is the one who knows God's truth *and* lives according to it.

In some ways, this lesson may seem more academic in nature than most. But if we don't understand the literary genres of these Biblical books, we may misread and misinterpret them.

I. Old Testament Wisdom Literature

A. Types of Wisdom Literature: Broadly speaking, ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature falls into two groups.

- i. Prudential (or Proverbial): Prudential wisdom is observations about life in a form that is memorable: either short, pithy statements or more lengthy instruction in the form of narratives, acrostics, riddles, lists, and parables. This kind of wisdom literature is most often practical, conservative and optimistic in its outlook. It contains generalizations gleaned from experience about the way life works best. The book of Proverbs is a classic example of prudential wisdom literature.
- ii. Reflective (or Contemplative): Some wise men analyzed the generalizations of prudential wisdom and found that not all of it was true. A person can do everything “right,” and yet life does not always work out as we hope. Thus, a second type of wisdom literature addresses life’s most difficult problems by challenging accepted doctrines and beliefs. It is often (but not always) pessimistic in tone. Sometimes, it appears in the form of monologue (as in the book of Ecclesiastes) and other times, in dialogue (as in the book of Job).

B. The Book of Job – The book of Job deals with the subject of human suffering and is among the great masterpieces of literature. Its first two chapters and last few verses are in prose. The main body contains speeches that are presented in poetry.

- i. Identity of Job and the Author: While some speculate that Job penned the book, it seems likely that someone who lived much later wrote it or edited it into the form that we have today. Clues within the text, including the length of Job’s life (42:17), the reference to roaming Sabeian and Chaldean tribesmen (1:15, 17), the measurement of Job’s wealth in cattle (chapters 1 and 12), and the fact that he acted as a priest for his own family (1:5) suggest that Job lived in the days of Israel’s Patriarchs. Therefore, it could be one of the oldest books of the Bible.
- ii. Plot
 1. *Job 1-2*
 - a. Job was a wealthy and godly man who lived in the land of Uz (possibly a general name for the area east of Palestine (Genesis 10:23; Lamentations 4:21)). In the opening two chapters of the book, we are presented with a rare Biblical heavenly scene in which Satan presents himself before God. God asks Satan whether he had considered Job, a righteousness man unlike any other on earth (1:8, 2:3). Satan accused God of blessing and sheltering Job so that he had no reason *not* to love and fear Him.

- b. Then, Satan suggested that God permit him to cause Job's circumstances to change for the worse. With God's permission, he removed all sources of Job's wealth and put his children to death. Finally, he afflicted Job from head to toe with painful sores. Following these tragedies, three of Job's friends, and eventually a fourth, came to console him.
 2. *Job 3-37*: Job knew nothing of what had transpired in Heaven. His faith and patience were tested, not only by his circumstances, but also by his friends' suggestions that a good God would not permit a good man to suffer. Job defended his integrity and brought his complaint of injustice directly to God, insisting that "the fear of the Lord... is wisdom" (28:28).
 3. *Job 38-42*: In the final chapters of the book, God appears to silence all the characters, pointing out that they cannot possibly expect to understand His ways. What did Job know about the founding of the earth (38:4), the limitations set upon the sea (38:8), and the charting of the constellations courses (38:31)? Job responded with humble contrition (42:5-6). Then, God exonerated him and blessed the second half of his life even more than the first.
- iii. Theology of the Book of Job
 1. As previously stated, testing generalizations is typical of reflective wisdom literature. While Job's friends advocated the position that one reaps what he or she sows (Galatians 6:7), the book of Job *tests that principle* and shows that it is *not a rule that is applied to every single case*. The consequences of the adultery of Solomon's father and mother (David and Bathsheba) before his birth spilled over into his own life and brought him trouble (1 Kings 1:5-8). However, the book of Job shows that the source and purpose of suffering sometimes remain hidden from us. It makes no attempt to justify God but shows Him to be the friend (not the enemy) of those who suffer.
 2. Job's hope was in the One in whom we can put our trust when we can't make sense of suffering. Job declared, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:25). We can only fully understand the theology of Job in the light of the New Testament teaching that God put on flesh and has fully shared in our suffering. On the Cross, Jesus, the ultimate Good, faced off against the ultimate evils of sin and death and defeated them. His victory assures us that He can work all things together for good (Romans 8:28), even evil things.

C. The Book of Ecclesiastes: While Job is classic, reflective wisdom literature presented in *dialogue*, Ecclesiastes is reflective wisdom literature presented in *monologue*. If ever there was a book for our postmodern world, it is the book of Ecclesiastes. The philosophy of relativism has successfully convinced millions that the only joys to be found are in materialism and self-indulgence. Ecclesiastes addresses the senselessness of life apart from God.

- i. Author and Date: Until recently, some scholars considered Ecclesiastes to be one of the newest books of the Old Testament (dating it as late as 250 B.C.). Some still doubt that Solomon wrote it or that it had just one author. The opening and concluding verses refer to “the teacher” (the Hebrew word is *Qoheleth*, 1:1) in the third person, while this “teacher” speaks in the first person throughout the bulk of the book. However, more recent discoveries have returned conservative scholars to the tradition that Solomon was the “son of David” called the “Teacher” and also the author of the book from beginning to end.ⁱⁱ
- ii. Purpose and Theme
 1. The recurring word *hebel*, often translated “vanity” or “meaningless,” can mean absurdity, futility, emptiness, or transitoriness (a vapor or wind). Solomon looked for meaning in the pursuits of wisdom, pleasure, work, and riches, and found that, in and of themselves, they offered no answers to the puzzle of life.
 2. In contrast, the book also contains many positive statements. For example, we are reminded that the good things of life are gifts of God (2:24-26, 5:18-19), that everything God does endures (3:14), that He has set eternity in the human heart (3:11), and that we find meaning by fearing and obeying Him (12:13). Some consider these contrasts evidence that the book is a collection of the sayings of different individuals. However, the contrasts actually prove the unity of the work and the writer’s main point: Material things are gifts of God, given for our enjoyment *and* intended to point us to Him, since He alone offers us true meaning in life. Therefore, while these gifts are not evil in and of themselves, *preoccupation* with them *is!*
 3. As Dr. Walter Kaiser Jr. concludes, Ecclesiastes affirms that puzzles remain in the plan of God, from our human perspective. At the same time, it encourages us not to allow these mysteries to diminish our human joy and activity.ⁱⁱⁱ
- iii. Source of Wisdom: Solomon’s observations from life experience are balanced with truth received by divine inspiration. He claimed that all of this wisdom came from the “Shepherd” (12:11), the one true God of Israel. As the prophets foretold (Micah 5:2, Zechariah 13:7), this Shepherd was the long-awaited Messiah (John 10:11).

D. The Book of Proverbs

i. Author

1. The book of Proverbs is an anthology of wise sayings that originated with more than one wise man. The work is largely credited to Solomon. Two verses (10:1 and 25:1) make direct reference to his role. However, it is possible that some of the proverbs in these sections may have been collected by him, rather than authored by him. Furthermore, Proverbs 30 and 31 name Agur and Lemuel as their authors. Some scholars believe that since the first nine chapters take a different form than chapters 10-22, someone other than Solomon wrote those as well.
2. In addition to the claims of 10:1 and 25:1 that Solomon authored at least that large portion of the book, there is some other interesting evidence that Proverbs 10:1-22:16 were written by him. In Hebrew, every letter of the alphabet was assigned a numeric value. The letters of Solomon's name add up to the number 375. This is the exact number of proverbs between 10:1 and 22:16 (which is put into its own subdivision in many translations).

ii. Theme: The theme of the book is found in 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." In keeping with this theme, the book compares the ways of the wise with the ways of fools.

iii. Prudential Wisdom

1. As previously stated, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes are the three Biblical books comprised entirely of wisdom literature. While Job and Ecclesiastes are reflective in nature, pondering the meaning of the human experience, Proverbs is prudential in nature.
2. Although prudential wisdom literature can be expressed in a variety of literary styles, the book of Proverbs exemplifies the more succinct form given to these timeless truths. Understanding them requires careful reading and meditation. Each contains a valuable underlying principle.
3. Like other prudential wisdom literature, Proverbs contains observations about the way life *generally* works. This is very important to understand, since many have mistaken some of its wise generalizations as promises or commands of God.
 - a. For example, Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." While this is *generally* true, many God-fearing parents have raised their children in the knowledge of the Lord and provided them with excellent models, yet one or more of their children have foolishly rejected the Lord.

Likewise, some of Judah's most godly kings had evil, idolatrous sons. We can also attest that a perverse mind is sometimes esteemed, rather than despised (12:8), lazy people do not always meet with failure and frustration and the road of life is not always smooth for the upright (15:19). Nevertheless, these wise generalizations about the way life works best give us ideals for which to aim and pitfalls to be avoided. Even though the typical, good outcome is sometimes foiled, one will never err by heeding them.

- b. It is equally important to realize that the proverbs are not commands, although many of them begin with imperatives. For example, the Proverbs 22:24-25 warns, "Make no friends with those given to anger, and do not associate with hotheads, or you may learn their ways and entangle yourself in a snare." If we misunderstand the nature of prudential wisdom literature, we might think that we should never befriend anyone with a bad temper. However, Jesus was a friend of sinners. The principle is to be careful in choosing our friends because they easily affect our character. The proverbs were not written as commands or promises but for the purpose of teaching wise principles. When reading them, discovering these principles should be our goal.
- iv. Subject Matter: The book of Proverbs addresses a wide variety of topics, including money, sexuality, family relationships and friendships, success, speech, business tactics, instructions for rulers, and virtues (such as patience, integrity, peace, and joy). As you read it, you may find it helpful to devise a list of its topics and add the references that address each.
- v. The Personification of Wisdom: In parts of the introductory chapters 1-9, wisdom is personified. It calls out, "I have worthy things to say" (8:6). From the earliest days of the Christian church, people have seen the voice of wisdom in Proverbs as a *reflection* of Jesus. Luke 11:31 tells us that Jesus is the supreme Wise Man, wiser than Solomon. But the voice of wisdom in Proverbs is not equivalent to the voice of the Jesus, since it says, "The Lord brought me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be" (8:22-23). Jesus is *un-created* and eternally existing. Nevertheless, we can certainly see the voice of wisdom in Proverbs as *reflecting* His wisdom, since He is its source. James 1:5 tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

Summary Statement: The ancient Hebrew writers were not afraid to use the writing styles of other cultures, including the genre of wisdom literature. However, because they were uniquely monotheistic, their wisdom alone was founded upon “the fear of the Lord” (Proverbs 1:7). Biblical wisdom literature points to the God of Israel as having answers that cannot be gleaned from human experience. It affirms that life is often puzzling and encourages us to *trust Yahweh* when life does not make sense.

Principle: *The truly wise trust God, even when life does not make sense.*

Proverbs offers generalizations about the way life works best and Ecclesiastes and Job test those generalizations and ask questions about the problems of human experience. Why is it that we can do everything “right” and not always get a good result? Why do good people suffer? “Why?” is the question that usually comes to our minds with regard to human suffering and life’s frustrations.

Author Philip Yancey has suggested that perhaps God did not answer these questions for Job because enlightenment would not have helped him or because Job was incapable of comprehending the answer. He points out that having intellectual answers does not solve suffering. Knowing “why” doesn’t alleviate feelings of despair or the pain of loneliness. Additionally, as Yancey states, for God to explain the “whys” of life to us may be like trying to describe color to a blind person or trying to communicate with a creature on a microscope slide. “We do not have the faculties to absorb so much light.”^{iv} In the end, Job admitted that he had spoken of things too wonderful for him to know (42:3). One reason for our inability is that we live within the confines of time and space. Since God lives outside these parameters, He can see things in a way we cannot fully comprehend. The apostle Paul said, “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror: then we shall see face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Wise men sought answers and concluded that life contains some mysteries for which we have no answers. God did not attempt to explain these mysteries to Job. Rather, He raised more questions and waited for Job’s response. Job’s *response* to suffering was more important than satisfying Job’s curiosity. Perhaps, the right question for us to ask is not, “*Why* do I suffer?” but, “How do I *respond* to suffering?” Job said, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom” (Job 28:28). This refrain is repeated in Ecclesiastes (12:13) and Proverbs (1:7). Trusting and obeying God demonstrate that we fear Him. One of my favorite illustrations of trusting God comes from Hannah Whitall Smith.

Do you recollect the delicious sense of rest with which you have sometimes gone to bed at night, after a day of great exertion and weariness? How delightful was the sensation of relaxing every muscle, and letting your body go in a perfect abandonment of ease and comfort. The strain of the day had ceased for a few hours at least, and the work of the day had been thrown off. You no longer had to hold up an aching head or a weary back. You trusted yourself to the bed in an absolute confidence, and it held you up,

without effort, or strain, or even thought on your part. You rested. But suppose you had doubted the strength or the stability of your bed, and had dreaded each moment to find it giving away beneath you and landing you on the floor; could you have rested then? Would not every muscle have been strained in a fruitless effort to hold yourself up, and would not the weariness have been greater than not to have gone to bed at all? Let this analogy teach you what it means to rest in the Lord. Let your souls lie down upon His sweet will, as your bodies lie down in your beds at night. Relax every strain and lay off every burden. Let yourselves go in perfect abandonment of ease and comfort, sure that when He holds you up you are perfectly safe. Your part is simply to rest. His part is to sustain you, and He cannot fail.^v

Application: What is your usual response to life’s disappointments? Do you become angry and condemn God in order to justify yourself (Job 40:8)? Or do you respond to things you cannot understand by trusting Him? Trust and obedience demonstrate our fear of God. It is easy to talk about trusting God, but do our lives contain *evidence* that we trust Him when things are not going as we expected? Do we just *know* about trusting, or do we *actually rest* in Him?

Transition: The books of Psalms and Song of Songs do not fall into the category of wisdom literature, strictly speaking, but Psalms contains some wisdom literature and Song of Songs is related to it.

II. Old Testament Lyrical Poetry

A. The Book of Psalms

- i. Title and Purpose: Psalms is the largest ancient collection of lyrical poetry in existence. It consists of songs and poetic prayers. It is the worship hymnal of the ancient Israelites. The Psalms were written over hundreds of years and put into a single collection sometime after the Exile. The title “Psalms” comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew name for the book (“Praises”) and means “music that comes from a stringed instrument.”
- ii. Authors: Many Psalms contain superscriptions that suggest authorship for the Psalm (some may have been written for these men rather than by them) and sometimes also give the historical background of its writing. Although most scholars agree that these “titles” were probably not part of the original, inspired work, the best evidence to date suggests that they were added at a very early date and, therefore, “may be taken as a reasonably reliable guide.”^{vi} About half (73) are attributed to David, one to Moses (Psalm 90) and two to Solomon (Psalms 72 and 127). The sons of Korah (2 Chronicles 20:19) and Asaph (1 Chronicles 15-16) were leaders of the Levitical singing groups. They wrote ten or eleven psalms.

Ethan wrote one (Psalm 89) and Hemen is credited (together with the sons of Korah) for another (Psalm 88). The authors of the others are unknown.

iii. Hebrew Poetic Characteristic: Hebrew poetry does not have meter or “rhyme,” as does western poetry. Its most distinctive literary device is *parallelism*. A number of types exist. In one of these, the lines express the same basic idea in different ways. For example, in Psalm 1:1 the same thought is repeated in three ways: “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked *or* stand in the way that sinners take *or* sit in the company of mockers [my emphases].” Another type of parallelism has contrasting lines, such as “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart” (Psalms 73:26).

iv. Five “Books”: The Psalms are divided into five “books.” Each ends in a doxology, with the entire 150th Psalm serving as a doxology for all five books. More than one explanation has been offered for these groupings. One approaches each “book” thematically:

1. Psalm 1-41 (Man)
2. Psalm 42-72 (Israel)
3. Psalm 73-89 (Sanctuary)
4. Psalm 90-106 (Earth)
5. Psalm 107-150 (Word of God)

Another approach claims that each “book” represents the themes of one of the five books of the Pentateuch:

1. Psalm 1-41 (Genesis)
2. Psalm 42-72 (Exodus)
3. Psalm 73-89 (Leviticus)
4. Psalm 90-106 (Numbers)
5. Psalm 107-150 (Deuteronomy)

v. Categorization

1. Scholars have also attempted to categorize the Psalms in other ways that are unrelated to the five books. One popular approach is to place each in a category according to its subject matter or its suggested use. Among these categories are:
 - a. Historical Psalms (those that remind people of God’s actions in the past)
 - b. Penitential Psalms (those that express sorrow for sin and repentance)
 - c. Lament Psalms (those that bemoan the writer’s condition and their decision to trust God)
 - d. Royal Psalms (those that relate to a reigning king)
 - e. Imprecatory Psalms (those that cry out to God to avenge His people from the wicked)

- f. Psalms of Hallel (those collections of Psalms in which the Hebrews offered the Lord praise [“hallel”]), some of which were pilgrimage songs used during their annual feasts.
 - g. Acrostic Psalms (each stanza of these begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet [Psalm 119])
 - h. Messianic Psalms (those that describe the Messiah): The Psalms teach us a great deal about the way in which Israel related to God and their view of Him. They reflect the prophetic promises that undergirded their faith and thus are full of prophecies about the Messiah. Prior to Jesus’ crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that everything must be fulfilled that was written about Him in the Law, the Prophets, *and the Psalms* (Luke 24:44). Some Psalms describe specific details. For example, speaking of the crucifixion, Psalm 22:16-17 says, “They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones.”
2. The Lord inspired a diverse range of psalms to meet the diverse situations of our lives. For centuries, they have expressed the cries of believers’ hearts and assisted in private and corporate worship. They encourage us not to hide our struggles and emotions but to bring them openly to the Lord.

B. The Song of Songs

- i. Language and Form: By its title, “Song of Songs” claims to be the most beautiful song of all. It is a love song. Unfortunately, the meaning of many of its ancient oriental phrases is confusing to modern readers. For example, it is difficult for us to understand a comparison between a beautiful woman’s teeth and a flock of sheep (4:2)! It is also sometimes difficult to understand who is speaking in the song. Most interpreters see at least two voices: those of a groom and a bride. However, many also see a third voice that represents those who observed the romance. Most contemporary conservatives view it as a collection of ancient Hebrew love poems, rather than a continuous, developing story.
- ii. History and Interpretation: The opening verse attributes the song to Solomon (although some suggest that it was written for him, not by him). The fact that it states a link to Solomon is one of the primary reasons that it was first accepted into the canon of scripture. Some of the early church fathers had deemed it erotic and unworthy; however, a last-minute appeal by one rabbi convinced those at the council of Jamnia (90 A.D.) to keep it in. They conceded on the basis of its link to Solomon and with the understanding that it represented an allegory of God’s love for His people.

However, this is only one of three major approaches to understanding the book that been taken historically.

- a. *Allegorical Interpretation*: An allegory is a story in which what you read is not what is really meant. The earliest Jewish interpretation views God as the husband (groom) and Israel as the bride. On this basis, Jews began to associate the book with Passover and have read it on the eighth day of this celebration. A Christian variation on this interpretation makes Christ the groom and the Church His bride. The allegorical approach dismisses the possibility that the Song was ever based on an actual relationship between Solomon and his wife or any particular man and woman. The popularity of this view stems from the fact that there is no obvious religious emphasis in it otherwise.
- b. *Literal Love Song*: Today, many scholars favor a literal view because they say there is no hint anywhere in the book itself that it was intended to be a “type” or allegory. Additionally, they point to the fact that the New Testament never once quotes from the Song of Songs as the basis for dismissing the possibility that it was intended to portray something to us about Christ’s relationship to His people. The literal view sees Song of Songs as simply a love poem or song in the tradition of others from antiquity. In this case, the song is about King Solomon and his bride. It presents sexuality as something we should neither consider obscene nor be ashamed of in the context of the heterosexual, monogamous marriage relationship.
- c. *Typological Interpretation*
 - i. This view is a compromise between an allegorical view and a literal view. According to it, Song of Songs *is* an historical account of a relationship between Solomon and his wife but is *also* a literary “type” of the relationship between God and Israel (or King Jesus and His bride, the Church). The view sees the Song as celebrating the beauty of sexuality in the marriage relationship *and* as illustrating God’s intimate bond with His people. Since marriage is used as a metaphor for the relationship of God and His people throughout scripture, from the equating of idolatry with adultery in Exodus (34:10-17) to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation (19:9), this view needs no further justification.

- ii. The bride in Song of Songs calls out, “Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills” (2:8). She urges him to come to her and to “make haste” (8:14). In Revelation (3:11, 22:7), Jesus responds to His bride, “I am coming soon!”

Summary Statement: While the wisdom books encourage us to trust God when life doesn’t make sense, the Song of Songs and Psalms give us a *basis* for trusting Him: His deep, abiding love.

Principle: *God’s deep, abiding love is one of the reasons we can trust Him.*

The Psalms contain dozens of references to God’s unfailing love for us. Psalm 136 appears to have been written as a responsive reading. Twenty-six times, the congregation responds to the worship leader with the refrain, “His love endures forever.” Song of Songs 2:4 exclaims, “His banner over me is love.”

Love is a personal and intimate thing. When John wrote that “God so loved the world” (John 3:16), he did not mean that God loves populations. God loves people.^{vii} John also wrote, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). Those who know the love of God trust Him implicitly. They have no fear that He desires anything but their good.

A.W. Tozer wrote:

Fear is the painful emotion that arises at the thought that we may be harmed or made to suffer. This fear persists while we are subject to the will of someone who does not desire our well-being. The moment we come under the protection of one of good will, fear is cast out... To know that love is of God and to enter into the secret place leaning upon the arm of the Beloved – this and only this can cast out fear.... God is love and God is sovereign. His love disposes Him to desire our everlasting welfare and His sovereignty enables Him to secure it.^{viii}

Application: Do you know God’s love for you? If so, what evidence is there of it? Do you just *talk about* trusting and resting in Him when life does not make sense or do you *do it*?

Conclusion

We have much to learn. The fear of the Lord involves learning and, in *Promised Land 2*, we are attempting to learn about a large portion of the Old Testament. If you have completed earlier studies, you will no doubt find this study more challenging. You may find the next few lessons to be especially time consuming. However, learning about the kings of Israel will give us *an opportunity* to become wise. But we won't *be wise* until we apply what we have learned to our own present circumstances and daily lives. As you answer the personal application questions in each weekly lesson, resist the temptation to jot down what you know we all ought to do and write down the specific thing God wants *you* to do. Then, go do it! The wise person is the one who knows God's truth and lives according to it.

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