

"Wisdom & Understanding... for Life Under the Sun [An EXHORTATION]"

The Ministry of the Word – Wisdom Literature

June 15, 2025

INTRO ...Reminder of needing "the whole counsel of God"

Acts 20:27 "for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."

...Why do I need to spend time off the Beaten Trail of MY Bible Paths—Because I need my understanding of God, of Humanity, of Redemption/Salvation, of Creaturely Purpose, of Natural & Spiritual Forces... to be informed by all that God has revealed—NOT simply my "antibiotic" taken for my "personal-felt-needs" ...or my tendency to read the Bible through the lens of my personality or temperament.

"The Wisdom Literature" (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecc., Song of Solomon)

...Summer Bible Plans – "Life Under the Sun" —

WHY? (1) ...Because it is the inspired word of God, thus it has a particular "voice"/tone we're supposed to benefit from. (2) ...Because it is rich in "Anthropology" and not just "Theology"

Many Christians have grown up traveling the prophetic roads of the Old Testament and the Pauline highways of the New Testament. Wisdom highways are less traveled. The Song of Solomon is like a back-road brothel to us. (As a young man, I was told by a pastor not to read this book until after I was married!) Job is like a long stretch of desert road with no night light and no gas stations or rest stops for miles. People can get stuck out there with no help, so we rarely travel there without a great deal of preparation. ... Ecclesiastes sounds like a crazed man downtown. He smells like he hasn't bathed—looks like it too—and as we pass by he won't stop glaring at us and beckoning to us that our lives are built on illusions, and that we are all going to die. So, most of us choose to get our lunch at a different shop on a less dreary corner of town. Meanwhile, we usually like our visits to the Psalms, except for the ones that we feel we need to rewrite or edit because of how uncomfortably raw the emotions they express are. Their moodiness can ruin a good time. In short, most who have grown up in the Christian community have very little acquaintance with the neighborhoods of wisdom. The wisdom books are like those neighbors at which we smile but with whom we rarely converse because they live on the "other side of the tracks." **Eswine, Zack W.. *Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes* (Gospel According to the Old Testament Book 14) (pp. 4-6)**

(2) ...Because wisdom literature is rich in "Anthropology", not just "Theology"

"The pastor and theologian John Calvin believed that we discover wisdom and life by means of double knowledge: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.⁵ ... The books of the Bible invite us to this double knowledge. Some books, like Romans, put God center stage. We learn about him mostly by contemplating him directly and less by paying attention to ourselves. But one of the ways that God leads us to know him is by making us pay attention to ourselves. He reveals himself by recovery of our humanity. He shows us what we were made for and then bids us to look at what has become of us. ... In the same way as books such as Ruth or Esther, in Ecclesiastes God intends you to know him by requiring you to look plainly and without polish at yourself, your neighbors, and the world in which you and I live. God puts himself in the background, as it were, in order to place self-concern front and center." **Eswine, Zack W.. *Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes* (pp. 2-3)**

...It seems the "Divine Design" of Wisdom Literature is to do a "Slow-Motion-Analysis" of Human Actions, Attitudes, & Experiences—"UNDER the SUN"

...Whether it's the Emotional Spectrum of Psalms ...the Confusing, Heartache-Posture of JOB ...the Contrast of Wise Living & Foolish Living of PROVERBS ...the Demotivating Feel

of Vanity in ECC. —The Brightness is Turned up on “Humanity”—thus, I will end up with a more clear understanding of myself!

...What Will We Do with a Clearer Understanding of Fallen Humanness (Ours & Others)?

...If we're Not Careful the Church can become “inhumane” ...boiling things down to simple doctrines, clear rules, and faith-based expectations. ...and overlooking each other's “Humanity-Under-the-Sun”

Proverbs teaches us a principle. “Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good” (Prov. 13:21). In this light, “Job’s friends seem warranted in their assessment of Job’s condition. . . . What else is there then but that Job needs to repent?”¹⁴ His disaster reveals to everyone that he has sinned. ... Contrary to how his religious friends interpreted him, Job was actually a righteous man. The story of “Job illustrates the sort of thing for which Ecclesiastes is preparing his students. The difficulty that arose between Job and his friends did so because Job’s experience did not correspond to the standard categories.”¹⁵ It’s as if Job’s friends knew a proverbial rule that “i comes before e,” but they had no category for “after c or sometimes y or with sounds of a like neighbor and weigh.” Therefore, they misapplied true things and damaged their neighbor instead of loving him—and all of this, they did misguidedly in God’s name.” **Eswine, Zack W.. *Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes* (pp. 7-8)**

I think the Biblically Informed People of God SHOULD experience a “healthy tension” between being “Principled” and being “Understanding.”

...Living with a clear CONVICTION of Righteousness (Right & Wrong) ...&... with present COMPASSION for Life that is lived “Under the Sun”

...Instead of stopping someone who tells us that they hate life, maybe we are supposed to listen to the unanswered moment and enter the discomfort with the language or silence that God gives us. Maybe we are meant to ask, “What is it about things under the sun that makes this person of God say he hates life?” Perhaps we are meant as God’s people to learn how to enter such things with him. ...Most of us would not anticipate that kind of voice from this kind of person. But by exposing us to this disorientation, God is preparing us to wisely do life in a fallen world. Job’s friends, like us, often struggle here. Therefore, God seems to believe that if we are to learn how to wisely do life, then our systematic categories, answers to every question, tidy explanations, formal language, deductive assumptions, and a resistance to what is subjective will not prove adequate for us.” **Zack Eswine, “Recovering Eden”, p. 36-37**

GET WISDOM => Get INSIGHT => Be UNDERSTANDING

Proverbs 4:1, 5-7 ¹ Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight,...

⁵ Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

Step 1 ... “GET Wisdom” ...Go Intentionally and Obtain it!! ...NOT Mere Knowledge, but “Wisdom”

Step 2 ... ‘whatever you get, get INSIGHT’ [biynâ (Heb.); understanding 32, wisdom 2]

1 **Peter 3:1, 7** Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ... ⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel,

NOTICE the “Insight/Understanding in this verse—that leads to a “Wise-Life”

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness [same word]. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

1 **Thess 5:14** And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak [same word], be patient with them all.

...THIS is Really Doable ...when you Understand “Life Under the Sun” and not just Principles & Doctrines

"The Sunday service is a gathering of troubles. Half of those who enter the church and take their seat before the pulpit are moving in a privatized fog of their own ills. In the words of Thoreau, they are living lives of quiet desperation. They are the dying anonymous. Their ills are real to them, yet they can confuse the untrained pastor because they keep up the appearance of having life in tow. The music, the liturgy, and the sermon may gang up on their sullen inwardness, trying to force them into the real world. But having moiled through the past 167 hours of their 168-hour week, their private doubts have numbed their hearts. Sunday's single hour of God-talk does not last long enough to lure them back into the world where the sermon would have them live. Given the choice, they would never choose to be mummified in the bandages of their own ills. They want to be free, and that's partly why they first came to church. They are usually too fogged to care about when Leviticus was written or whatever happened to the Hittites. They are the wounded, reaching out to snare the God-words that fly at them between eleven and twelve o'clock. They are pew sitters, trying to remain anonymous, while they cry out to the sermonizer, 'Hey look! I'm here! I'm bleeding.'" They do not want us to bring a set of ancient commentaries against their injuries of heart. They just want a counselor to stop the hemorrhaging of their souls, and if that can't be done they would like some life-survivor to show them a set of well-healed scars so they can leave the service believing that healing is possible." **Calvin Miller**, "Preaching", p. 41