

good
NEWS BIBLE

The books of

Proverbs,
Ecclesiastes and
Song of Songs

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Welcome to the Good News Bible

Welcome to this dyslexia-friendly edition of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, using text from the Good News Bible.

If you are dyslexic, you may find most Bibles very difficult to read, because of their small type, long paragraphs and thin paper. This book has been specially designed with the British Dyslexia Association's style guide in mind, so it has the following features:

- Thicker paper, so that type does not show through
- Cream-coloured paper
- Matt paper
- Plain font
- Larger type
- Wider line spacing
- Short paragraphs
- Bold headings

The Good News Bible is a clear, easy-to read translation of the Bible. It uses ordinary, everyday language so that as many people as possible can read and understand it. This has made it a very popular translation, selling over 150 million copies in the UK alone.

PROVERBS

The beginnings of wisdom

What's it about? Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings about life, wisdom, happiness, eternity and more.

Who wrote it? Much of the book is attributed to Solomon, with other parts linked to people called Agur and Lemuel. However, questions about authorship remain.

Why read it? Not really a book of instruction, Proverbs opens up thoughts on how to live God's way.

What's it to me? Cultures change, but people remain the same, meet similar situations and face similar challenges. This is why the guidelines for a good life in Proverbs are still worth reading.

Chapter 1

The Value of Proverbs

¹The proverbs of Solomon, son of David and king of Israel.

²Here are proverbs that will help you to recognize wisdom and good advice, and understand sayings with deep meaning.

³They can teach you how to live intelligently and how to be honest, just, and fair.

⁴They can make an inexperienced person clever and teach young people how to be resourceful.

⁵These proverbs can even add to the knowledge of the wise and give guidance to the educated, ⁶so that they can understand the hidden meanings of proverbs and the problems that the wise raise.

Advice to Young People

⁷To have knowledge, you must first have reverence for the LORD. ^a Stupid people have no respect for wisdom and refuse to learn.

⁸Pay attention to what your father and mother tell you, my child.

⁹Their teaching will improve your character as a handsome turban or a necklace improves your appearance.

^a To... LORD; or *The most important part of knowledge is having reverence for the LORD.*

¹⁰When sinners tempt you, my child, don't give in.

¹¹Suppose they say, "Come on; let's find someone to kill!
Let's attack some innocent people for the fun of it!

¹²They may be alive and well when we find them, but
they'll be dead when we're through with them!

¹³We'll find all kinds of riches and fill our houses with loot!

¹⁴Come and join us, and we'll all share what we steal."

¹⁵Don't go with people like that, my child. Stay away
from them.

¹⁶They can't wait to do something bad. They're always
ready to kill.

¹⁷It does no good to spread a net when the bird you
want to catch is watching, ¹⁸but people like that are
setting a trap for themselves, a trap in which they will die.

¹⁹Robbery always claims the life of the robber — this is
what happens to^b anyone who lives by violence.

Wisdom Calls

²⁰Listen! Wisdom is calling out in the streets and market
places, ²¹calling loudly at the city gates and wherever
people come together:

²²"Foolish people! How long do you want to be foolish?
How long will you enjoy pouring scorn on knowledge? Will
you never learn?"

^b One ancient translation *what happens to*; Hebrew *the path of*.

Ecclesiastes

The meaning of life

What's it about? Ecclesiastes is a book about the search for wisdom, with the writer trying to find the meaning in life. He reflects on foolishness and wisdom, sin and trusting in God.

Who wrote it? Many people traditionally believed that Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, but there's not much evidence to prove this claim.

Why read it? Ecclesiastes is a book unlike most others in the Bible. It might seem curious, but contains some very famous passages, such as the song about time in chapter 3.

What's it to me? Ecclesiastes gives us the permission to ask questions about doubt and faith, and to wonder about life – the fact that it sometimes seems unfair, and the role of God in it all.

Chapter 1

Life is Useless

¹ These are the words of the Philosopher, David's son, who was king in Jerusalem.

² It is useless, useless, said the Philosopher. Life is useless, all useless.

³ You spend your life working, labouring, and what do you have to show for it?

⁴ Generations come and generations go, but the world stays just the same.

⁵ The sun still rises, and it still goes down, going wearily back to where it must start all over again.

⁶ The wind blows south, the wind blows north — round and round and back again.

⁷ Every river flows into the sea, but the sea is not yet full. The water returns to where the rivers began, and starts all over again.

⁸ Everything leads to weariness — a weariness too great for words. Our eyes can never see enough to be satisfied; our ears can never hear enough.

⁹ What has happened before will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing new in the whole world.

¹⁰ "Look," they say, "here is something new!" But no, it has all happened before, long before we were born.

¹¹No one remembers what has happened in the past, and no one in days to come will remember what happens between now and then.

The Philosopher's Experience

¹²I, the Philosopher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

¹³I determined that I would examine and study all the things that are done in this world.

God has laid a miserable fate upon us.

¹⁴I have seen everything done in this world, and I tell you, it is all useless. It is like chasing the wind.

¹⁵You can't straighten out what is crooked; you can't count things that aren't there.

¹⁶I told myself, "I have become a great man, far wiser than anyone who ruled Jerusalem before me. I know what wisdom and knowledge really are." ¹⁷I was determined to learn the difference between knowledge and foolishness, wisdom and madness. But I found out that I might as well be chasing the wind.

¹⁸The wiser you are, the more worries you have; the more you know, the more it hurts.

Chapter 2

¹I decided to enjoy myself and find out what happiness is. But I found that this is useless, too.

²I discovered that laughter is foolish, that pleasure does you no good.

³Driven on by my desire for wisdom, I decided to cheer myself up with wine and have a good time. I thought that this might be the best way people can spend their short lives on earth.

⁴I accomplished great things. I built myself houses and planted vineyards.

⁵I planted gardens and orchards, with all kinds of fruit trees in them; ⁶I dug ponds to irrigate them.

⁷I bought many slaves, and there were slaves born in my household. I owned more livestock than anyone else who had ever lived in Jerusalem.

⁸I also piled up silver and gold from the royal treasuries of the lands I ruled. Men and women sang to entertain me, and I had all the women a man could want.

⁹Yes, I was great, greater than anyone else who had ever lived in Jerusalem, and my wisdom never failed me.

¹⁰Anything I wanted, I got. I did not deny myself any pleasure. I was proud of everything I had worked for, and all this was my reward.

¹¹Then I thought about all that I had done and how hard I had worked doing it, and I realized that it didn't mean a thing. It was like chasing the wind — of no use at all.

¹²After all, a king can only do what previous kings have done.



“Look after your sheep and cattle as carefully as you can” (27.23)

So I started thinking about what it meant to be wise or reckless or foolish.

¹³Oh, I know, “Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness.

¹⁴The wise can see where they are going, and fools cannot.” But I also know that the same fate is waiting for us all.

¹⁵I thought to myself, “I will suffer the same fate as fools. So what have I gained from being so wise?” “Nothing,” I answered, “not a thing.” ¹⁶No one remembers the wise, and no one remembers fools. In days to come, we will all be forgotten. We must all die — wise and foolish alike.

¹⁷So life came to mean nothing to me, because everything in it had brought me nothing but trouble. It had all been useless; I had been chasing the wind.

The Song of Songs

The heart of love

What's it about? Song of Songs is a collection of love poetry.

Who wrote it? It's said that Solomon wrote these poems, but that's not certain.

Why read it? Some people think the book represents the love between God and his people, but it can be read just as a celebration of human love.

What's it to me? Some people think that being in love with another person gets in the way of loving God. Song of Songs takes a different view.

Chapter 1

¹The most beautiful of songs, by Solomon.^a

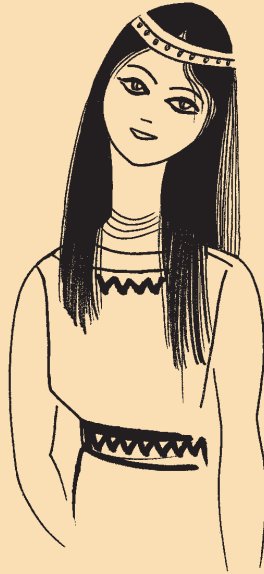
The First Song

The Woman

- ² Your lips cover me with kisses;
your love is better than wine.
- ³ There is a fragrance about you;
the sound of your name recalls it.
No woman could help loving you.
- ⁴ Take me with you, and we'll run away;
be my king and take me to your room.
We will be happy together,
drink deep, and lose ourselves in love.
No wonder all women love you!
- ⁵ Women of Jerusalem, I am dark but^b beautiful,
dark as the desert tents of Kedar,
but beautiful as the curtains in Solomon's palace.
- ⁶ Don't look down on me because of my colour,
because the sun has tanned me.
My brothers were angry with me
and made me work in the vineyard.
I had no time to care for myself.
- ⁷ Tell me, my love,
Where will you lead your flock to graze?
Where will they rest from the noonday sun?
Why should I need to look for you
among the flocks of the other shepherds?^c

^a by Solomon; or dedicated to Solomon, or about Solomon.

^b but; or and.



“Loveliest of women” (1.8)

The Man

- 8 Don't you know the place, loveliest of women?
Go and follow the flock;
find pasture for your goats
near the tents of the shepherds.
- 9 You, my love, excite men
as a mare excites the stallions of Pharaoh's chariots.
- 10 Your hair is beautiful upon your cheeks
and falls along your neck like jewels.
- 11 But we will make for you a chain of gold
with ornaments of silver.

c Probable text *Why should I... shepherds*; Hebrew unclear.

Where to find ...

Wisdom calls to the foolish	Proverbs 1.20–33
Seven things that the Lord hates	Proverbs 6.16–19
The creation of Wisdom	Proverbs 8.22–31
Thirty wise sayings	Proverbs 22.22—24.22
Four things ...	Proverbs 30.16–31
The capable wife	Proverbs 31.10–31
Life is useless	Ecclesiastes 1—2
A time for everything	Ecclesiastes 3.1–13
Wisdom and foolishness	Ecclesiastes 9.13—10.20
Youth and old age	Ecclesiastes 11.9—12.7
The power of love	Song of Songs 8.6–7