READING ECCLESIASTES AND THE SONG OF SONGS TOGETHER (NOVEMBER 2026)

What?	Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs are examples of wisdom literature, like the Book of Proverbs. They both make use of vivid poetic imagery.
Why?	Wisdom literature is written to help God's people think rightly and live wisely in his world. These books discuss different sides of human existence: Ecclesiastes focusses on the frustrations of life and the Song of Songs explores the theme of love.
Who?	Both books are traditionally attributed to King Solomon, who was renowned for his God-given wisdom and produced many proverbs and songs (1 Kings 4:29–34). More importantly, both books are God-breathed Scripture (2 Tim 3:16) and behind the human author stands the perfect wisdom of God.

A SUGGESTED 30-DAY READING PLAN

Ecclesiastes	☐ 5:1–7	☐ 9:11–18	☐ 2:1–17
☐ 1:1–11	☐ 5:8–20	☐ 10:1–20	☐ 3:1–11
☐ 1:12–18	☐ 6:1–12	☐ 11:1–10	☐ 4:1–5:1
☐ 2:1–11	☐ 7:1–14	☐ 12:1–8	☐ 5:2–6:3
☐ 2:12–26	☐ 7:15–29	☐ 12:9–14	☐ 6:4–13
☐ 3:1–15	☐ 8:1–9	☐ Review	☐ 7:1–8:4
☐ 3:16–22	☐ 8:10–17	**Song of Songs**	☐ 8:5–14
☐ 4:1–16	☐ 9:1–10	☐ 1:1–17	☐ Review

UNDERSTANDING ECCLESIASTES

Verses at the beginning and end of the book help us to understand the basic message of Ecclesiastes.

Vanity of vanities! All is vanity (1:2)
The Preacher begins by saying that everything is (depending on your Bible translation) "vanity", "meaningless" or "vapour". He is describing the frustrating reality of life in a fallen world. Life "under the sun" is fleeting, elusive, enigmatic and messy. This is seen in our work, our recreation and our relationships.
We need to accept that life now is fleeting and death is certain.

Fear God and keep his commandments (12:13)
The conclusion reminds us where true wisdom and purpose is found in a confusing world. We trust God and follow him, even when we cannot make sense of life. We recognise that we are not in control, and worship the One who is in control. As the Preacher shows us throughout the book, this perspective allows us to enjoy the good things of this world as gifts from God, without trying to find our ultimate satisfaction in them.

Ecclesiastes and Christ
Hundreds of years after Ecclesiastes was written, God the Son stepped down into the frustrating realities of life "under the sun" to give us hope. As we trust in Christ, we experience his divine presence in our fallen world, we find joy in his good gifts, and we look forward to the day when he will bring the mess of this world (including death) to an end for good.

UNDERSTANDING THE SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) is a more neglected part of the Bible, but it is a precious part of God's word to us.

The story of the Song
The Song introduces us to three main characters: a Shulammite woman, a shepherd (traditionally seen as Solomon) and a group of women called the "daughters of Jerusalem". We follow the man and woman's relationship from courtship to marriage, although there are various ways of understanding the exact story of the song. More important than the narrative is the vivid imagery used to describe the couple's desire for one another and intimacy with one another, leading to a celebration of love that is "strong as death" (8:6).

The Song and Christ
Some people would read the Song of Songs as just a human love poem. But in the wider context of the Bible, which points us to Christ from beginning to end, this supreme song also leads us to celebrate a far greater love. Throughout the Bible, marriage is a picture of the Lord's relationship with his people, and in the New Testament we see that human marriage was created as a reflection of this greater reality (Ephesians 5:25–32). Christ is the ultimate bridegroom and the church is his bride. As well as giving insight into human relationships, the Song of Songs is intended to teach us about Christ's love for us and to stir in us a desire to have a deeper experience of our union with him.

EXTRA HELP FOR READING THESE BOOKS

There are resources you may find helpful on our website: litchardmission.co.uk/rbt. We also have an online question box, which you can access by scanning this QR code. We will aim to answer these questions in midweek meetings, on Sundays or at our end-of-month discussion times.

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

You might like to make notes on these questions as you read through the books.

1. What do these books show me about **who God is and what he is like?**

2. How do these books point me to the **love and saving work of Christ?**

3. What do these books teach me about **human nature and experiences?**

4. What am I learning about **how to live wisely in God's world?**

5. What can I share with **someone else in Litchard Mission** to encourage them?