father, King David, always wanted to build a permanent home for the presence of God, but Yahweh would not allow it because he was a man of war (5:3). That privilege and responsibility would fall to Solomon (5:5).

Because he was filled with wisdom and at peace with his neighbors, Solomon had assistance from surrounding nations in building this magnificent place. Hiram, king of Tyre, pledged much of the material when he first heard of the project (5:7-12). Building the Temple was important for Solomon and his people, but this was not the end. God told Solomon, “As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations, and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave your father David. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel” (6:12-13). God would not allow them to grow complacent simply because a permanent structure had become His dwelling place. Obedience fueled by loving faith was still the foundation of their relationship.

Thank God for making your soul His dwelling place. Pray for a life of indisputable faith, love and obedience which brings Him glory.

Saturday, June 17, 2017—1 Kings 8-10

The Tabernacle was a portable tent in which the Spirit of God dwelled as His people journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. God moved, His people followed, and the Tent was that visible reminder He was among them. After several hundred years in the Promised Land, Solomon built the majestic, permanent Temple.

The most important aspect of the Temple, like that of the Tabernacle, was the indwelling presence of God. When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he brought the Ark of the Covenant to its place in the Most Holy Place, and the presence of God filled the inner place with a cloud so heavy in glory that the priests could not do their work (8:11). Solomon prayed one of the most significant prayers in Scripture (8:22-61), dedicating the Temple and laying out the covenant implications. Repeatedly, Solomon called on God to hear from heaven and forgive. This Temple could not contain God, but it would be a vital connection point for the relationship between God and man. The people concluded with a great festival, celebrating who God was and what He had provided.

Building the Temple was significant, but it was not the most important thing Solomon was to do. God reminded him to walk faithfully with Him each day so his descendants would do the same (9:3-9). This was the highest task. The ensuing days were filled with praise, riches, peace, and wisdom like no one had ever seen (9:10-10:29).

God wants people to be His Temple, individually and as a church. Pray for wisdom and favor in your life and your congregation.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 24

Sunday, June 11, 2017—Proverbs 4-6

When God told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He was giving them free will—the ability to choose—and telling them not to be God. Good and evil find definition in Him, not in self. When we begin to define good and evil according to our desires, we fall away from His glory and design. When life revolves around self instead of Him, trouble is guaranteed.

The Teacher saw oppression around him and determined those who had died and those who never lived were better off than the living. Labor and achievement led to envy. A man with no one for whom to live found life meaningless (4:1-8). Hoarding wealth only led to dissatisfaction (5:8-17). What good are riches which can’t be enjoyed (6:1-12)? When, however, two worked together, meaninglessness faded (4:9-12). When a man sees his work as a gift from God (5:18-20), he experiences joy. Life finds value and purpose when the focus turns to others.

This “other-centered” approach is even more important with God. “Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few” (5:2). To stand in awe of Him (5:7) allows all other things to gain proper perspective.

Ecclesiastes urges the reader to live a life of meaning—focused on others, dependent on God, and respected by others. Pray for the first two. God will ensure the third.

Monday, June 12, 2017—Ecclesiastes 7-9

An old poem speaks about the dash between the year of birth and the year of death on a tombstone. While small and seemingly insignificant, that dash represents a lifetime. The poem asks the reader what that dash represents in his personal life. Has there been influence and impact?

Ecclesiastes 7 speaks of this significance in a sobering way. How can the day of death be better than the day of birth (7:1)? At the day of death, all know the outcome of the life just passed. At birth, there is only speculation. Of course, at birth there is great hope, but there is no certainty. The Teacher knew the value of wisdom, so he wasn’t afraid to look at some of life’s uncomfortable situations and see their importance for shaping and sharing wisdom compared to some areas that were more attractive or comfortable.

The Teacher knew God was not to blame for the struggles of life. “The only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes” (7:29). Even the most righteous committed sin (7:20). Wisdom allows the possessor to see God in His righteousness and life with its flaws (8:1-17). Wisdom recognizes the common destiny of death for the most righteous and the worst sinner (9:1-3), so wisdom allows one to enjoy life to its fullest (9:7-10).

Thank God for His wisdom which is better than physical strength (9:16). Ask for continued gifts of wisdom so your life glorifies Him and can be as full as He designed.

Tuesday, June 13, 2017—Ecclesiastes 10-12

Walking with Christ is a daily calling, and gaining wisdom is a never-ending quest. Both of them enrich the other and are absolutely necessary because the world is full of folly and needs the salt and light of Christ in increasing measure. The Teacher knew the harm even the slightest amount of folly could bring. “As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor” (10:1). Throughout the tenth chapter, he discusses how wisdom affects one’s word, work, position in life, and patience with others. Wisdom becomes an additional skill for gaining more from life and giving more to others.

Wisdom also allows one to find satisfaction no matter the station or situation. “Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say” (10:20). This also encourages generosity and trust in the Lord (11:1), knowing He will protect and provide. Wisdom recognizes His sovereignty and causes one to work steadily and enjoy each moment He provides (11:4-10).

Growing old is physically demanding and emotionally challenging (12:1-8). Walking in wisdom in one’s youth helps lay a solid foundation that physical, emotional, and mental stress cannot shake. Pray for a heart of wisdom which can enrich your own life and a willingness to impart that wisdom (12:9-10) so others can treasure Jesus. Fear and obey God (12:13).

Wednesday, June 14, 2017—Song of Solomon 1-4

“The Song of Songs That Is of Solomon” is the formal title of the book. To repeat a noun—the song of songs—gave emphasis. This was the song above all songs Solomon wrote. He gave his highest regards to a song which celebrate the passion and importance of the marriage relationship.

Several truths are evident throughout the song. One is the foundation of communication between husband and wife. There is much dialogue between these partners expressing so much tender emotion and foundational respect. There is appreciation for character traits as well as enjoyment of physical attributes. Another truth is the celebration of watching friends about the relationship. This is not a relationship hidden from others but one which friends and family want to see flourish.

Much of the expression from the Lover to his Beloved does not transfer to modern readers. He speaks to her in her insecurity about her appearance (1:6) and tells her she is like one of Pharaoh’s mares (19) and that her eyes are doves (1:15, 4:1). While no modern man would use these exact phrases, he would do well to see the power of affirmation. The words of the Lover convince her she is beautiful (2:1). In turn, she celebrates being his (2:3). She knows the power of love and the importance of waiting (2:7, 3:5) to surrender oneself to this level. There is depth and longing (3:1) developed with which one does not toy.

Thank God for marriage and its design.

Thursday, June 15, 2017—Song of Solomon 5-8

From the beginning of time, Satan has taken God’s best and corrupted it, making it less than God intended while making it similar in appearance. As a result, those seeking to avoid Satan’s lies sometimes are confused about God’s gifts. Marriage and sexuality are two of those gifts. Marriage and sexuality were God’s idea, yet believers have often avoided honest, open conversations about them because the world has made them seem inappropriate, dirty, or scandalous.

The Lover and his Beloved are obviously emotionally and physically attracted to one another, and they discuss that with one another as well as with their friends. To be sure, the physical intimacy God gives to a husband and wife are to be exclusive to that relationship. Others don’t need to know all the details, and the relationship is not limited to the physical, yet being able to celebrate what God has provided is a way to celebrate God Himself. Movies and shows celebrate the sexual experience between people who are not married. Why would God’s people avoid celebrating what is righteous and honoring?

There is great personal satisfaction knowing one’s spouse finds the other attractive (7:10), and there is great power in the emotional connection between lovers (8:7). When God is the foundation of those strong, God-given desires, the relationship has potential to be personal enriching and God-honoring. When, however, Satan corrupts those drives and makes them the end in themselves rather than avenues to worship, heartache and frustration ensue.

Pray for marriage and sexuality to bring worship and satisfaction.

Friday, June 16, 2017—1 Kings 5-7

Solomon was wise in many ways throughout his life, and he left behind much of that wisdom in his Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Leading his people involved far more than sharing wisdom about life and relationships. Being the king of Israel meant setting the example and charting the course for the worship of Yahweh. Solomon’s