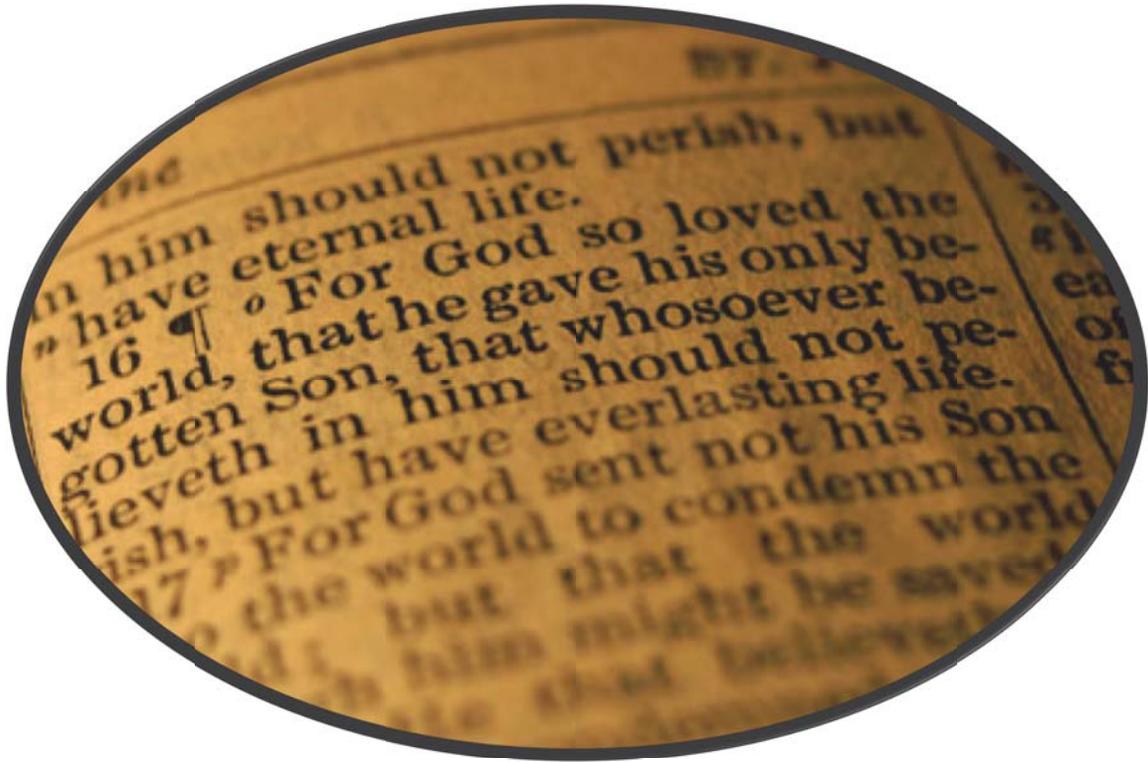


THE HEART OF GOD

THE WRITINGS



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Heart of God: The Writings
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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
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Introduction to *The Writings*

The Writings, also called the Wisdom Literature, includes some of the most familiar and beloved books of the Old Testament. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon present many profound and stirring examples of what it means to live in God's covenant as His chosen and redeemed people.

We've already looked at Ecclesiastes, so our focus will be on the other four books of the Writings. We will consider various perspectives on our relationship with God, as well as on what it means to live for Him in this world.

The poetry of these books is filled with images and analogies meant to stimulate our imaginations and cause our minds and affections to soar with delight in the Lord. Read each assignment carefully and reflectively, listening for the Spirit to lead you deeper into the heart of God.

The Heart of God studies provide a road map through the Scriptures, unfolding key unifying threads and following the development of those matters closest to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation. Through all our study we'll see how the Scriptures lead us to Jesus, and how He, in turn, brings into the presence of our heavenly Father and His Kingdom. There, as we encounter God and His glory, the Spirit can transform us increasingly in to the very image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

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1 Job (1)

Read and meditate on Job 1, 2, 9, 12, 13, and 16.

The Old Testament is traditionally divided into three sections: the Law (the first five books, by Moses), the Prophets (historical prophets and writing prophets, major and minor), and the Writings. Generally cast in poetic form, the Writings are a collection of stories, songs, meditations, aphorisms, and prayers that served to help God's covenant people fix their thoughts and affections on Him. We have already had occasion to consider the book of Ecclesiastes. In this week's study, therefore, we will look at the remaining books of the Writings – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon – in order to follow the primary themes of divine revelation through them.

For reflection

1. The book of Job is one of the oldest books in the Old Testament, dating perhaps from the time of Abraham, or even earlier. What do we learn from these chapters about the unseen realm, and its relationship to the world of sight, sound, and things?
2. From what we have seen thus far in the Old Testament, what do we know about God? How does that help and guide us in trying to understand the events that befell Job?
3. How would you describe Job's faith in these chapters? In what ways is it clear that He has a heart for God? What seems to be his great desire (cf. Job 13)?
4. Job's friends seem intent on giving him a reason for his suffering, in the belief, apparently, that he might then be able to find a way out of his troubles. Job seems equally intent on discovering the reason for what has befallen him. But God being Who He is, is it always wise or necessary for us to *understand* His reasons and motives for what He does (cf. Is. 55.8, 9; Eccl. 3.11)? Explain.
5. How can trials and sufferings *confirm* our status as God's people, *renew us* in His redeeming grace, and *bring Him glory* in all things? Should God's people today expect to endure trials and sufferings? Explain.

Summary

In His wisdom, and for His glory, it pleased God to bring one of His faithful servants to trials the likes of which most of us will never know. Job's initial response is to trust God, but to seek His wisdom, so that he can bear up under his trial. His friends want to lay the blame for his plight on him, but Job scorns their counsel. But he has no better explanation. Where does this leave him? What are we learning from Job about faith, and how it operates within God's covenant?

Closing Prayer

O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!
For Your arrows pierce me deeply,
And Your hand presses me down.
There is no soundness in my flesh
Because of Your anger,
Nor any health in my bones
Because of my sin.
For my iniquities have gone over my head;
Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

The Heart of God: The Writings

My wounds are foul *and* festering
Because of my foolishness.
I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
For my loins are full of inflammation,
And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
I am feeble and severely broken;
I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.
Lord, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You...
Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, be not far from me!
Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!

Psalm 38.1-9, 21, 22

2 Job (2)

Read and meditate on Job 19, 31, 38, 40.1-14, and 42.

Through three cycles of harangue from his friends, Job stood his ground and refused to accept their simplistic explanation for his sufferings. But he had no better explanation of his own, and he knew that only God could make sense of all this. Job fell through temptation into sin when he began to *demand* of God that He give him an explanation. God had other plans.

For reflection

1. In chapter 19.21-29, Job expresses an extraordinary insight into future developments of God's covenant. And while he cannot have fully understood what he was saying, yet he seems to have known that full resolution of our human plight lies beyond this life. Explain.
2. In chapter 31, exasperated by the repeated accusations and innuendo of his friends, Job turns to self-justification, which becomes making demands on God (vv. 35-37). What do we learn here about faith? What do we learn about trusting God even beyond the limits of our ability to understand?
3. Chapters 32-37 introduce Elihu, whose name means *He is my God*. He rebukes Job's friends and offers Job succor; then he rebukes Job and defends the integrity and wisdom of God. Elihu offers Job, his friends, and us, the readers, an opportunity to re-orient ourselves to a fuller understanding of life in God's covenant. How can you see in Elihu something of a *partial* fulfillment of what Job was longing for in Job 9.25-35? To what greater *mediator* does Elihu point?
4. God appears in Job 38, and it's not pretty. Rather, it's so beautiful, so overwhelming, and so all-encompassing that it boggles our minds. We know God, but we can't fathom His immense wisdom and greatness, and we are humbled before the vast scope and mystery of His power and might. What may we learn from Job 38-41 about knowing God through creation (cf. Ps. 19.1-4)? While we may *know* Him in creation, and *discern His presence and glory* there (Prov. 25.2), does this mean we can *understand* the way He does? What do we learn from these chapters about faith?
5. In chapter 42, Job repents and is restored. Were his friends right after all? If not, of what was Job repenting? What's the difference between the *ear* and the *eye* as instruments for *knowing*? What is Job saying about his relationship with God?

Summary

The book of Job offers timeless truth about living in God's covenant. In this world we will have tribulation; but God has overcome the troubles of the world through His eternal Wisdom and Power. Our calling is not to *know as God knows*, but to *know God*, and to trust in Him, come what may. What's the most important lesson for you from the book of Job?

Closing Prayer

I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works.
Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts,
And I will declare Your greatness.
They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness,
And shall sing of Your righteousness.
The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,

Slow to anger and great in mercy.
The LORD *is* good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works.
All Your works shall praise You, O LORD,
And Your saints shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And talk of Your power,
To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

Psalm 145.5-12

3 Psalms (1)

Read and meditate on Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19, and 23.

The book of Psalms is perhaps the book most beloved of the people of God from all ages. These prayers, songs, and meditations cover the whole gamut of life in the world within God's covenant, and teach us how to commune with God in every situation.

For reflection

1. Psalm 1 describes the righteous man. Psalm 2 proclaims the righteous One. How can you see that these two psalms provide a cornerstone for the entire book of Psalms?
2. Psalm 8 demonstrates the continuity of God's covenant by reaching all the way back to the covenant with Adam and affirming its continuing validity. Explain.
3. Psalm 19 provides a synopsis of God's two "books" of revelation. What are these? Which is the most important when it comes to knowing God and His will? How does knowing *this* book help us in reading God's *other* book of revelation, in creation?
4. In Psalm 23 God presents Himself in one of His favorite Old Testament tropes: Shepherd. In what ways does the idea of God as Shepherd encapsulate all three of the unifying threads of divine revelation – God's glory, God's people, and God's work of redemption?
5. From what you've seen in just these five psalms, how do you see that the psalms can help to lift us above our temporal circumstances into the eternal plan and pleasure of God? How can you see Christ foreshadowed in these psalms?

Summary

If you have not begun to use the psalms in your daily prayers, this might be a good opportunity to do so. The majesty, beauty, mystery, and glory of the psalms, together with their utter humanness, make them perfect guides for us as we come before the Lord in prayer. How do you see that in the psalms we considered today?

Closing Prayer

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
"Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
"Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."
"I will declare the decree:
The Lord has said to Me,
'You *are* My Son,

Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' ”
Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2

4 Psalms (2)

Read and meditate on Psalms 32, 38, 40, 45, and 51.

The psalms confront us with the depths of our sin and the heights of God's glory. They show us how to draw on His strength in the midst of our weaknesses, and how to make our way back to Him when we have strayed. At every turn they assure us that the Lord is our Strength and our Redeemer.

For reflection

1. Psalm 32 is a psalm of *confession*. Based on what you see in Psalm 32, what is the purpose of a psalm of confession? How might you use psalms of confession in your own prayer life?
2. In Psalm 38 we glimpse the power of sin, especially when we fail to acknowledge, confess, and repent of our sins. What do you see here about the way unconfessed sin affects us? Add to this Psalm 66.18, and explain why it is important that we confess our sins faithfully.
3. David is the author of Psalm 40. Read this psalm in the light of Romans 12.1, 2. How does this psalm guide us in thinking about God and our relationship with Him? This is both a psalm of praise and a psalm of confession. What does this suggest about the role of each of these for living in God's covenant?
4. Psalm 45 lifts us into the very presence of the exalted King of Glory. In your own words, describe the vision of Christ (cf. Heb. 1.8, 9) which the sons of Korah present here. Why is it important for us to *fix* such visions in our minds (cf. Col. 3.1-3; Heb. 12.1, 2; 1 Jn. 3.1-3)?
5. Where do you see each of the unifying threads of revelation in Psalm 51? What do we learn about living as God's people? About His redeeming grace? His glory?

Summary

The psalms show us the depths and darkness of our sins, and they open to us the gleaming heights of the glory of God. They remind us that we're mired in the former and therefore unfit for the latter. But they also create a bridge, provided by God Himself, to lift us out of sin into glory, where increasingly, we realize more of what it means to be the people of God. And the strong cable holding that bridge in place is our Lord Jesus Christ, glimpsed in every single psalm. Why does this make learning to pray the psalms a good idea?

Closing Prayer

My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.
You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.
Gird Your sword upon *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
With Your glory and Your majesty.
And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness;
And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.
Your arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;
The peoples fall under You.
Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

Psalm 45.1-7

5 Psalms (3)

Read and meditate on Psalms 78, 79, 84, 87, 130, and 149.

The psalms teach the covenant people of God where to place their hope – not in themselves or any other human being or created thing, but in God alone. We are a people on a journey to the heavenly courts of God. We are part of a vast multitude, streaming up to the mountain of the Lord’s house in response to the grace of His covenant and calling.

For reflection

1. Psalm 78 reminds us that unless *God* keeps His covenant, we have no hope of salvation. How do you see that in this psalm? How do verses 1-8 encourage us to pursue faithfulness within God’s covenant?
2. Psalm 79 was probably written during the glory days of King Solomon’s reign. Meditate on 1 Kings 11.11-13 and Ecclesiastes 2. Remember that Asaph would have composed this psalm to be used in Solomon’s glorious temple. What did Asaph see that most of the people either *did* not or *would* not acknowledge? What warning was Asaph sending to Israel with this psalm? What does this suggest about the value of the psalms for our lives in God’s covenant?
3. Read Psalms 84 and 87 in the light of Micah 5.1-8. Who is streaming up to the mountain of the Lord’s house? What is it like to be on that journey? What awaits us? Where are you in this journey at this time?
4. Psalm 130 moves from depths to heights, pleading to resting, sinfulness to redemption, and a focus on hopelessness to a focus on hope. What kinds of affections (feelings, aspirations, hopes) does this psalm provoke within you? Verse 5 is the *pivot* of this psalm. What do we mean by that, and of what does that pivot consist?
5. What does Psalm 149 lead us to aspire to in our relationship with God? With other members of God’s covenant community? With the people of the world? What “two-edged” sword do we wield as central to our calling as God’s people? To what ends?

Summary

The psalms engage us intellectually, emotionally, volitionally, and in every area and aspect of our lives. God has provided these *scripts* to guide us in our walk with and work for Him. Why does it make sense to incorporate the psalms into our communal and personal worship of the Lord?

Closing Prayer

Give ear, O my people, *to* my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide *them* from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.
For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,

That they should make them known to their children;
That the generation to come might know *them*,
The children *who* would be born,
That they may arise and declare *them* to their children,
That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments;
And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation *that* did not set its heart aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Psalm 78.1-8

6 Proverbs

Read and meditate on Proverbs 1, 3, 8, 16, 22, and 30.

The Writings are also referred to as the Wisdom Literature. Wisdom is that skill in living that finds us abiding in the Lord and His covenant, loving God and our neighbors according to all His Word. Of all the Writings, Proverbs is most directly concerned with how the wisdom of God should be expressed in our daily lives.

For reflection

1. How would you explain the purpose of Proverbs, as you see it in chapters 1 and 3?
2. Proverbs 16 expands on what Solomon declares in Proverbs 4.23: The heart is the heart of the matter when it comes to living in God's covenant. Explain. What does it mean to keep (*guard*) your heart with all diligence?
3. In Proverbs 8, Wisdom is personified. English translations treat Wisdom as a woman here, but this is only because the Hebrew noun for Wisdom is a *feminine* noun, as are almost all abstract nouns in Hebrew. This has nothing to do with human gender; and it has *much* to do with Jesus (vv. 22-31). Meditate on Colossians 2.1-3. How many different ways can you see that *Wisdom* in Proverbs 8 is the *Treasury of Wisdom* Paul refers to in Colossians 2.1-3? What does this suggest about the entire corpus of Wisdom Literature?
4. Chapter 22 is representative of the rest of the book of Proverbs. How many different aspects of everyday life does this chapter address? What does this suggest about the value of wisdom and the scope of God's covenant?
5. Recall our previous discussion about the "two books" of divine revelation. According to verse 4, what do we need to lead us into all wisdom? How can you see both God's *Word* and His *works* serving to reveal His wisdom in this chapter? Meditate on Psalm 111.2. How might we be more consistent and fruitful in our study of God's works?

Summary

Life in God's covenant enriches everyday experience by filling it with the Wisdom of God. God intends His covenant to reach to every area of our lives, bringing revival, renewal, and awakening so that we, His redeemed people, might live to His glory. Meditate on Ephesians 4.8-10. Is the basic message of Proverbs simply, "Let your life be filled with Jesus"? Explain.

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD!

I will praise the Lord with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.
The works of the Lord *are* great,
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.
His work is honorable and glorious,
And His righteousness endures forever.
He has made His wonderful works to be remembered;
The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.
He has given food to those who fear Him;
He will ever be mindful of His covenant.
He has declared to His people the power of His works,

In giving them the heritage of the nations.
The works of His hands *are* verity and justice;
All His precepts *are* sure.
They stand fast forever and ever,
And are done in truth and uprightness.
He has sent redemption to His people;
He has commanded His covenant forever:
Holy and awesome *is* His name.
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*.
His praise endures forever.

Psalm 111

7 Song of Solomon

Read and meditate on Song of Solomon 1, 2, 4, and 8.

The Song of Solomon is one of the most beautiful books of the Old Testament. It's also one of the most difficult. In order to understand this Song, and to appreciate its covenantal significance, we need to study and meditate on the images employed, and the exchanges between the main characters in this brief dramatic narrative.

For reflection

1. From chapter 1, who are the main characters in this poem? What is the focus of their concern? Keeping in mind that this is poetry, and thus is fraught with much more meaning than what is merely on the surface, how might this love song have application to our covenant relationship with God?
2. Just in chapter 1, how many different analogies (*this is like that*) does Solomon use to convey his meaning? What sights, sounds, colors, and feelings do these suggest? Which of these analogies have we seen used elsewhere to talk about God and His relationship to His people?
3. In chapter 2, the love of the two main characters is described in terms of things that bring delight. How many can you identify? How do these images intend to teach us about what it is to love another person? To love God?
4. In chapter 4, how would you describe the heart of the Beloved for his Shulamite? How does she respond to that profession of love? In what ways is this like God's covenant promises to us?
5. Chapter 8 seems to be directed to the next generation of God's people (the Little Sister). How is that generation described? What do the lovers intend to do for her? How might you see in this a consciousness of a passage like Psalm 78:1-8? Or 2 Timothy 2:2?

Summary

The Song of Solomon fulfills a dual purpose. It extols and celebrates the virtues of married love, and, at the same time, it points to the mysteries of the love between God and His covenant people. It teaches us to delight in such love, to seek and take pleasure in it, and to commend it to onlookers, including the generation to come. How should this book encourage God's people today?

Closing Prayer

O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
For *there* is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* it.
Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

The Heart of God: The Writings

If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"
Even the night shall be light about me;
Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,
But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.
For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.

Psalm 139.1-14

For reflection or discussion

1. What are the Writings of the Old Testament, and why do you suppose they were, for the most part, composed in the form of poetry?
2. What is wisdom? How do the Writings help us to grow in the wisdom (Wisdom) of God?
3. Why does it make sense to use the psalms to help us in our prayers? What advantages should we expect to gain from doing so?
4. God's covenant addresses every area of our lives. How can you see that in Proverbs and the Song of Solomon? This being so, how should this affect our approach to daily living within God's covenant?
5. What are the most important lessons to emerge from this introduction to the Writings?

Glory to Glory

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word *to* the way we live for His glory in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31).

What have you encountered *of* God's glory in our readings and meditations in this week's studies? That is, how has He shown Himself *to* you more clearly?

How do you expect this *experience* of God's glory to help you *live more consistently for* His glory in the daily details of your life?

What have you learned about yourself from this week's study to help you in knowing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom? To equip you for serving Christ in your [Personal Mission Field](#)?

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Thank you.