

## The Habits of Wisdom

**Note to leaders:** There is quite a bit of material to cover in one session. If you meet on a weekly basis, you may decide to split the study up and discuss it over two weeks. For bi-weekly or monthly groups choose the questions that you think will be of most interest to your group. Do be sure to include some application questions as part of your discussion!

### Appetizer

There are two central ideas in the theology of the Old Testament: God creates and God liberates. The different books of the Bible expand on the meaning and the implications of these two core actions of God in history.

How is the flavour of wisdom literature different from other parts of the Bible?

The following texts are found in the part of the Old Testament we know as the Pentateuch, the Law or Torah. As you read each one, notice not only what the law says but also the reason that it gives. Why should Israelites keep these laws? Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33 – 36; 25:39 – 43; Deuteronomy 15:12 – 15; 24:14 – 22.

Now read the following texts from the Wisdom literature: Proverbs 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; 22:2; 29:7, 13; Job 31:13–15.

How do the wisdom writers back up their point?

[Exercise taken from Wright, Christopher J. H.. How to Preach and Teach the Old Testament for All Its Worth (p. 267)].

### Entrée

#### Bible Study: Proverbs 4:10-27

- 1) Read through the text together. Pay attention to repeated words. What is (are) the main image(s) that you notice in this passage?
- 2) Wisdom in Proverbs is often described as a *path* to walk, and not necessarily a destination. Why do you think this imagery is used? What does it tell us about seeking wisdom?

## A Taste of Wisdom

### Study Guide 2

- 3) Verses 21 and 23 mention the role of the *heart* in wisdom. In Ancient Near Eastern literature the word *heart* is used a bit differently from how we might use it today. While it does include desires and emotions, this word also implies the mind and intellect. The heart determines what we choose as our direction in life. (Also see Proverbs 2:9-13)  
What do you think the author means by instructing the son to guard (keep or protect) their heart? (The role of the heart is also in Proverbs 3:1, 4:4, 16:14, 18)  
How is this to be done?
- 4) Wisdom is a theme that comes up in New Testament writings as well. In Colossians, for example, Paul talks about walking in God's wisdom (see Colossians 1:9-10, 2:3, 3:16, 4:5). Is choosing the way of wisdom something you think about as you seek to follow Jesus? Why or why not? How is it related?
- 5) Imagine that you are trying to give instruction on wise living to a younger person today. What imagery or examples would you use in our modern day context? As a group try to write your own short wisdom saying that conveys a similar idea as Proverbs 4.

## Dessert

Wisdom, as seen in Proverbs, encompasses the whole of life. How might our relationship with food relate to wise living? Do you think that food waste is a moral problem?

Read: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/food-waste-emissions-1.7050863>