

Tutorial Guide: *Wisdom, the Gospels, and Finding Jesus in the Story*

For Lectures 7 & 8: Wisdom Literature + NT Overview & Gospels

Time: 1 hour

Designed for: Groups with mixed familiarity with Scripture

Facilitator Role: Guide reflection and open questions using this structured walkthrough

Session Plan Overview

Time	Section	Topic
0–5 min	Introduction	Questions of wisdom and the arrival of Jesus
5–25 min	Part 1	Wisdom Literature – The Bible’s Philosophers
25–50 min	Part 2	Jesus and the Gospels – Four Voices, One Story
50–60 min	Part 3	Finding Jesus in the Old Testament
60 min	Wrap-Up	Final reflections

1. Introduction (0–5 min)

Say:

“Today we’re looking at how the Bible responds to life’s deep questions. First, we’ll explore a group of books called *Wisdom Literature* — poetic and philosophical texts that wrestle with life, love, and suffering. Then we’ll look at how the New Testament opens with four Gospel accounts of Jesus — each presenting him in a unique way, and each drawing deeply from the Old Testament story.”

Opening Questions:

- Have you ever asked big questions like “Why do good people suffer?” or “What gives life meaning?”
 - Do you think faith should give simple answers or help us live with complexity?
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2. Wisdom Literature – The Bible’s Philosophers (5–25 min)

Summary:

Wisdom books like *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Job*, and *Song of Songs* engage honestly with human experience — not through rules or history, but through reflection, poetry, and paradox. These books ask us to think carefully, live wisely, and face suffering, love, and death with honesty and faith.

Key Focus Areas:

Proverbs – Sayings for Everyday Life

- Wisdom is practical, not just religious.
- Proverbs 1–9 contrasts “Lady Wisdom” and “the Strange Woman.”
- Proverbs 31 describes the “capable woman” as a model of wisdom in action.

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you see wisdom at work in daily life?
 - Can good advice sometimes contradict itself? What does that tell us?
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Ecclesiastes – Nothing Matters?

- “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” – everything seems fleeting.
- Key line: “*What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?*”
- Reflects on time (ch. 3) and ageing (ch. 12) with a tone of realism and questioning.

Discussion Prompts:

- Do you hear despair or honesty in Ecclesiastes?
 - Why do you think this book is in the Bible?
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Job – When the Righteous Suffer

- Job loses everything, even though he’s innocent.
- His friends insist he must have sinned — but God eventually says they’re wrong.
- The book challenges the idea that good behaviour always leads to blessing.

Discussion Prompts:

- What does Job say to the idea: “If you obey God, you’ll be blessed”?
 - How does this challenge the pattern seen in earlier books like Deuteronomy?
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Song of Songs – A Celebration of Love

- A series of love poems with no mention of God.
- Often interpreted as an allegory of God’s love for Israel (or Christ for the Church).
- Song 8:6–7: “*Love is strong as death...*”

Discussion Prompt:

- Why might God include a book of romantic poetry in the Bible?

3. Jesus and the Gospels – Four Voices, One Story (25–50 min)

Summary:

The New Testament opens with four Gospels — each telling the story of Jesus, but from different angles. They show Jesus as teacher, healer, challenger, and saviour — and connect his life deeply with the Old Testament story.

Gospel Portraits:

Mark – The Urgent Story

- Shortest Gospel, focused on action and suffering
- Ends suddenly: resurrection hinted at, but not shown
- Themes: secrecy, human weakness, the cross

Ask:

- Why might a Gospel end in uncertainty? What's Mark inviting us to do?
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Matthew – The New Moses

- Emphasises Jesus as the teacher of Israel
- Contains 5 teaching blocks, like the 5 books of Moses
- Begins with a genealogy and fulfilment of prophecy

Ask:

- Why do you think Matthew starts with a family tree?
 - What does it mean to say Jesus “fulfils” the Scriptures?
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Luke – The Inclusive Gospel

- Focus on outsiders: the poor, women, foreigners
- Full of meals, prayers, and stories of compassion
- Links Jesus' story to world history (e.g., Roman rule)

Ask:

- Why does Luke focus so much on the margins?
- What does Luke say about who belongs in God's kingdom?

John – The Divine Word

- Begins with “In the beginning...” echoing Genesis
- Focuses on signs, identity, and eternal life
- Jesus is portrayed as fully divine, fully present

Ask:

- How does John help us see Jesus as more than just a teacher?
 - What do the “I Am” sayings (e.g., “I am the bread of life”) reveal?
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4. Finding Jesus in the Old Testament (50–60 min)

Summary:

The Gospel writers didn’t start from scratch. They drew deeply on the Old Testament — quoting it, alluding to it, and seeing Jesus as the fulfilment of its hopes, promises, and patterns. They saw Jesus not just as a new teacher, but as the **climax of the old story**.

Examples of Old Testament Allusions in the Gospels:

- **Isaiah 7:14** → “*A virgin shall conceive...*” – quoted in Matthew at Jesus’ birth
 - **Micah 5:2** → *A ruler from Bethlehem* – echoed in the nativity stories
 - **Psalms 22** → “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” – spoken by Jesus on the cross
 - **Exodus themes** – Jesus’ baptism, wilderness testing, and teaching from a mountain mirror Israel’s journey
 - **Wisdom themes** – Jesus speaks in parables and teaches as one “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42)
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Discussion Prompts:

- Why do you think the Gospel writers used so many Old Testament references?
 - What difference does it make to see Jesus as continuing or fulfilling the story that began in Genesis?
 - Can you think of a time when an old story or memory helped you make sense of something new?
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Wrap-Up

Ask:

- What stood out to you most today?
- Did you find any book or Gospel that surprised you?
- Where do you feel most drawn in — the honest questions of the Wisdom books, or the Gospel portraits of Jesus?

Closing Thought:

The Bible tells one big story — from ancient questions about life and suffering, to the arrival of Jesus as the one who brings hope, healing, and fulfilment. We are invited into this story — to wrestle with it, to be shaped by it, and to find our place within it.