

## Getting to know your Bible – Part 3

*Getting To Know Your Bible*

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Tonight I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Joshua chapter 24 in the Old Testament and if tonight is a part of our Sunday in worship, if this is your first time with us or the first time in some time, I want to invite you to a very broad, vast and fast journey. That's right, I've entitled this "Getting to know your Bible." As you well know, the Bible is a very extensive book from Genesis to Revelation, 66 books, 1,189 chapters and that being said, we are going to cover the totality of it in less than two months. Essentially, you know, you hear people say a 30,000 foot view, this is more of about a 50,000 foot view as we see the totality of the scriptures and the respective divisions. And tonight, we're going to begin in Joshua and if time permits, we're going to make it all the way to the end of Song of Solomon. I mean, this is a vast, fast section, but it is a section of the Old Testament that is known as the writings. Last week we addressed the law, the Torah, the Pentateuch, the first five books and then we gather again, we will address what we know as the prophets. But the writings are the most vast, most thorough section of our respected Bible and/or scriptures, beginning with Joshua going through what we know as Song of Solomon.

Before we go to Joshua chapter 24, just as kind of a highlight, one of the, I like to use the term Meyers-isms, but one of the theories that I claim to possess is that God in his desired intent of communication is not very verbose. Allow me to illustrate. The Garden of Eden. Adam's there. He's naming all the animals. Everything's going really well. And when God gives him instructions on how to live life, it's one single verse. That's all it is. He says, "You may eat freely of every tree of the garden, except the one, the knowledge of good and evil. In the day you eat thereof, thou shalt surely die." It's a one verse instruction manual, that's all it is, but we discover later that his instruction had to become a little more thorough as humanity continues to rebel and misunderstand, whatever it may be. Then we make our way to the book of Exodus. The Israelites have come out of Egypt. We know that Moses goes on Mount Sinai. If you've read chapter 20 of the book of Exodus, the original Ten Commandments are not very long but the book of Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy is a thorough explanation of all the ways that we try to dismiss those simple 10 statements. Next week when we talk about the prophets, I hold the position that the very first chronological prophet was Obadiah, one page in your Bible and you'll discover as you read the rest of the prophets, all they're doing is expounding on what God gave Obadiah. You say what does that have to do with tonight? This is the most expansive, most extensive passage or section we have in the Bible and yet when we

get to the end of the book of Joshua, we discover that, guess what, once again God's instructions were not very lengthy but our need for understanding is such.

Joshua chapter 1 begins with the Israelites knocking on the door of Jordan's stormy banks. In fact, they're gonna go from the east and to the west. They're gonna take the Ark of the Covenant across, the waters are gonna part much like they did in the Red Sea. God gives them some very specific instructions. If you go back to chapter 1, it's only two verses, verses 9 and 10. It says that every place that your foot steps, every place you go, it shall be yours according to my word, and there you shall have boldness and instruction. He basically says, "If you do what I say, it'll work out. If you don't, it won't." Now, fast forward 24 chapters later. The Israelites are well-embedded in the land, but if you've read the book of Joshua, you'll know they've had their ups, their downs, their goods, their bads and I'm going to read one of the most famous verses in all of the Bible, however, we're not gonna read it as we put it on our walls of our home. We're gonna read it in context. That verse is verse 15, which says, "For as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Not only is that not the entirety of the verse, that's the backside of that one respective verse. We're gonna begin in verse 13. Now remember, God has a pattern of short communication with our long understanding. Beginning in verse 13.

13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat. 14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. 15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. 16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; 17 For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: 18 And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

Push pause. Sounds great. In fact, if that were the end, you would almost think, then why do we have Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel? Why did it not, quote, go right? I want you to listen to the most non-pastoral, pastoral passage in the Bible. Verse 19, Joshua, their leader, their pastor,

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

How is that for positive communication? But what's happening here? The Israelites said, "Oh, we want to serve the Lord." They never said they would forsake the former gods. They never said they would abolish them. They said, "How dare we?" But they never said they would. In other words, what we discover is they're about to repeat the mistakes of their forefathers over and over again.

Now, if you will cut me a little bit of slack tonight, this section of the Bible that we're gonna go over, I refer to as the soap opera section. Now, you say the soap opera section. Just work with me for just a minute. You say, why would you call it the soap opera section? You know, one of the things that I've learned throughout my life when it comes to the genre known as soap operas is that you can watch one, not watch it for three years, come back and you haven't missed the story. Right? You haven't missed anything. That's what's happening in this section of the Bible. Essentially, what we just read is the plot of every book. The Lord calls them to repent in obedience. They claim they'll obey, and guess what, they don't. And there is, as we're going to study in a moment, this vicious cycle where the story really never changes. Secondly, one of the things that you discover in what we know as the proverbial soap opera, it doesn't matter who the actual character change is, because the actors come and go, they never change. And it doesn't matter who the judge is, it doesn't matter who the king is, it doesn't matter where they're... they repeat the same mistakes and they walk the same pattern. And so again, you can pick up your Bible in the book of Joshua, 2 Chronicles, or Ezra and it's the same story over and over again.

So as a survey, and I know tonight's somewhat extensive and we have the outline on the screen as well as that which we handed out, what we know as the writings, we typically break that up into the historical section, which is Joshua through Esther, and then wisdom literature, which is Job through Song of Solomon. I want to define the section, and I know you're capable of reading, so forgive me for doing this, but when you're covering such a vast amount of material, I want to try to make it somewhat specific in its definition and description. These books, though historical, do not contain history resembling 21st century standards. There are often no specific times or dates given for the events; that doesn't declare that events are any less historical. It is imperative to note that the focus of these books is not just facts and details, but rather the religious and spiritual history of God's people.

Allow me to explain. It would be to our 21st century Western mind advantage if God would say it something like this. "In the year 1056 BC, in the third month, fourth day." That's not how he did it. In fact, one of the oftentimes most confounding aspects of this section of the Bible is it will say, "In the third year of the reign of a certain king, five years after the earthquake and two years before the king of the north died." Now, again, that's not how we see things. That's not how we write things or record all of Joshua to take God's people into the Promised Land. This, quote, journey is recorded in stages. Listen to this: entrance, conquest, division, governance. Once the land is settled, judges are put in place to help the people in daily and national life. After a period of several judges, a monarchy or a kingship is established.

There are three kings of great significance. I want to call your attention to the book of 1 Samuel chapter 8. Again, this is the largest section of scripture and there's a host of passages we could go to but one of the things that we see is that when they established in the Promised Land, God's idea, God's governance, we know as the judges. And you study the book of Judges, you will discover there was a host of men and a few ladies who the Lord appointed to be the representative of, the leader of his people as they navigate this famous, quote, Promised Land. If you look at it historically, just where, quote, in charge, things went better than at other times. And again, what did the Israelites do? They rejected God's means. They rejected God's establishment of how he wanted things done. And again, I say this all the time, but before we cast the proverbial stone through their stained glass, do we not do the same? In fact, we're in a culture today that is taking every institution that God ordered upside down. God's institution for leading his people were judges. That's who he established.

So in 1 Samuel chapter 8, I want to pick up the story.

7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. 8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. 9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. 10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. 12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. 14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. 17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. 19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

It's a frightening passage of scripture, and even though things were not necessarily at times always perfect, God had ordained these judges were the way of which he would

govern them. But they begged to be like the other nations. They pleaded to be like those that they were surrounded by. And so we see in the context of the section of the Bible, there are three primary kings, three primary monarchs that rise to the occasion. The first was a man by the name of Saul. Saul, I know Melody did a beautiful job of talking about the image that we see, the mirror in front of me. Saul was a lot like me. It says he was head and shoulders above everybody else. It was a beautiful... ignore that.

Okay, Saul was a man who looked exactly like what the people wanted. One to fight their battles. One that was appealing to look at. One that men aspired to be and women aspired to be his wife. I mean, he was that picture. Do you remember what happened though when God called him to be king? He went and hid. He hid. And Saul was a travesty from all respects. In fact, verse Samuel 10 and verse 31 records not only his rebellion against God, but he actually died by way of what we know as suicide. He gave up his own life in the pride of what had befallen him.

Saul went by the wayside, a man by the name of David, who's actually probably more of a mirror reflection of me because when you look at the account of David's calling, Jesse, his dad, had eight sons. Samuel comes unto him and says, "God has appointed the next king to be of your lineage." He said, "Bring out the boys. Let's see which one is the next king of Israel." And you remember that Jesse began with the oldest and the tallest. He went all through the list and none could be found. Finally, Samuel looked at him and said, "This doesn't make sense. God has called me to your house. Why is there not one who he is ordained as the king? Surely you have another child, another son?" And Jesse said, "You don't mean David. You don't mean the runt of the litter. You don't mean the youngest one who's out with the sheep. No, no, that can't be him." But we discover that was the one that was anointed, that was the one who would become the most famous of the leaders. In fact, today, if you go to what we call the Holy Land, if you go to what we know as Israel, it is still called, there in Jerusalem, even though Bethlehem is the town of David, it is called, there's the old city, which is called David's City. It is still prominent today. So much so that in Matthew chapter 1, when we get the lineage of Jesus Christ, the first name mentioned is David. It says the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham and then it goes into the chronological genealogy.

David, as you well know, comes to the end of his life. He has a child by the name of Solomon. Incidentally, Solomon was not the first child of David's relationship with Bathsheba, but technically a little later. As you know, that first child was lost seven days after birth. But Solomon is known in the Bible as the wisest man to ever live. Probably the most famous story about Solomon that's been told a thousand different ways is the story about the two women shared an apartment together, both had a newborn baby, and then in the night one of them lost their child. Today we might call it SIDS, sudden infant death or whatever. All we know is the next morning one of the children was deceased. The two women got in a fight over whose child the other one actually was. The matter was brought before Solomon. It's a famous story and Solomon simply asked the ladies, "What shall we do?" And one of the ladies said, "I know what we do. Let's chop the baby in half and give half to each one of us." And Solomon said, "There's no way you're the mom of this baby. Give it to the other woman." Solomon was one, when God asked what

do you want, he said, just give me wisdom. Solomon, not only known as the wisest at times, but he's the vessel that God gave us the book of Ecclesiastes which basically is, "I've been there, done that, got the t-shirt," Book of the Bible and what we know as the famous Song of Salmon But he is the one, his hands, his treasury is the one that eventually purchased and built that famous temple that David so desired.

When Solomon passed, then what we know as the monarchy divided. This is where in the Old Testament things just get mildly chaotic. In fact, it's pretty easy to follow up to this point. You've got judges that come and judges that go. You've got three kings that rise in power, either have the crown taken away from them or they die. But when Solomon dies, it gets almost impossible to keep up with who's who, because you have a divided kingdom, you have a split family and you've got people taking each other out and usurping each other's roles. The end of that period, 1 and 2 Chronicles, records the division of the monarchy between the northern kingdom, which would have 10 of the famous tribes, and the southern kingdom, which would have two, Benjamin and Judah. They eventually both of these lands are taken captive. The Assyrians come in 722 and take the northern kingdom captive. The Babylonians come in 586 and take the southern. When we get to the prophets next week, this is critical because the Lord uses the illustration of the northern kingdom and the Assyrians as an example to the southern kingdoms, "Don't follow their lead." But guess what we did? The same thing we always do.

So when we look at this section of the Bible, there are some theological frameworks that I think are necessary to grasp. The first one is this, it's what we call the sin cycle. The sin cycle can be seen in Joshua all the way through what we know as 2 Chronicles, and to be honest with you, it can be seen in our very lives today. Here's how the sin cycle works. The people of God sin. They find themselves in rebellion against God. They cry out to God for mercy, for understanding, and for grace. God grants that. He shows them favor. He allows them to be redeemed and restored by his power alone. They begin to walk in that redemption. They begin to walk in that relationship and as you well know, confidence turns into arrogance, and they actually begin to believe that the reason they're in the position they are is because of their own doing. So what do they do? They begin to build the high places back. They begin to worship the false idols. They begin to neglect the things of the temple of God and the worship of the one true God till they find themselves in the ditch again. So what do they do? They cry out to God once again. And what does he do? He redeems them. He restores them. And the cycle continues and continues and continues. It is, forgive me, much like watching a soap opera. It's the same story over and over and over again.

One of my favorite illustrations, some years ago in another state, I was leading a weekday morning men's Bible study, much like I do here on Tuesday mornings. There was a man who was, you know, we talked about the stages of development according to the Bible this morning, I don't know if he was the age, but he was between elder and aged. He was up there, so to speak. One day, he said, "I've been reading through the book of Judges. I've been reading through that section of the Bible," and he said, "I have come to the conclusion that the Israelites of the Old Testament are the most stiff-necked, ignorant,

rebellious people on the planet." I think one of the reasons that God reminded me on this section of the Bible is not just because the names that are hard to pronounce, not because the stories that at times get confounding, it's because, to be honest with you, it's very much a mirror picture of ourselves. How often do we call out to the Lord to help us, redeem us, save us, and then before long we, again, ignore him, become self-sufficient, etc.

The sin cycle. Secondly is what we call the failed leadership. If you begin to look at the judges, you begin to look at the kings, I mean, these are the days of Samson and Jephthah and David and Saul. You'll discover they were mightily used by God and of God but again, leadership failed. Even the priests of the day, in fact Samuel, who we read or spoke about earlier, who not only warned the people about a kingship, but who's the one who anointed David, a lot of people don't realize that when Samuel died, I mean, here was a man who pretty much walked the straight and narrow, pretty much kept God's people in line, when he died, he took his priestly ephod and he decided, listen to this, he decided, "I'm gonna put it on display. If I put it on display, then when people walk by, they will remember how God blessed them, and they will continue on the quote straight and narrow." You know what the Bible says the people did? They went, this is a direct quote, they went a-whoring after the ephod. Again, even those who we hold in such high esteem, we discover often failed during and the end and after their life.

And finally, God's grace. Grace. Grace. God's grace. That word, which means by definition receiving that which we rightfully do not deserve, it is the underlying theme of this entire section because if you and I were in charge, if you and I were proverbially God in the context, we'd have gotten rid of them earlier than later. Trust me. What do we discover? Countless, countless chances to repent. If you'll notice the end of this section, what you and I know as 2 Chronicles, you'll discover that chronologically it mirrors the book of Isaiah. Isaiah and his prophecies are contemporaries with 2 Chronicles, which ends chapters 40 through 66 as maybe one of the greatest pictures of grace in all of the Bible.

Before we go to the wisdom literature, which is technically on the back of your sheet as well as on the screen, I want to bring up a fascinating fact. Your Old Testament, as you have it tonight, obviously begins with Genesis and it ends with Malachi. If you were of a Jewish belief, if you had what we call a Hebrew Bible, meaning in the language of Hebrew, but also for the faith of what we know as Judaism, you might be surprised that 2 Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible and what you and I know as the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Habakkuk and all these great men are actually placed in the middle and not in the end. And the reason is because they do not believe that the Messiah has come and so therefore, they see the prophecies of Isaiah and such and the history of Kings and Chronicles awaiting, they believe they're on the doorstep of the Messiah coming. We know the Messiah has come and many of those prophecies of those famous books that we'll study next week aren't in regards to his first coming, they're in regards to his second coming. So if you have the opportunity to speak to someone who is Jewish and/or grab a Hebrew Bible, you will notice the last book of the Hebrew Bible

is what you and I know as 2 Chronicles, where the people are awaiting possession of the land.

The wisdom literature, which is the backside of this section, is Job through Song of Solomon. We call it the wisdom literature because, as by definition, wisdom isn't an acquisition of new knowledge, it's an understanding of what to do with what we have. And if you think about it, if you read Joshua through 2 Chronicles, you will discover, you will learn, you will be educated in every possible human way to do it that's not God's way. I mean you just can't make it up. Every time you turn a page it's like surely they're going to get together and they do not. They're called wisdom literature because there's nothing really new, it's just put in a way of how to apply what we should already know.

Historically speaking with the exception of Job, all of what we know as the wisdom literature actually was given to us by God during that monarchy period through Saul, David, and Solomon. Though Job mainly describes the experience of select individuals and it shows life from a mutual and personal communal level, the style of these writings verifies the leadership of Israel was emphatically spiritual as well as physical. You know, Saul may have been rebellious against God, but the Bible does speak of times of repentance. David, a man after God's own heart, cried out to God when his sin was found and discovered, and if you read Ecclesiastes chapter 12, even though Solomon went completely sideways, he came back around. In fact, some of the last words he wrote were, "Here are the conclusion of the matter: obey God and do His commandments." He quote came back around.

So even though in these historical writings we see this continuous cycle and this saga of the repentance of the sin cycle, down at the heart of these individuals was a sincere desire to do the things of God and serve the Lord and so in the wisdom literature we see their heart on display. As far as theology is concerned, they describe the various human experiences of God's people under various circumstances. These experiences, though done in the flesh, are representative of a spiritual life within their five books that we classify as quote-unquote wisdom literature.

Job, the story of a man obviously who lost it all and stayed faithful to chapter 42. In fact, one of my statements about Job is this, no matter what chapter you find yourself in, chapter 42 is coming. It is a vivid portrayal of spiritual warfare, of that which is happening behind the scenes that we may not see with our eyes, we may not hear with our ears, but is even more real than that which we do. Job had no idea that God was bragging on him. He had no idea that Satan was accusing him. And he had no clue, he had no clue the blessings in store for him at the end of his story.

The book of what we know as Psalms primarily is given to us at the hand of David. Of a 152 Psalms, 72 of them are given to us through him. These songs and poems describe the attributes of God, the promises of God, the grace of God, as well as the effects of sin and prophetic promises concerning the people of God and their eventual Savior Jesus Christ. In fact, the most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament is Psalm 110 verse 1, where David makes the statement that his Lord will sit on the throne forever. In



other words, whom we know is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. One of the things that I love about the Psalms is that you cannot categorize them. Now I know if you'll do an in-depth study we classify them into five types of Psalms. When I say you cannot categorize them stylistically they may have different themes but the style of the Psalms is literally all over the map and it concludes Psalm 150 verse 6, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD." What a great conclusionary piece of wisdom.

The book of Proverbs, 31 chapters of timeless sayings and anecdotes. One of the things that I say about the book of Proverbs is this, it is a proverb not a promise. You do know there's a difference, right? A proverb means, generally speaking this is how it goes. What we know as the book of Proverbs, allow me to just be very forthright and transparent tonight, gives us warning. It warns us of the paths we should not take, the decisions we should not make, and it references those that have gone before us. If I could summarize the book of Psalms, just put up with me and I guess because the Lord gave me boys, it is so relevant, basically, Proverbs says stay away from strong drink and bad women. Oh, and by the way, don't misuse your money. That's Proverbs. I mean, it's over and over and over again. And as you read Proverbs, you'll say, why do we keep talking about these same things? Because the last time I checked, those are the things that get most people in trouble.

Ecclesiastes. I love this book of the Bible. As I said earlier, been there, done that, got the t-shirt. Solomon had all the money he could ever spend, all the influence he could ever exert, all the experience that one could have. In fact, he begins with vanity of vanities, all is vanity. And really, he's writing what we know of Ecclesiastes after the fact and he's saying that everything we experience, everything we acquire, everything we desire in life, perspective, it's just vanity. To make it a little bit personal, I know many of you are aware that in the past week and a half, my wife Tracy's mom has gone to be with the Lord. Her and her sister were out there for about a week with her dad. He may be watching right now. And one of the things that they did, as we often do at times like that, is they began to go through the pictures. They began to go through the things. In girl's case, they go through the jewelry. And one of the things that my wife shared with me last night, she said, "You know, my mom had some incredible, incredible things, but she didn't take anything with her." Think about it. It doesn't matter what we acquire. There's literally nothing that we take to the next physically and Solomon reiterates that. And again, as I mentioned earlier, he concludes with, "This is the whole duty of man, to obey God and keep his commandments." If you're ever tempted to buy into what the world is selling, just read Ecclesiastes because Solomon not only bought it, he invested in it, and then he bought the company and said, "Nope, it doesn't work."

Last but not least, maybe one of the most controversial and at times scandalous books of the Bible, Song of Solomon. Now, let me give you a little historical context here. Solomon, originally, when he was wise, he had one wife, the wife of his youth. When wisdom began to fail, he decided to acquire 300 wives and 900 concubines. I don't know why. I'm just going to be honest with you. But nonetheless, he did. And by the way, when you look at his life, one of the biggest issues with those acquisitions is they brought idolatry and false worship not only into his house, but in throughout all of Israel. Song of

Solomon on the surface. is a story of a young man and a young woman who are madly, passionately in love with one another. Now, it's somewhat scandalous at times, but I've had moments in my own marriage where I have very unwisely and humorously decided that I would brag on my wife in the context of Song of Solomon. For example, one day I pulled her aside, I said, "Baby, I want you to know that you are such and such a biblical woman." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Your hair flows like the goats and your teeth are lined up like the rocks. It's beautiful." But that is a description that is given in the book of Song of Solomon.

But remember where it is. Remember where we are. We begin in Joshua. We're coming out of Egypt. We're going to the Promised Land. There's going to be this repetitive cycle of sin, rebellion, repentance, restoration. It ends in Song of Solomon. Song of Solomon, many believe, is more than just the story of a young man and a young woman who are madly in love with each other, many people believe that it is a prophetic picture of the church, of a young lady who is destitute and desperate on her own and can only be what she desires when her, if I can use contemporary secular language, knight in shining armor comes in and swoops her away. Why? Because once we leave Song of Solomon, we're into the prophecies and so there is a picture that it begins leaving the bondage of Egypt and it ends with the promise of a relationship with the bridegroom himself.

And so what we know as the writings is a vast section. It is at times a confounding section, a convicting section when we look in light of our own lives, but also think it's very prophetic in itself, that no amount of leadership, no amount of coordination can ever get God's people where they need to be. The only one who is pictured as able is the one that's described as the bridegroom, that when we get to the New Testament, we discover that we, his church, are referred to as his bride. In this world that we live in today, if there is one thing we are so desperately in need of and that which is so, shall I say, rarely discovered and sought after, it is instruction and it is wisdom, and it is in this section of the Bible that gives us practical illustration after illustration after illustration of what it looks like to walk in favor with God and what it looks like to walk much the opposite.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Tonight as we draw this service to a close, I think it's fitting that Song of Solomon is the conclusion of this section and it causes us to reflect, have I believed in, have I called upon the bridegroom to me? I know it's Sunday evening, but tonight may be the night where you realize your need of forgiveness, your need of salvation, your need to call upon the Lord. And maybe tonight in an environment like this, is the way that God has it perfectly and prophetically and providentially designed. Tonight, the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe tonight's that night where you call on Jesus to save you from the rebellious nature of your sin. Or tonight maybe you say, "You know pastor, that's been taken care of for many, many years and decades." But maybe tonight's one of those nights where you hear these stories that are oh so familiar, you hear names that you've heard most of your life and you realize that they're not just historical characters, they're not just guys way back then, they're a mirrored reflection of who you and I often become in life. So maybe tonight for you it's not about stepping out and stepping forward and rendering a decision, maybe tonight it's about walking out of here realizing that those ancient words

that we sang about earlier in the service really are there to guide us in direction, to keep us from rebellion, and to cause us to walk in favor and in wisdom with God and man.

*Lord Jesus tonight, thank you. God, that section of the Bible that if we would just be honest, at times we find very non-exciting, God, thank you. that you've inspired it and you've preserved it to give us instruction. God, may we heed what it says and may we honor you by doing so. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.*