

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Lesson 6

The Books in the Old Testament (III): The Wisdom Books

Passages: Job–Song of Solomon

Memory Verse

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
(Proverbs 9:10)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Understand the importance of studying the wisdom books. 2. Learn the basics of conducting a thematic study of the wisdom books.	God is the source of all wisdom.	When we learn to fear the Lord, He will bless and protect us.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. An Overview of the Wisdom Books
- B. Studying the Wisdom Books: Thematic Studies

Life Application: The Fear of the Lord

Memory Verse

Conclusion: By provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, the wisdom books help us to stand firm in our faith so that we can confidently face any obstacles or decisions that we encounter in our spiritual lives.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. An Overview of the Wisdom Books

As the name indicates, the wisdom books are not records of historical events or narratives but are instead books that instruct us how to live wisely. Throughout the centuries, many such books have been written, and even today, bookstores have self-help or philosophy sections that focus on morality, the way we ought to live, and our state of being. The Bible, however, focuses on the wisdom of living in the context of our faith. They teach us of the self-destructive nature of sin and of how living wisely means learning to fear our Creator and adopting His will as our own. However, this is not always an easy thing to do, which is why the wisdom books are so varied in style, themes, and teachings.

Job

- Hebrew: “persecuted one”
- Theme: The purpose of suffering
- Key Verse: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5–6)
- Key Teachings: Our human wisdom and knowledge are very limited in scope when compared to God’s wisdom. God allows suffering to happen in our lives so that we are able to grow.

From the Book of Job, we can gain a deeper understanding about God’s sovereign nature. He has ultimate control over the coming and going of our lives. We are under His authority and protection because we are His creation. The Book of Job gives us wisdom in the form of dialogues between Job and his friends, and Job and God Himself. The dialogues follow something similar to a call and response. Questions that we have about suffering and justice are asked on our behalf by Job and his friends, and all of these are answered by Elihu, and eventually, God Himself.

Psalms (Heb. *Tehillim* meaning “praises”)

- From the Greek word *psalmoi*, which refers to instrumental music, a “psalm” is a sacred song or hymn.
- Theme: Praise and prayer
- Key Verse: “This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.” (Psalm 102:18)
- Key Teachings: The Book of Psalms teaches us to praise God in all circumstances.

The Book of Psalms describes God’s mercy and justice. Some psalms praise God for His abundant grace, while others call for God to answer in times of need, or to answer the evil deeds of mankind with His just punishment. But all five subsections, or “books” within Psalms conclude with unreserved praise for God. Through the patriarchs, prophets, and other leaders, God spoke to His people; through these psalms, individuals responded to God with deeply emotional songs.

Proverbs

- A “proverb” is a saying that states a general truth or point.
- Theme: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- Key Verse: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)
- Key Teachings: True wisdom can only be found in the Lord. It is important for us to be spiritually wise because wisdom is valued in the eyes of God.

God is wise, and He is the source of wisdom. We are able to see His wisdom from His creation and in all that He does, and has done, in the lives of man. As a result, if we feel like we lack direction in our lives, or if we need knowledge or understanding, we can always come before God and ask for it. While the Book of Psalms offers a reflection of our deepest emotions, the Book of Proverbs gives us a series of instructive sayings to help us to keep our hearts, minds, and spirits in order, all in a manner that is still applicable today.

Ecclesiastes

- A Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for “preacher.”
- Theme: Everything under the sun is vanity.
- Key Verse: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- Key Teachings: The things in this world are all temporary. God is the one who gives hope and meaning to our lives.

God is our source of hope. The world that we live in can be chaotic and unfair. However, our hope is not in the world. Rather, our hope comes from God. When we are willing to follow and keep His teachings, then we will be able to look away from the things in this world and instead look towards the things above. In contrast to the Book of Job, the Book of Ecclesiastes is more of a monologue, one man’s journey to find the meaning of his life after having received everything as a rich and powerful king. While Job sought answers after being reduced to nothing, King Solomon sought answers after receiving everything this world had to offer.

Song of Solomon

- Also known as “Song of Songs.”
- Theme: God’s love for the church.
- Key Verse: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine.” (Song 1:2)
- Key Teachings: God loves His people and wants them to have an intimate relationship with Him.

Song of Solomon describes to us the joy and intimacy that can be found in a godly marriage, while also offering a glimpse of what the union between the bride of Christ—the church—and the Lord Jesus should look like. God demonstrates His love for His bride, which is the church. He wants to be with His people, and this beautiful relationship is depicted throughout Song of Solomon.

Overall, the wisdom books vary greatly in style and difficulty, but in the end, the conclusion is always the same: wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord. However, reading them can be difficult, so now we’ll shift our focus and examine one way to study the wisdom books.

B. Studying the Wisdom Books: Thematic Studies

One key way to study the wisdom books is to look at them from a thematic approach. Although there are many themes in the wisdom books, today we will pick out just one theme and study it together. At the end of the study, hopefully we’ll have learned a bit more about how to study the wisdom books, as well as the importance of reading them.

(Teachers: The following example study also serves as the Life Application for this lesson. If your students have strong biblical knowledge, consider having them conduct this study on their own or in small groups,

with some basic teacher guidance. For example, consider referring them to the appropriate verses for each question and having them discuss answers, before directly conveying the below teachings.)

Example Study & Life Application: The Fear of the Lord

To do a thematic study, we first need to figure out the theme in the passage. Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 12:13–14. The theme in these verses is very clear: Fear of the Lord. Because this theme is often addressed in sermons and other lessons, we probably already know a great deal about fearing the Lord. But the Bible is incredibly layered. Seemingly simple themes often have greater depth than we may realize, and there is always something new to learn about God or about ourselves.

Once we've picked a theme, we can move on. To do any kind of study, it is important to ask ourselves a few questions. It is important to focus on the "what," the "why," and the "how," especially in context of our faith. What does the Bible teach us about this theme? Why is this important to us? How does this affect our daily walk of faith? What can I change in my daily life in response to this new understanding? Asking the right questions will lead to more beneficial answers! For now, we'll just focus on a few for our theme of "fearing God."

1. What does it mean to fear God?

"Fearing God" is a common theme in the Bible. Let's do a quick review of what it means to fear God. There are two types of fear. The first is the one we all encounter during our lifetime. Loneliness, rejection, and loss are just a few of many fears that we experience. It can also be the kind of fear that keeps us awake at night, or startles us in a frightening moment. But unlike the fear of the unknown, the fear of God is a healthy and holy fear that brings us life and blessings (Prov 19:23; Ps 112:1). It is a continual awareness of God's presence next to us, and the fact that He sees, knows, and is with our every move (Ps 33:18).

2. Why must we fear God?

Answering this question means that we need to have a thorough understanding of who God is. Let's read Psalm 146:5–10. What characteristics of God can be found in this passage? (*Creator, Savior, judge, righteous, healer, eternal.*) God is the Creator, Savior, and judge of all mankind (Ps 5:4–7). He is all-powerful and has control over everything, from our sicknesses to the nations across the world. Psalm 33:8 says, "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him."

From these passages, we can see that there are several reasons we ought to fear God. Not only is He the one who gave us life, both physical and spiritual, but He is also the one who executes judgment upon us for our sins, and who also gives us blessings when we worship Him. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and holiness can never be matched. This sovereignty that He holds is the reason we need to fear Him. In much the same way we would show respect towards an authority figure or someone whom we admire, we ought to show even greater respect to the one who made us, judges us, and blesses us according to His will.

3. What do we gain from fearing God?

Similar to knowing why we should fear God, it is important to consider what happens to our lives when we do. What kinds of changes occur? If someone were to look at your life from the outside, what would they see? What would make them think, "This must be a person who fears God"? Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life." The fear of the Lord is the source of every blessing imaginable! Let's take a closer look at just a

few of them.

a. Strong confidence

“In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” (Prov 14:26)

What is the meaning of this promise? When you face the unknown or encounter any danger, because you fear God, you will find assurance in Him and find that He will help you get through it. You are not facing these things by yourself but facing them together with God because He is dwelling within you, giving you His confidence and boldness. These feelings are not from you, but from God. You and I can face any frightening thing in life with the presence of the Holy God at our side because we fear Him. Can you think of a situation where you were or would be afraid or anxious? How would fearing God affect or change the situation, either physically or mentally?

b. Wisdom

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Prov 9:10)

Wisdom is different from knowledge, and worldly knowledge is different from knowledge of God. So, what is wisdom? It is not the same as being smart. We can accumulate knowledge, but we can be unwise. And we can accumulate knowledge of the world, but this knowledge will not help us in spiritual matters. Wisdom helps us to live according to God’s word. It helps us to know what to do, when to do it, and how to act. It helps us to discern when to believe our friends, or when to make our own judgment. Ultimately though, wisdom is what leads us to salvation, because a wise person is someone who lives out the life that God intended for them.

In the parable of the rich fool, God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” (Lk 12:20). The farmer had planned his future without God in mind. But a person who fears God and has a relationship with Him becomes wiser because he makes decisions based on God’s will. In much the same way, you may graduate with several degrees, or become successful in the workplace, but as with the rich farmer, these are meaningless if you do not have the wisdom that comes from fearing God (Prov 3:5–6).

Have you ever been in a position where you did not know what to do or say? Have you ever felt tricked, or heard about others who were deceived into difficult situations?

c. Deliverance

“The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” (Ps 34:7)

In the Bible, angels are messengers from God that protect God’s people. This means that God has promised to take care of us; He will never leave or forsake us. Proverbs states that “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death” (Prov 14:27). When we fear God, He will even protect us from death.

Have you heard a testimony or been in a position where you experienced God’s

deliverance? While there are more obvious incidents of deliverance from accident or injury, sometimes we may realize that God has delivered us from harm even without our knowledge, perhaps by guiding us out of an unsafe area, or by protecting us from natural disasters.

It is clear that when we fear God, He will provide, protect, and even fight for us (Ps 34:9–10)! The fear of the Lord is a very peaceful and secure feeling. So, to fear God is the wisest way to live, as fearing God is an awesome blessing and promise. The pathway to a full life that is characterized by deep joy and intimacy with God starts from fearing Him.

4. How do we fear God?

Any study of the Bible should conclude with something that affects our own lives. In this case, it would be good to continue the topic of “how to fear God in our daily lives.” To answer this question, we first need to go back the original passage of study. King Solomon wrote: “Fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl 12:13). Let’s also read Proverbs 8:13. “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” Fearing God, therefore, is obedience to God and the rejection of sin.

Let’s read Proverbs 28:14. “Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” This verse demonstrates a form of parallelism where two things are compared and contrasted. What is being contrasted here, though? One is a heart that is reverent, and the other, a heart that is hardened. One leads to joy, the other to calamity. Like most spiritual matters, reverence and fear are things that start from the heart, are echoed in our actions, and result in blessings from God.

If fearing God means having a softened heart, we need to first diagnose ourselves. Do you have constant conversations with God? Do you remember Him when you go to school, or when you’re with friends who are non-believers? Do you honor Him with your words and deeds? These are all actions of a person who follows God’s commandments and fears Him in their lives.

From the many verses that we referred to throughout this thematic study, we can see that while the historical books describe the physical journey of the people of God, the wisdom books reveal their hearts. Instead of a simple retelling of events, they capture feelings, evoke imagery that reflects our inner selves, and offer empathy and understanding for whatever we may be experiencing in life. They employ vivid and expressive imagery to communicate a teaching that would otherwise be difficult to convey. By provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, they help us to stand firm in our faith so that we can confidently face any obstacles or decisions that we encounter in our spiritual lives.

Through these books, we will find guidance whenever we feel confused, and comfort when we encounter suffering. In accordance with the name, the wisdom books offer so many teachings for us, as long as we take the time to seek and dive deeply into God’s word.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What kinds of teachings do the wisdom books focus on?** They focus on the wisdom of living, in the context of our faith. They teach us of man’s self-destructive nature, and how living wisely means learning to fear our Creator and adopting His will as our own.

2. **The wisdom books vary greatly in style and difficulty, but in the end, what is their conclusion?**
Wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord.
3. **What are some questions that we can ask ourselves while studying the Bible thematically?** What does the Bible teach us about this theme? Why is this important to us? How does this affect our daily walk of faith? What can I change in my daily life in response to this new understanding?
4. **Why must we fear God?** Not only is He the one who gave us life, both physical and spiritual, but He is also the one who executes judgment upon us for our sins, and who also gives us blessings when we worship Him. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and holiness can never be matched.
5. **What is the purpose of the expressive and vivid imagery used in the wisdom books?** To communicate a teaching that would otherwise be difficult to convey. Also, by provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, they help us to stand firm in our faith.

Memory Verse

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
(Proverbs 9:10)

Meaning

See *Spiritual Teachings, Section B, Life Application*.

Conclusion

The wisdom books contain a lot of evocative and expressive imagery, and use words to form clear paintings of God’s love and promises. However, they also contain many stark images of mankind’s behavior and the results that follow should they choose to do evil and rebel against God’s commands. By provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, they help us to stand firm in our faith so that we can confidently face any obstacles or decisions that we encounter in our spiritual lives.

Lesson 6 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Explain in your own words why fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
Not only is He the one who gave us life, both physical and spiritual, but He is also the one who executes judgment upon us for our sins. Wisdom is also what leads us to salvation, which is from God.
2. What kinds of teachings do the wisdom books focus on?
They focus on the wisdom of living, in the context of our faith. They teach us of man's self-destructive nature, and how living wisely means learning to fear our Creator and adopting His will as our own.
3. After today's lesson, how would you explain the purpose of the wisdom books in your own words?
Personal answers. E.g.: They are books that teach us how to live wisely in the context of our faith. They use strong visuals and different literary forms to teach us the destructive nature of sin, and how living wisely leads us to salvation. They provoke visuals that linger in our minds, so that we can stand firm in our faith.
4. If you were to do a thematic study, after picking a theme, where would you start?
Pick a theme, then ask questions. Focus on the "what," the "why," and the "how," especially in the context of our faith.
5. How would you describe someone who fears God?
Personal answers. E.g.: Someone who demonstrates wisdom in their choices; a person who doesn't become overly anxious or upset when faced with tribulation; someone trustworthy, whom you can turn to for advice; someone who is humble and willingly admits to their mistakes; etc.
6. Do you think you demonstrate the fear of God in your daily life? Why or why not?
Personal answers.