

# Under The Fig Tree



## WEEK 21

### Day 1

Proverbs Chapter 9. Wisdom from God comes through the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is imparted to us so that we do what God desires and become what He intends. If we listen to God and learn to be moved by His Spirit we will discover that He is building us into His Living Temple. Solomon built a physical temple, known throughout the world. Despite its grandeur, however, he realized that this was not the full heavenly reality of God's presence among His people. He also knew God in a personal way. The Book of Proverbs is filled with teaching that is relevant to the New Covenant and builds a bridge between the New Covenant and Torah. The Book is full of imagery pointing to spiritual truths as well as practical instructions: we do well to read it carefully. The Temple itself was an illustration of spiritual truths. We have the biblical account of its construction to help us understand these truths. The building itself is no longer needed now we understand the fulfillment in Yeshua and His people, but the biblical account is still very useful. We find other illustrations too, such as the picture of a virtuous wife compared with the image of an adulteress. See what the Lord shows you as you read these portions of what Solomon learned and passed on to us. Verse 10 is very important: it shows us the foundation on which to build. The fear of the Lord must be a beginning of our walk of faith and wisdom. Fear of the Lord is very much lacking in the world today and, as a consequence, many people live independently of Him. Such people are foolish. Fear of the Lord means reverence for Him, honouring Him in all things, approaching Him in all humility, knowing that we can do nothing of value without Him.

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Chapter 10. Chapters 1 to 9 gave a general background to Solomon's teaching on wisdom. Now we come to specific examples. Notice the way they are written. Each proverb is made up of two statements. These statements are sometimes parallels – the same idea written in two different ways. The two ideas can also be in contrast to one another, each reinforcing the other. The major contrast is between wisdom and foolishness, shown in various illustrations. Figures of speech are used extensively. Some of the simpler figures of speech are metaphors, and similes, which illustrate an idea through a comparison. Another common figure of speech is called hyperbole, where an idea is presented in an exaggerated way to make a point more emphatically. An example of a comparison comes in verse 26, and an example of hyperbole is in the second half of verse 31. Figures of speech are typical of Hebraic thought, where ideas are conveyed in a pictorial way. This is true in God's

teaching and also in prophecy. The Prophets often received communications through visions. Ask God to renew your mind so that you are more Hebraic than Greek in your mind and spirit.

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Chapters 11 to 12. Read two more chapters today. Read each one carefully and pause briefly after each proverb to reflect on what is written. See if the Holy Spirit shows you something especially relevant to you today. If a particular proverb is relevant you will find yourself pausing for longer at that point in your reading, in order to understand what the Lord is saying to you through it.

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## Day 2

Chapters 13 to 16. Read these four chapters today in the same prayerful attitude.

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## Day 3

Chapters 17 to 20. The Book of Proverbs is a sample of what God showed Solomon during his life. He asked for understanding so that he might lead God's people. God promised both understanding *and* wisdom. The result is that God speaks to us through these proverbs, just as He did to Solomon. Read another four chapters today.

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## Day 4

Chapters 21 to 24. Next time you plan your Bible reading scheme you may want to spend more time on the Book of Proverbs than we have allocated this year. Four chapters is rather a lot in one day, when every two sentences contain a point for meditation and reflection. The Holy Spirit will highlight the most relevant Proverbs for you as you read them prayerfully. Come back to this Book again in the future, just as you will to all of the Books of the Bible. Become familiar with what is in the Book and then the Holy Spirit will guide you back here time and again.

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## Day 5

Chapters 25 to 28. In 1 Kings 4:32, we read that Solomon composed 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. The Book of Proverbs contains only a sample of Solomon's wise sayings. Chapters 25 to 28 were added at the time of Hezekiah from records that had been passed on. We still do not have all that Solomon wrote. I wonder what is missing? Do we need to know? Solomon recorded what God showed him, and this is a valuable treasury for all time. We, too, should be prepared to hear directly from the Holy Spirit just as Solomon did. This sample of Solomon's wisdom is enough to direct our paths in our personal walk with God.

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## Day 6

Chapter 29. These are the last of Solomon's proverbs, which added to the Book at the time of Hezekiah.

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Chapter 30. The proverbs in this Chapter are attributed to a person by the name of Agur. They are of a different style from those of Solomon. Other people wrote proverbs and here is a sample for us. Proverbs were not only known in Israel. There are men and women from other nations considered to be wise and many other proverbs have been passed on through written records. We must be careful to discern which proverbs are results of inspiration of the Holy Spirit and which come from other sources, whether human logic or false spirits. In the Torah we read about the importance of honouring the elderly, symbolized by older men and women with grey hair. Through a long life a person who has followed a good path with God will speak wise words to the young. The Proverbs in the Bible are the best examples of this. Agur illustrates to us that other people learn wisdom just as Solomon did, but we must be discerning when we come to proverbs outside of the Bible.

You will probably find particular proverbs that you like best today. From time to time you may find new inspiration as the Holy Spirit highlights something else that is relevant in a different proverb. There is sometimes prophetic insight as well as teaching, such as in Verse 4, where Agur implies that God has a Son! That may have been a moment of inspiration that we understand more fully today in the light of Yeshua. Verses 7 to 9 are among my favourite proverbs. It comes from the voice of experience of a person who desires to walk with God, have provision for his life but also recognizing that too much provision can make us independent of God. See if there are echoes from the Proverbs in your own life today.

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Chapter 31. King Lemuel is the author of this Chapter, which ends the Book of Proverbs. Whether there was a real person named King Lemuel or not we do not know – it does not really matter. A lot of Jewish literature is anonymous and the author attributes his writing to an imaginary person who could be the sort of person who would speak in this way. It may even be that Solomon was Lemuel. There are some well known books, such as the Book of Enoch, which was not actually written by Enoch even though it is named after him. This particular book is founded on biblical truth, and is useful as a piece of Jewish literature. The proverbs of Lemuel were accepted for inclusion in the Bible as were a number of other writings, including some literature. We must accept Biblical literature as a part of God's teaching. The Bible contains many types of documents. Most of the documents are accounts of real people, but just as, in all nations, there are ideas conveyed through stories, so this has a place in what has come to us from ancient Israel. The Proverbs give us one example. The Parables give us another.

Verses 10 to 31 of Chapter 31 are the most well known. Just as wisdom is to be desired as a treasure higher than rubies, so is a virtuous wife. These verses illustrate the qualities of a virtuous wife from the days of Ancient Israel. It serves as an illustration rather than a definition. Comparable qualities can be found in a virtuous wife in the modern context. She is a wife who is a partner and helper to a

good husband, just as God had intended for Adam and Eve. She brings up her children in the ways of God.

It is appropriate to end the Book of Proverbs with a picture of a virtuous wife. Not only is this relevant in our families and societies, but it is also a reminder of our relationship with the Lord. Israel was likened to the God's chosen wife. The imagery is also applied to the relationship between all believers and Yeshua, the Son of God. Wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live good lives on this earth and also to prepare us to be the Bride of Yeshua.

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## Day 7

### A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

The Song of Songs. This was written by Solomon. It is fitting to read this Book in its entirety today. It is also fitting to read it immediately after Proverbs 31. Solomon had many wives. He had the privilege of choosing from among the most beautiful of women. This Book comes from his experiences. Though Solomon erred in his choice of many wives he also is a type of Messiah. Through Adam and Eve, God teaches us the principle of one husband with one wife, and this points to the Lord having one bride. In the Lord's case the one bride is one body with many parts. We are His bride together. Solomon was a forerunner of Yeshua and so there is something of an illustration in his many wives pointing to the one family of God making up Yeshua's bride. The imagery is tarnished in Solomon, though he could have been forgiven for thinking that he was the Messiah. His kingdom prospered greatly under the blessing of God, and David may have foreseen messianic fulfillment in his son Solomon whilst also recognizing that God Himself would bring His own Son into the world. We cannot go too far with this but Solomon was intended to be a forerunner and a type of Yeshua. This is a subject to consider carefully because we know that Solomon's humanity was also evident and that he was tempted, especially by his accumulation of many wives. He was not the Messiah, but gives some illustration for us to study. Perhaps another way of looking at this is that Song of Songs is an expression of a perfect relationship that Solomon was seeking. As such it encourages us to also seek that perfect relationship, which one day will be fulfilled when Yeshua returns for His Bride who will be without spot or blemish.

Out of Solomon's experience comes the Song of Songs, *Shir Hashirim* in Hebrew. It is a meditation upon a pure and lovely relationship between a man and a woman, and in its purity gives us a picture of relationship between God and His people, also to be fulfilled through the loving relationship between Yeshua and His bride. This book is an important inclusion in the Bible because it challenges us to go beyond dry ritual in our interpretation of Torah, to the freedom of exploration of pure loving relationships. God gave men and women the ability to experience intimate relationships, which, if kept pure, help us to understand that there is an intimate spiritual counterpart.

As we read the book prayerfully, the Holy Spirit will draw us into pure and intimate relationship with God and free us from inhibition that comes from dry legalism. Let Him minister to you. There are some wonderful passages that speak strongly of God's love for us, what He has done for us and what He intends for us, such as:

Chapter 2, Verse 4: *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*

Chapter 4, Verse 1: *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair.*

Chapter 7, Verse 6: *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love.*

And, speaking clearly of the Cross,

Chapter 8, Verse 6: *Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.*

Imagine Solomon's Palace and picture this as a drama that was performed there. Just as in any play, there are principal parts. The main characters are the bride (Shulamite) and the King (Solomon).

There is also the chorus (daughters of Jerusalem). The dialogue flows among these characters to create a picture of a romance in ancient Israel. Solomon succeeded in creating imagery that Yeshua could transfer to the Bride, the Bridegroom, and the friends of the Bridegroom, a parable speaking of His return to gather His people to Himself at the end of the age.

Read all eight chapters of *Shir Hashirim* today and see how the Holy Spirit speaks to you, and how you are inspired to speak to God.

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