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STANDARD EDITION

Job

Consider My Servant



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Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Sabbath School Lessons



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Carol has two adult children.

Introduction to the Book of Job

Consider My Servant

Job was a successful, respected family man of Uz, probably a territory "near the Syrian desert or in northern Arabia, and not far from Edom."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 1120. Henry M. Morris suggests: "The Book of Job may also be the oldest book in the Bible, with the probable exception of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. There can, at least, be no question about its setting in the patriarchal period, certainly before Moses and possibly even before Abraham."—*The Remarkable Record of Job* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1988), p. 12.

Morris thinks that the ancient Jewish tradition that regarded Moses as the author should be taken seriously. As evidence, he cites the allusions in Job to the Genesis account of Creation, the fall of mankind into sin, and the Flood. Ellen G. White agrees. During Moses' 40 years in Midian, "under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140. (See also *Education*, p. 159.)

The major theme of the book is the control of God over the affairs of the universe and specifically over the affairs of earth. Although the suffering of innocent people is not fully explained, "the history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

Five prominent truths are emphasized in Job: (1) Job's experience illustrates that righteous people may suffer. (2) Job's greatest concern was to reconcile his faith in God's supreme justice with his own undeserved afflictions. How could a loving, just God allow it? (3) God deplores the notions that the righteous are always blessed and that suffering is always the result of the sufferer's sin. (4) God is completely just, even though in this life the wicked are often never punished and the innocent often suffer. (5) Despite their suffering, human beings, motivated by love, must surrender themselves entirely to God, because He is Lord. Job served God because he loved Him, not for prosperity or prestige.

The book of Job has five natural divisions:

- I. Prologue: The Drama Begins (Job 1, 2).
- II. Job Seeks Understanding, and His Three Aged Friends Respond (Job 3–31).
- III. Young Elihu Attempts to Answer for God (Job 32–37).
- IV. God speaks for Himself (Job 38–41).
- V. Conclusion: Job's Restoration (Job 42).

**Check with your local Adventist Book Center
for the companion book to this quarter's Sab-
bath School lessons.**

When Calamity Strikes



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 1:1-5, 13-22; 2:7-13.

MEMORY TEXT: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

KEY THOUGHT: How should believers in God relate to the problem of suffering? The book of Job helps us find God's answer to this universal question.

THE QUESTION EVERYONE ASKS. "My wife and I had a daughter-in-law and two little grandchildren we just adored. They were all three killed in a tornado," wrote a sad and perplexed grandfather to a young minister.

"I think about this thing all the time. It's like a nightmare. I . . . try to live a Christian life; I've prayed constantly that God would show me the answer or reason for it. Do you think God had a purpose or reason for this thing?"—"Why Blame God?" *These Times*, May 1970.

Some forms of suffering are understandable. It seems obvious that we should "reap" what we "sow" (Gal. 6:7). But again, there are other incidents such as the one described above for which there is no discernible reason. Our study of the book of Job this quarter will help us find a biblical way of relating to human woe and of handling our own personal sorrows.

JOB'S BACKGROUND (Job 1:1; James 5:11).

Who was Job, and where did he live? For what characteristic was he known? Job 1:1; James 5:11.

It is evident that James regarded Job as a historical person whose steadfastness under terrible trials is an example for Christians. The words *endurance*, *fortitude*, and *steadfastness* translate the Greek word used by James more accurately than does the word *patience*.

"Job doubtless lived in patriarchal times, as the social, historical, and cultural setting of the book suggests. The land of Uz has not been identified with any particular locality, but references in the book of Job and data provided by Josephus . . . and Ptolemy locate Uz east of Palestine proper on the borders of the Arabian Desert, certainly south of Damascus and probably in the vicinity of Edom."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 579. Because any location along the eastern fringe of Israel's Transjordan area could qualify as "east" (Job 1:3), other scholars choose to locate Uz to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

What indications do we have that Moses was the author of the book of Job? (See Introduction.) Linguistic evidence, present in both the book of Job and the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), suggests that the same author wrote all of them.

If Moses wrote the book of Job during his sojourn in Midian, it would explain why there are no allusions to the Exodus or related events, because he was writing before that time.

"The obvious setting of Job is that of Arabian Desert culture. Strangely enough, it is not an Israelitish setting. There were worshipers of God outside the confines of Abraham's descendants. The setting is not political, military, or ecclesiastical. Rather, Job emerges from a domestic background common to his age. He was a wealthy landowner, honored and loved by his countrymen. He can be identified with no dynasty or ruling clan. He stands out, a lone, majestic figure in history, important because of his personal experience rather than because of his relationship to his time or to his contemporaries."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 494.

What is important about the story of Job?

HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS (Job 1:1-5).

Although the exact location of Job's home cannot be pinpointed, the account indicates that the patriarch was a city dweller (see Job 29:7) and not a nomad living in tents like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Heb. 11:9).

What was Job's economic status? Job 1:3. What does Job 31:24, 25, 28 reveal about Job's attitude toward his great wealth?

"God has given in His word a picture of a prosperous man [Job]—one whose life was in the truest sense a success, a man whom both heaven and earth delighted to honor."—*Education*, p. 142.

How large a family did Job have? Job 1:2. How concerned was Job for the spiritual well-being of his children? Job 1:5.

Not only was Job successful in business, he was a happy family man. The love Job and his wife had for their children was reflected in the mutual love the young people had for one another (Job 1:4). Job's care for his family went beyond the customs of the time as is seen in the unusual act of dividing his great wealth with his daughters, as well as with his sons (Job 42:13-15).

"It were well for parents to learn from the man of Uz a lesson of steadfastness and devotion. Job did not neglect his duty to those outside of his household; he was benevolent, kind, thoughtful of the interest of others; and at the same time he labored earnestly for the salvation of his own family."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

How was Job regarded by the city fathers and the younger generation of leaders? Job 29:7-10. Why did the less fortunate people in the city and even strangers appreciate him? Job 29:11-17; 31:32.

In what practical ways would you suggest Christians today might emulate Job's concern for his family and involvement in the affairs of his city?

SUDDEN LOSS AND SEARING SICKNESS (Job 1:13-19; 2:7, 8).

Job and his wife were unaware of what was taking place in the heavenly council recorded in Job 1 and 2. The family members were living normal lives, rejoicing in the Lord, with one another, and with their neighbors. (See Job 1:13.)

What four tragic events struck this happy family in a single day? Job 1:13-19. What is the significance of the repeated phrase "while he was yet speaking"? Which of the catastrophes do you think was the most severe for Job and his wife? Why?

"Job was given no opportunity to recover his equilibrium between blows. The poignancy of the tragedies was accentuated by the ruthless timing of the events. In a few short minutes his world collapsed."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 501.

The patriarch lost his material goods. Eventually he could replace his herds and flocks, but people are always more important than things. His children were forever gone as far as this life was concerned. Job and his wife must have been numb with grief.

What terrible disease beset the grieving father? Job 2:7, 8. How did it affect him? Job 2:12.

The Hebrew word translated "boils" (KJV) or "sores" (RSV) in Job 2:7 is used for the boils of the Egyptian plague (Ex. 9:9), and also in connection with leprosy (Lev. 13:20) and the sickness of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7). Evidently it was a severe condition of boils, ulcers, or another diseased condition of the skin. In just a few moments a strong man had become a diseased sufferer unable to explain why.

Have you ever experienced a painful disease? How did you relate to your suffering?

"Often your mind may be clouded because of pain. Then do not try to think. You know that Jesus loves you. He understands your weakness. You may do His will by simply resting in His arms."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251. (See Ps. 119:110-112, 137-144.)

FAITH LOOKS UP (Job 1:20, 21; 2:9, 10).

When Job's life collapsed, how did he respond? Job 1:20, 21. How would you have responded?

Job's religious experience ran deep. He had a close, personal relationship with his Maker, and he would not blame God for these horrible, inexplicable events. *Job knew that what God allowed, He had not caused.* Job's statements must be interpreted with this in mind: "The Lord hath taken away" (Job 1:21), and "Shall we not receive evil" (Job 2:10) at the hand of God? God is never responsible for evil, but recognizing His complete sovereignty over the world, Job submitted himself to whatever the Lord allowed.

"The power of the truth should be sufficient to sustain and console in every adversity. It is in enabling its possessor to triumph over affliction that the religion of Christ reveals its true value. It brings the appetites, the passions, and the emotions under the control of reason and conscience, and disciplines the thoughts to flow in a healthful channel. And then the tongue will not be left to dishonor God by expressions of sinful repining.

"Our Creator justly claims the right to do as He chooses with the creatures of His hand. He has a right to govern as He will, and not as man chooses. But He is not a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He is the very fountain of love, the giver of blessings innumerable."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 314.

How was Job's grief and confusion of mind compounded by his wife's reaction to their ruin? Job 2:9. In what way did she unwittingly allow Satan to use her? Job 2:4, 5, 9 (compare Eph. 6:12).

The Lord never reproved Job's wife. Perhaps the loss of her 10 children at one stroke and the collapse of her husband's health was more than she could endure. Her words seem to express a faith now overshadowed by tragic loss. Her audible despair pressed harder on Job's faith than even his great losses and sickness. But the baffled man refused to yield his confidence in God.

Remind yourself of some of your painful experiences in life. Looking back, how do you know God was with you?

THE COMING OF "HELPFUL" FRIENDS (Job 2:11-13).

Who heard about Job's catastrophes? What did they agree among themselves to do? Why? Job 2:11.

Job's friends came from some distance to show their support. Job later called them "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2), but this does not deny their sincere desire to be supportive of their long-time friend in his great need.

How did Job's friends feel about his sufferings? Job 2:12, 13. In what unsatisfactory ways do we sometimes relate to people who are grieving personal loss? Why?

"When these friends caught their first glimpse of Job from afar, they were aghast. All of Job's former estate, which once dominated the landscape, had been devastated, and Job himself was scarcely recognizable, his body being so disfigured. Overcome with grief, they wept aloud and rent their mantles. They threw *dust*, symbolic of disease and death, *into the air*. . . . This gesture expressed the depth of their sorrow at such a horrifying affliction. Then they sat in silence for seven days and seven nights. This length of time signified the intensity of their sorrow, for such was the period of mourning at the death of a most notable figure (cf. Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13)."

"The seven-day period functions as a turning point in the dramatic action of the account. The atmosphere was tense. Nobody spoke. Job's pain was visibly unbearable. Then like a thunderclap Job's lament broke the silence."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988), pp. 86, 87.

If you visited a suffering friend, would you weep and sit in silence for a long period of time? Or would you offer words of encouragement and consolation?

The subsequent conversation revealed his friends' belief that Job's suffering had resulted from his sin. Perhaps this partly explains their long silence. Instead of reassuring him of God's love, forgiveness, and power to restore, the miserable comforters nursed their depression and contributed to his agony of spirit. Their opinions, rather than his need, were uppermost in their thoughts.

FURTHER STUDY: What do the following Bible passages teach regarding the attitude we should adopt in times of suffering and trial?

Deut. 8:5 _____

Prov. 3:11, 12 _____

Isa. 48:10 _____

1 Peter 1:7 _____

1 Peter 4:12, 13 _____

Read *The Ministry of Healing*, "Mind Cure," pp. 241-259.

'It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest-tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches.'—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 575, 576.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do trials often befall believers at moments of success?
2. Is it necessary for us to suffer before we have such trust as Job exhibited? How is trust developed?
3. God allows, but does not necessarily cause, suffering. The purpose of the suffering is sometimes to test the faith of the sufferer. But why does He allow a baby to be born handicapped? This may test the family's faith, but the baby is innocent.
4. How would you explain Job's statement, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away" (Job 1:21)? How would you answer someone who cannot believe that God really loves us when He allows such terrible things to happen?

SUMMARY: Suffering comes to all—good and bad, rich and poor—as illustrated by Job's experience. Its presence is not evidence that God has abandoned us. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19). Job's submission is an example for us.

The Adversary



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 1:6-12, 21, 22; 2:1-10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

KEY THOUGHT: Evil and misery exist in a universe created by a God of love because an enemy has arisen who is the cause of all that is wrong.

WE MUST LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES. Satan hated Job because Job was a living example that serving God was not an impossibility. Throughout history there have been many who have proved Satan wrong by relying totally upon the righteousness of God. At the end of time there will be the righteous living on the earth just before Jesus comes. (See Rev. 14:1-5; 15:2.) They too will stir up Satan's wrath, and he will do all he can to destroy them.

This lesson points us to the fact that human suffering is linked to the presence of sin on earth. A loving God is *not* the source of our misery. (See Matt. 13:28.)

"Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very essence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name."—*Education*, p. 154.

THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING (Job 1:6, 7).

In the Bible we are allowed to see that which God never disclosed to Job and his friends. The curtain is drawn back to reveal that it was Satan who caused the patriarch's trials. Satan appeared as the accuser before a meeting that might be thought of as a cosmic United Nations assembly. He argued that if God would allow him to prove a point, his rebellion would be vindicated.

What do the scriptures that follow reveal about the "sons of God" who assembled periodically before God's throne? Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; 1 Kings 22:19.

Who were included in the heavenly council? "There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commanders of the angel hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds, are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion—all are there to welcome the Redeemer."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

Whose accusing voice was heard in the heavenly council? Job 1:6; 2:1. On what basis could he do this? 2 Cor. 4:4; John 14:30; Luke 4:5, 6.

As an unfallen angel Lucifer began to question the necessity of God's law and eventually to violate it. (See 1 John 3:8.) He chose to question God's character and misrepresent Him to the other angels. (See John 8:44.) He also sought to be independent of God. (See Isa. 14:13, 14.)

Insurrection broke out among the angels. In the resulting conflict, Lucifer (Satan) and those angels who sided with him were expelled from heaven. (See Rev. 12:7-9.) Satan then gained Adam and Eve's authority over this earth when they chose to rebel against God. (See Rom. 5:12; 8:22.) Even though the world is still God's, during the great controversy Jesus acknowledges Satan to be the "prince of this world" (John 14:30).

What does an understanding of Satan's role do for your concept of suffering?

THE ADVERSARY'S CHALLENGE (Job 1:8-11).

When the Lord asked whether Satan was acquainted with Job, what did He call the patriarch as an expression of His approval? Job 1:8; 2:3. Why would such terms rankle Satan?

Job was an overcomer through the power that came from God. His love and obedience demonstrated the falseness of Satan's earlier charges against God's government and law.

"The enemy cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, the one who walks prayerfully before the Lord. Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, from the assaults of the wicked one. The promise is given, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.' "—*My Life Today*, p. 316.

What were some of the traits of Job's "righteous" character? Job 29:12-17 (compare 31:1, 5, 6, 9-12, 24, 25, 29-40).

A major premise of the book. The righteousness of Job came by grace through faith. This fact is basic to an understanding of one of the book's major teachings: *that personal suffering is not always the result of one's flawed character or hidden acts of sin.*

When God pointed to Job as an example of a human being who delighted to serve Him, what charge did the devil make? Job 1:8-10. What did Satan's proposal imply about Job's character? Job 1:11.

Satan implied that God's bestowal of temporal blessings on Job was a bribe intended to gain his loyalty. This charge slighted both God's character and Job's. "A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said, 'Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast not thou made a hedge about him?' "—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 512, 513.

Since my commitment to Christ makes me liable to satanic attacks, what advantage do I have in being a Christian?

THE SOURCE OF JOB'S TROUBLES (Job 1:12, 21, 22).

How did the Lord respond to Satan's challenge? Job 1:12. Why do you think He allowed Satan to carry out his proposals?

The background for Satan's challenge and for God's response is the great controversy between God and the rebellious angel. Until such time as the underlying evil of sin could be fully disclosed before the watching universe, God found it necessary to permit Satan to exist and to carry his rebellion to its ultimate length. This would, of necessity, cause seemingly unfair trouble and trials to those caught in the midst of the struggle on the planet that was the stage where the drama of sin and salvation was being performed.

If you could ask God a question, what would you ask Him? A little boy in Vacation Bible School responded to this question by writing, "Why do tigers bite?" Why does the Creator, who made perfect animals, allow them today to injure and kill other creatures? Such questions as this have long bothered those who believe that a good God created a perfect world.

When the cancer of sin invaded God's perfect world, God did everything He could to counteract it. He could not use arbitrary force to destroy evil at its inception, or He would have denied created beings the power of choice.

If someone you know should deny that sin is the cause of all our troubles, ask why the animals in zoos are kept behind bars or moats. If people do not believe in sin, why do they carry keys? A banker may not know much about theology, but his response to a loan application may demonstrate that he is aware of sinful human nature.

God allows sin to run its course in order that the entire universe might realize how devastating evil really is. But at the cross of Calvary, God paid the price to eradicate sin and its results from this universe forever. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 626.)

How did Job disprove the claim that he served God only because of material blessings? Job 1:21, 22.

How would you overcome discouragement in the face of calamity and suffering like Job's?

THE ADVERSARY COMPLAINS AGAIN (Job 2:1-5).

In a second appeal to God, why did Satan propose a new test for Job? Job 2:4, 5.

"Undaunted . . . Satan responded without making any concessions to Yahweh's assessment of the reliability of his servant or the absurdity of the testing. Without debating the results of the test . . . Satan persisted in his skeptical attitude about the grounds of Job's faith. He posited that Job was acting contritely because he had not really been tested. Yahweh had set up too many restrictions for there to be a true test. Impudently . . . Satan countered Yahweh's positive evaluation of Job by quoting two short proverbs, asserting that every person is essentially self-serving. . . .

"Satan was seeking to move Yahweh to intensify Job's testing. Insolently he enjoined: *Stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh.* Since the bones were considered the seat of illness (e.g. Lam. 1:13), . . . Satan had in mind a debilitating disease, one that would threaten Job's very life. He believed that if Job's body became sorely afflicted, he would surely curse God to his face. Job would exchange his fear of God for a healthy life."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, pp. 80, 81.

How does the Bible principle of self-sacrificing love override the desire for self-preservation among those who accept Christ as Lord of their lives? Rom. 5:7, 8; 1 John 3:16; Matt. 16:25.

The desire for eternal life is a good secondary motive for serving the Lord. Jesus encouraged this desire. (See John 5:24.) But the desire to live is not the primary concern of consecrated Christians. Both Moses and Paul were willing to die eternally if only their beloved people could be saved. (See Ex. 32:32; Rom. 9:3.) The self-giving love of Christ inspires the same spirit of sacrifice in His faithful servants.

Would you be willing to give up your life if your faithfulness in the face of death would convince others of the love and justice of God? What other reasons would you accept for laying down your life?

THE CAUSE OF JOB'S DISEASE (Job 2:6, 7, 10).

What was the real cause of Job's troubles?

Eph. 6:12 _____

1 Peter 5:8 _____

Rev. 12:10-12 _____

To whom did Job attribute his sufferings? Job 1:21; 2:10.
Why do you think he did so?

Semitic people looked upon God as the first cause of everything. Thus God is said to be the cause of all that happened to Job. (See Job 1:11; 2:5.) Yet Moses makes it clear that it was Satan who provoked and caused Job's sufferings. In the Bible, God often is said to have done something that He permitted or did not prevent. Other examples can be found in Genesis 45:4-8; Exodus 4:21; 7:22; 8:15; Isaiah 10:5-11.

"The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

In what way did God impose limits or restraints on Satan's ability to cause suffering? Job 1:12; 2:6. Why didn't God impose the same restraints on Satan in the cases of the apostle Paul and the many Christian martyrs? (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 240, 634.)

If Satan had full sway over the human family he would ruthlessly ruin and destroy every human being. But the Lord restricts the devil's operations.

"Satan was permitted to tempt the too-confident Peter, as he had been permitted to tempt Job; but when that work was done he had to retire. . . . The enemy dare not go one hairbreadth beyond his appointed sphere."—*My Life Today*, p. 316.

What promises should encourage God's people when they are brought under trial and suffering? 1 Cor. 10:13; Isa. 43:2 (compare Ps. 140:6, 7; 144:1, 2).

FURTHER STUDY: What is the relationship between Revelation 12:7-9 and the rest of Revelation 12? Why did John introduce the casting of Satan out of heaven in the context of a discussion of the work of the "dragon" in the Christian era? What has Satan been given permission to do to God's people throughout the ages? Has the Lord imposed restraints upon him? In what ways will Satan's attack on the last-day church be similar to and different from his attack on Job?

Read the chapter entitled "The Origin of Evil" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 492-504.

Why has God allowed Satan to continue to exist? "He has allowed Satan to develop his character, that he might stand before the heavenly universe, before the worlds unfallen, and the fallen world, in his true attributes, as a deceiver, an accuser of the brethren, a murderer at heart."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 412.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: As a Christian, how would you relate to the following situations? How would you reconcile such suffering with the love of God for His devoted people? (See Rom. 8:28.)

- A promising college student who, because of an automobile accident that was not his fault, has lost both legs and is crying out, "Why me?"
- A pastor, stricken with a fatal malignancy after 25 years of successful service in the mission field?
- A widow whose husband of less than two years has just died from a rare disease?

SUMMARY: The sufferings of Job in particular and of the human race in general can be understood only against the backdrop of the controversy between God and Satan. Satan and sin are the ultimate cause of all woe. Because of His perfectly righteous nature, God cannot eliminate these from the universe until the moral issues raised in Satan's rebellion have been fully and finally resolved. But God does restrain Satan, and He overrules his efforts, in order to bring good out of evil for those who love Him.

Conversation With a Suffering Man



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 3-5.

MEMORY TEXT: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" (Job 4:17).

KEY THOUGHT: It does not always help us in times of discouragement to be told that we have brought our troubles on ourselves. We need to be sure that we understand clearly how God deals with humanity.

THE DIALOGUES BETWEEN JOB AND HIS FRIENDS consist of three cycles. There are six speeches in each cycle, one by each of Job's three friends followed by Job's responses: the first cycle (Job 4:1-14:22); the second cycle (Job 15:1-21:34); the third cycle (Job 22:1-27:23).

Some time had elapsed since Job had expressed a calm trust in God and resignation to his fate. It took a while for the news of his calamities to reach his friends and for them to come to see him. "This passage of time helps to explain Job's change of attitude from the calm resignation of ch. 2:10 to the deep discouragement of ch. 3. The initial blows of tragedy appeared not to be as damaging to Job's morale as were the weeks of constant suffering."—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 504.

Eliphaz outlined the prevailing attitude of his day toward suffering. He mixed a good deal of truth with some error. His words demonstrate that a mistaken understanding of God and His ways often limits our compassion.

JOB'S DISCOURAGEMENT (Job 3:1-19).

Sometimes people have the mistaken idea that a Christian should always be happy. A sustaining faith holds us close to the Lord even in times of discouragement.

What remarks show how discouraged Job was? Job 3:3-10.

Job wanted the day of his birth removed from the calendar. If the day had not existed, Job himself would be nonexistent and, therefore, would not be suffering intense pain and misery. He wished, "May it [the day of my birth] not be counted among the days of the year; May it not appear in any of its months" (Job 3:6, Jewish Publication Society translation, hereafter referred to as JPS). Job cursed the day of his birth "because it did not block my mother's womb, and hide trouble from my eyes" (Job 3:10, JPS).

Job was not the only Bible character who experienced dependency. Compare his reactions with those of:

Elijah—1 Kings 19:4, 14

The psalmist—Psalm 6:2, 3, 6, 7

Jeremiah—Jer. 20:14, 15, 18

"While the Christian's life should be predominantly happy, dark days will come. All Christians sometimes pass through the 'Slough of Despond.' As in Job's case, the sun still shines and will eventually break through."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1980), p. 29.

**Why did Job wish he had never been born (Job 3:11, 12)?
Job 3:13-19.**

If Job had died at birth, he would have been like dead kings and nobles (verses 14, 15). Their wealth would be gone, but so would be their troubles. In fact, Job says, it would be an advantage to have been stillborn.

Is death the real solution to the problems of this life? What ultimate solution does God offer? (See 1 Cor. 15:51-57.)

WHY IS SUFFERING PERPETUATED? (Job 3:20-26).

What basic question did Job raise about the continued suffering of those wishing to die? Job 3:20-22.

When the quality of life has gone, as it had for Job, sufferers sometimes wish they could fall asleep and not awaken until the resurrection morning. Job questioned why God perpetuates the lives of those who are suffering and who crave death. There are reasons that are beyond our human understanding. Perhaps the Lord maintains the life of the sufferer because He knows that the result will be a deeper level of commitment to Him. Perhaps He sees that there are habits and attitudes that need to be changed. Perhaps loved ones and friends will be so impressed with the patience and faith of a suffering saint that they will turn to God. Illness, with its accompanying weakness and frustration, is hard to bear. But the Lord assures us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Job saw no way out of his trouble. Persistent suffering, unrelieved by a knowledge of its cause, is likely to produce this kind of feeling. "Satan had claimed that God had built a hedge of protection around Job (ch. 1:10). Now Job claims that God has built a hedge of affliction about him [verse 23]."—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 508.

How did Job describe his reaction to the troubles that had come upon him? Job 3:24-26.

How human Job was! Before calamity and sickness came upon him, he feared that his life of prosperity might suddenly be brought to an end. And sure enough, it was! The heavens sometimes do fall. But, for the faithful, the Lord is always present to restrain the hand of the evil one.

How do you relate to the question Job raised (Job 3:23)? Can you think of other reasons why God allows people to go on suffering even though they wish to die? Because "all things [good and bad] work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28), can we rest in the assurance that God will bring blessing out of what appears to us to be unnecessary suffering?

THE TRADITIONAL DOCTRINE OF RETRIBUTION (Job 4:1-11).

We are prone at times to be as judgmental as Job's friends. Have we ever said to someone undergoing trials, "Perhaps God is trying to teach you something," or "If your lifestyle had been different . . ."? The Bible does support the idea that God often rewards good and punishes evil in this life. But that does not mean that we have the right or wisdom to judge others' characters by the good or evil fortunes that befall them.

Notice how tactfully Eliphaz began his remarks. For what did he commend Job? Job 4:3-5.

Eliphaz suggested that, as a result of his personal calamities, Job could no longer be objective (verse 5).

To be "dismayed" and "impatient" (verse 5, NIV, RSV) with what one does not understand is a normal human emotion. But to make "your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope" (verse 6, NIV) is to trust in self rather than in God.

What is true and what is false in Eliphaz' speech recorded in Job 4:7-11?

We do not live in the time of retributive justice. "It is very natural for human beings to think that great calamities are a sure index of great crimes and enormous sins; but men often make a mistake in thus measuring character. We are not living in the time of retributive judgment. Good and evil are mingled, and calamities come upon all. Sometimes men do pass the boundary line beyond God's protecting care, and then Satan exercises his power upon them, and God does not interpose. Job was sorely afflicted, and his friends sought to make him acknowledge that his suffering was the result of sin, and cause him to feel under condemnation. They represented his case as that of a great sinner; but the Lord rebuked them for their judgment of His faithful servant."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

Can you refer to other Bible examples of the misuse of the doctrine of retribution? How is it misused by Christians today?

ELIPHAZ DESCRIBES HIS DREAM (Job 4:12-21).

Answer the following concerning Eliphaz' dream. Job 4:12-16:

Who or what spoke to Eliphaz? verses 12-16:

What was the question? verse 17:

What was the answer? verses 18, 19:

What evidence was presented? verses 20, 21:

Eliphaz thought he had received a divine revelation. But dreams do not always come from God.

The Hebrew of Job 4:17 uses the verb *to justify*. The verse may be translated: "Can a man be justified before God, can a man be pure before his Maker?" In this Eliphaz was correct: a justified person is pure before God. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 163.) No mortal is, by nature, pure in the sight of God. (Compare Rom. 3:9-18.) The only remedy is to be justified (made pure) by God when, believing, we receive Christ as Saviour and Lord. (See Rom. 3:21-31; 6:18.)

Job claimed innocence. The implication is that God afflicted an innocent man. Eliphaz responded by asserting that mortals are naturally unrighteous or impure in the sight of God. Hence, no one dare imply that God is unjust in afflicting and destroying such imperfect creatures. God does not place total confidence in His angels (Job 4:18). How much less can He have confidence in "those who dwell in houses of clay" (verse 19, JPS).

The error in Eliphaz' argument is not in his claim that all mortals are naturally impure in the sight of God, but in the implication that, therefore, Job's sufferings resulted from his fallen human condition. In fact, *Satan caused Job's sufferings*, and there is no evidence that God allowed Job to be afflicted because he was fallen by nature.

Was Job a justified man before Satan's afflictions burst upon him? What evidence can you give that justified believers are subject to suffering and death?

ELIPHAZ SHARES HIS LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF GOD (Job 5).

It is true that "all our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 161. But Job's affliction resulted from Satan's transgression of natural law, not Job's transgression. Eliphaz implied that Job was among the sinful and foolish (Job 5:1-7). 'Eliphaz fails to recognize that stating a reason for trouble does not comfort the sufferer. The human heart is not healed by a knowledge of the inevitability of trouble any more than sin is forgiven by a knowledge of the universality of sin.'—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 512.

What did Eliphaz advise Job to do? What weaknesses do you find in the reasoning behind his argument that Job had no just cause for complaint? Job 5:8-26.

Eliphaz' argument recorded in chapter 5 is threefold: (1) Foolish, evil mortals suffer for their sins (verses 1-7); (2) Job should turn to God, who is fully able to restore his health and fortunes (verses 8-16); (3) Job should be happy that God is reproofing him, because He plans to deliver him from his afflictions and give him long life and prosperity (verses 17-26).

The errors in the argument are apparent: (1) Job had no evidence that he was being punished for being foolish or evil. (2) Job had never turned away from God. He could not explain why God allowed calamities to come upon him, but he had never rejected God. (3) Job had no evidence that God planned to restore his health and fortunes. Those who put their trust in the Lord will not always be immune from the continuing "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

Paul quoted Eliphaz' statement (Job 5:13), preceding it with the truth that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God" (1 Cor. 3:19, NASB). By Eliphaz' reasoning there is no basis for understanding the inexplicable. The law of cause and effect is God-ordained. But in Job 1 and 2, the readers of Moses' account are given insight into what neither Job nor Eliphaz was able to see. Satan was the cause of Job's loss and suffering.

In spite of his lack of full understanding, what did Eliphaz claim about his views? Job 5:27. What is the lesson for us as we recognize the falsity of his claim?

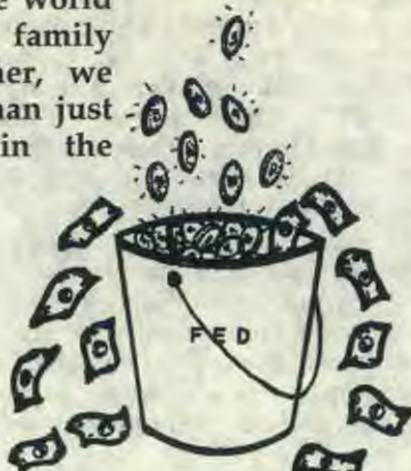
FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 3-5 in a modern version. What do you learn about Satan from Zech. 3:1, 2; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:10-12?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If Eliphaz' argument is incorrect, and God does not always restore to health and prosperity those who trust in Him (Job 5:17-26), how would you explain to an unbeliever your faith in the providences of God?
2. Atheists sometimes live long and prosperous lives. How does this fact relate to Eliphaz' expectation that fools always suffer?
3. A friend of yours has just won two million dollars in a lottery. He believes that God gave him this money. Do you agree with him? Why? How would you respond?

SUMMARY: Although Eliphaz expresses the prevailing attitude of his day toward suffering, his understanding of God and His ways was a mixture of truth and error. A mistaken understanding of God and His ways limits our ability to show compassion to suffering people.

When the world
Adventist family
gets together, we
are more than just
"a drop in the
bucket."



Let's "get together"
June 26 for the Far Eastern
Division!

Confused by Tradition



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 6-8.

MEMORY TEXT: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:4, 5).

KEY THOUGHT: When the inexplicable occurs, people either blame someone or something or seek understanding. But the source of information to which they turn may be questionable. If so, the information shared can be hurtful rather than helpful, because it is only partially true. In times of stress we need to make sure we are in contact with God through His revealed Word.

BILDAD JUMPS INTO THE DEBATE. In the first cycle of the dialogue between Job and his friends, Eliphaz was the first to answer Job. His answer was followed by Job's second speech. Then another friend, Bildad, jumped into the discussion. Who was Bildad? "Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah" (Gen. 25:1). She bore him six children including Shuah from whom came the Shuhites. Bildad was a Shuhite. Abraham sent Keturah's sons "eastward, unto the east country" (Gen. 25:6). The Shuhites lived "toward the Euphrates" (Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1983], p. 1022). Because Bildad shared the misconceptions of his companions, it was difficult for him to sympathize with Job.

COMPLAINTS AND CHIDES (Job 6:1-20).

Chapters 6 and 7 relate that Job not only complained about his affliction but also stated the truth as he saw it. God is willing to listen to both our complaints and our limited understanding of truth. He does so in order to help us learn and experience more about Him.

Job complained about the seriousness of his affliction (Job 6:1-13). Job admitted (Job 6:1-7) that his opening words about his calamity were "rash" (verse 3, RSV) and "impetuous" (NIV), but still he found his troubles inexplicable. He believed that somehow he had been separated from God's promised goodness. Because of the insight we are given in the first two chapters, we understand that he was being tested.

How did Job characterize the "dust" on which, in the figurative sense, he had been forced to subsist? Job 6:6, 7. What did he say he wanted, and why? Job 6:8-13.

His trials were tasteless or unsavory to him because he did not perceive why God had allowed them to come upon him and how God intended them for his benefit.

What statement did Job make about friendship, and to what kind of rivers did he liken his disappointing friends? Job 6:14-20.

The friends were "unreliable" and "treacherous" (Job 6:15, TLB, RSV). When needed, they would "vanish from their place" (verse 17, RSV, NASB). All of these actions can be viewed as forms of deceit. Jesus reminds us that "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). To act at times like a friend and at times to act otherwise is confusing and hurtful. How different is the constancy of Jesus' friendship. (See Prov. 18:24.)

What kind of friendship do you show to those in trouble? Do you turn away from them because you don't want to be associated with losers? Suppose that, unlike Job, they are responsible for their own trouble. How do you treat them under those circumstances?

SPIRITUAL IMPOTENCE (Job 6:21-30).

"Job was using a dry river to illustrate his disappointment with his friends. When he needed help, they offered nothing but self-righteous criticism.

"The dry river analogy applies in our age as well as in Job's. . . . Recall the promising people who have lost—or mislaid—their faith. Unfortunately, good people seem to get tired of being good faster than bad people get tired of being bad. By ourselves we tend to ravel out, to diminish, to dry up. The only effective deterrent to this tendency is the renewing power of God.

"Second, the 'dry river' disappoints when it is most needed. In a disillusioned world, many are seeking for a stream in the desert. They look toward professed Christians hoping to see absolute honesty, untainted purity, unselfish kindness, exemplary conduct, and generous faith. Too often professed Christians are like 'dry rivers.' The thirsty searcher goes away disappointed. . . .

"Job's friends were like 'dry rivers' because they failed to allow truth to flow. They misread the workings of Providence and were confused by tradition. The sympathy they yearned to express was dried up by the hot winds of their tradition."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, pp. 33, 34.

What did Job say was the reason for his friends' behavior?
Job 6:21.

Job "stands in shame before them [his friends] just as a thirsty member of a caravan before a dried-up brook. His friends have proved to be *nothing*. . . . They have no refreshing water to offer him. In looking at Job, a *terror* . . . they are *afraid*. Fear has dissolved their loyalty and preempted their efforts to console him."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, pp. 138, 139.

Job had not asked his friends for temporal support. What did he expect from them? Job 6:22-24. What searching question did Job ask next? Job 6:25-30.

How would you have recommended to Job's friends that they revitalize their dried-up spiritual lives?

DESIRE FOR DEATH (Job 7:1-11).

How long did Job indicate he had suffered up to this point in his experience? Job 7:1-3.

The friends originally heard of Job's troubles and together decided to come and comfort him. "They saw how very great was his suffering" (Job 2:13, JPS). Perhaps Job was in or was ending what might appear a dangerous stage of his disease. But as their dialogue with Job and their monologues on suffering continued, so did Job's illness. His condition became chronic, perhaps with recurrent symptoms. Certainly he had "unrelenting" and "unsparing pain" (Job 6:10, NIV, NASB). By this time Job had experienced "months of futility" (NIV) and "emptiness" (RSV).

How did Job describe the symptoms of his disease and the consequent impact on his physical appearance? Job 7:5. How did he assess his future? Job 7:6-10.

What did Job's intense suffering lead him to decide? Job 7:11.

Job had every right to speak to his heavenly Father about his anguishing experience. Job was hurting and impatient. He seemed to feel that his undeserved suffering justified him in complaining to God.

The book of Job clearly identifies the speakers in the dialogue between Job and his friends and frequently notes the person or persons who are being addressed. But rarely does the author note when a remark or complaint is being addressed to God. But beginning with Job 7:11, the context is clear that Job is directing his complaint to the heavenly Watcher, the "Preserver of men" mentioned in verse 20. The word translated "preserver" (KJV), "watcher" (NASB, RSV, NIV, TLB), or "jailer" (TEV) means to guard in a good sense (protect) or in a bad sense (confine). Job's complaint was that God was confining him by illness. "Why make of me Your target, and a burden to myself?" (Job 7:20, JPS).

Knowing the work of Satan in persecuting Job, and God's intention to test him, are you better able to explain some of the trials that you have experienced?

JOB COMPLAINS DIRECTLY TO GOD (Job 7:12-21).

Complete the following exercise in order to clarify Job's reactions:

Verse	What Job felt	Verse	What Job wanted
12		13	refuge in sleep
14		15	death rather than pain
16		17-19	to be left alone
20		21	pardon

Job's feelings can be understood in the light of what he thought would be best for him. But when our desires are completely surrendered to God's will for us, we are reconciled to whatever He orders or provides.

Compare Job 7:17 with Psalm 8:3-6. What do you see as the major difference between the way these similar thoughts were understood by the persons expressing them?

God promises us today the blessings Job craved:

Prov. 3:24 _____

Rev. 2:10 _____

James 1:13 _____

Micah 7:18 _____

"If Job had met his trials with perfect calmness, if he had never uttered an impatient word, we might find it hard to identify with him when problems pile up in our lives. We know how he felt when he screamed: 'I give up; I am tired of living. Leave me alone. My life makes no sense.' It may be a comfort to us to remember that God was behind the shadows in Job's world. He hasn't forsaken us, either."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, p. 35.

What spiritual dangers do you see in the way Job reacted?

BILDAD JOINS THE DISCUSSION (Job 8:1-22).

Bildad joined Eliphaz in mixing truth with error. This chapter contains his reaction to Job's complaints.

How would you answer the question that Bildad asked Job about the way God deals with us? Job 8:1-3.

"Bildad attempts a defense of the justice of God. He is correct in his respect for God's justice, but wrong in his understanding of God's justice. He believes that justice demands specific punishment for sins in this life. He assumes that Job is the object of such justice."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 520.

What reason did Bildad propose for the death of Job's children? What false solution did he suggest? Job 8:4-7?

"After renouncing Job's complaint that God is treating him unjustly, Bildad instructs Job about the certainty of double retribution. There are no exceptions to retribution. The blameless are always blessed by God and the wicked always punished. Any circumstances to the contrary are either illusory or momentary. This can be proved by the teaching of the fathers and by the patterns of nature. In Bildad's opinion it is unequivocally true that God does not pervert justice. He thus equates justice with double retribution."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 164.

Despite Bildad's arguments, presented in Job 8:8-22, why would you reject the traditional view that the wicked always suffer in this life and the righteous always prosper?

In the short term, tradition may be called experience. Such experience, however, may be unreliable. To be valid, experience must be based on "careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 69. Those who "know nothing" (Job 8:9) cannot evaluate tradition or understand true experience.

What evidence can you give that *in the long run* the wicked will suffer and the righteous will be rewarded?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 6-8 in other versions, if possible. As you read Job 8, think about the concept of salvation by works and contrast it with the great doctrine of justification by faith as it is summarized in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 253-256.

We dare not be too hard on Job's friends. "The casual reader is sometimes shocked at the position taken by Job's three friends. Pious as Job is, perfect as Jehovah has declared him to be, the three persist in condemning him. Their attitude may provoke a resentment against these men. Such reaction is as unjust to the three friends as the three friends are unjust to Job. For it is an easily overlooked distinction that separates the belief of these three friends from the reader's own belief.

"God does reward good and punish evil in this life. Throughout the Christian world this is an axiom. You and I have grown up with the basic assumption. And Scripture examples to support the assumption are abundant. . . .

"Yet it does not follow from this that man can judge his neighbor's character by the good or ill fortune that befalls him. Failure to recognize this fact is one fundamental error of these three friends. . . .

"As wisdom taught, God rewards good and punishes evil. But as wisdom did not know to teach, man's vision is too circumscribed to distinguish good from evil. What appears to the finite mind a calamity may in God's providence become a blessing. And what wisdom interprets as a mark of divine disapproval may be instead a token of God's faith in man."—Paul T. Gibbs, *Job and the Mysteries of Wisdom*, pp. 82-85.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can you decide whether any particular trial is a punishment for your sin or simply an instance of God testing your faithfulness?
2. What difference does it make when you accept the fact that God overrules and brings good out of evil for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28)?

SUMMARY: Both Job and his friends show confusion about how God deals with human beings. Such confusion does not help us handle the question of suffering and the effects of sin in this world. However, a true friendship with God based on a careful study of His Word will help us find answers to the problem of suffering.

Job Asks for a Mediator



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 9-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7).

KEY THOUGHT: Under pressure of great suffering, Job stated that God punishes both the innocent and the guilty. He concluded that he could not receive a fair hearing in the divine court. Zophar answered by reiterating that Job was being punished because he was guilty. If Job would repent, then God would restore him. Both Job and Zophar were mistaken. How would you answer them?

TEST EVERY STATEMENT BY THE WORD OF GOD. Job 9 through 11 presents an inspired record of how the minds of God-fearing persons sometimes try to grasp issues and concepts that are beyond their experience or ability to understand. The book of Job is not filled with prophetic symbols. It does not simply relate a narrative or state only unequivocal truths. It contains human and divine thoughts. The human thoughts about life and God often show a misunderstanding of God's dealings. In studying this book we must be alert to the need of separating true concepts from false ones. Every statement of Job and his friends must be tested by the overall teaching of God's Word. Not all that they said about God is true. (See Job 40:8, 9; 42:7.) Job was nearer to the truth about God than his friends, but under pressure of discouragement he made statements that misrepresented God.

JOB WANTS JUST JUDGMENT (Job 9:1-24).

The Hebrew of Job's question may be translated: "How can a man be justified with God?" (verse 2). The question is, "How can a person be so righteous that in God's court he would be acquitted?"

Why did Job think he would not fare well in God's court? Job 9:1-16.

Because he felt that he was being punished in spite of his innocence, Job concluded that he could never defend himself in the heavenly court. "If one wished to contend with him [God], one could not answer him once in a thousand times" (Job 9:3, RSV). Job accepted the truth that, because God is so wise and powerful, no one can argue with Him. He recognized that God controls the universe, of which we are only a small part. Therefore, Job asked, Why should God be concerned with my plea of innocence?

What was Job's mistake? He failed to see that the very purpose of the heavenly court is to vindicate those who have placed their trust in God. In a later century, Daniel clarified the issue. Daniel foresaw the time when "the Ancient of Days came and judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones of the Most High" (Dan 7:22, JPS). (See also Matt. 10:32; Rev. 3:5.) Repentant, believing, sinful human beings have an Advocate in the heavenly court, "one like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13, RSV), Jesus Christ, our heavenly Mediator and Friend. (Compare 1 John 2:1; 1 Tim. 2:5.)

In your own words, outline Job's false concept of God expressed in Job 9:17-24. What evidence can you give that Job was wrong?

Verse 17: It was not God who was crushing Job; it was Satan. God allowed Job's sufferings to prove Satan wrong. God does not destroy the blameless (see verse 22).

Verse 18: God never fills anyone with bitterness. (See Ps. 55:22.)

Verse 20: God has no desire to prove an innocent believer guilty. (See Ex. 20:6.) Quite the contrary!

Imagine yourself in Job's place. How could you answer your own doubting arguments?

**NOTHING OF OURSELVES RECOMMENDS US TO GOD
(Job 9:25-35).**

What had Job decided about his life? Job 9:25-28.

Notice the three figures Job used to describe the swiftness of his approaching fate (verses 25, 26). During this rapidly passing time, he could not forget his suffering.

What had Job decided about his standing with God and his chances of coming to an understanding with Him? Job 9:28-31. What did Job believe he needed? Job 9:32-35.

The Jewish Publication Society translation of Job 9:28, 29 reads: "I know that You will not acquit me. It will be I who am in the wrong; why then should I waste effort?" How wrong Job was! If he stood alone before his Maker, certainly he would be found deficient. As a fallen human being he needed a Saviour and a Mediator. But One was promised (Gen. 3:15). Pressured by discouragement, Job overlooked this promise.

Job 9:33 in the RSV reads: "There is no umpire between us." In fact, God has provided an Umpire. "The I AM is the Daysman [umpire, arbiter] between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. "Jesus encircles the race with His human arm, while with His divine arm He lays hold upon infinity."—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Aug. 24, 1891, p. 5.

"Have you ever felt trapped?"

"Although a man is unhappy with his job, he can't quit, because he has a family to support. . . . But every day is drudgery. What should he do? A person desires deeply to confess Christ and live by his inner religious convictions. But he fears such a course would cost him his home, his friends, and his career. . . . He is caught. What should he do? A young person finds himself hooked on drugs. He knows his habit is ruining his life. . . . His is a formidable trap. What should he do?

"Job felt trapped too. He recognized that he couldn't win in a contest with God. His problems were unresolved, and he didn't know how to get through to God with his side of the story."—Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, pp. 36, 37.

What do you consider to be the way out of these traps?

JOB COMPLAINS ABOUT HIS TREATMENT (Job 10:1-22).

Chapter 10 demonstrates Job's inability to reconcile *what he knows* about God with *what he is experiencing*. He sees himself as guiltless and cannot understand God's dealings.

How would you summarize Job's questions in Job 10:2-6?

Job was searching for reasons for his problems. In the process he blamed God for destroying the work of His hands while "smiling on the policy of wicked men" (Job 10:3, NEB). Job had temporarily forgotten that divine help is freely offered in our search to understand God and to reconcile ourselves to that which His providence has allowed.

How to search and find. Ask for wisdom and accept it as God's gift. Accept God's help to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Remember that "the Bible was given for practical purposes" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 20). Thank your Father for your new understanding and apply to your life what you have learned.

What did Job wonder about, and of what was he confident? Job 10:8-13.

From God's perspective, what are the answers to Job's questions? Did God create with the intention of destroying His created works? Who introduced sin and death into our world? Will God raise again those who died believing? Will He give them immortality and physical, mental, and spiritual perfection? (See 1 Cor. 15:51-58; Phil. 3:20, 21.)

Job 10:14-22. Job's complaints were a plea for understanding. His expressed thoughts and feelings revealed his understanding of God's dealings with him. Once again he renewed his lament that he wished he had never been born and pleaded for death. In verses 20-22 he seemed to be asking for a little comfort before he died.

Ask yourself: Do I understand how God deals with me? List the areas in which you seek answers from the Light of life.

ZOPHAR EMPHASIZES JOB'S GUILT (Job 11:1-12).

"Since in Zophar's view people are either contrite worshipers of God or arrogant sinners, he sees little possibility that such a wordy man as Job might be upright, free from wrong. With no apparent sympathy for Job's lament, he coldly reasons that Job's present punishment is only partial, tempered by God's abundant mercy. But he offers Job the promise that if he repents and turns to God with a single mind, he will again enjoy a secure, rich life."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 193.

What did Zophar think of Job's words? What did Zophar want God to do? Job 11:1-6.

Zophar is right about sound wisdom having "many sides" (verse 6, JPS). Single-sided thinking often lies at the base of our problems. The alternative to seeing truth in its breadth is to become more narrow. The point is, not that there are no absolute truths, but that our understanding of truth is never absolute. There are always vistas beyond.

Why are there limits to our understanding God? Job 11:7-9.

Zophar was stating established truth. "We may be ever searching, ever inquiring, ever learning, and yet there is an infinity beyond."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 431.

How would you answer Zophar's questions in Job 11:10-12?

Zophar mixed truth with falsehood. While no one can stop God (verse 10, TEV), at Moses' request He did delay judgment (Ex. 32:31-34), and He prolonged the light for Joshua (Joshua 10:12-14). Sin in some ways has hindered God's grand plan for developing sons and daughters in His likeness. Zophar's questions, like Bildad's, must be answered with both "of course" and "not really."

Do you agree with Zophar's statement to Job, "Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves" (Job 11:6, RSV)? Why or why not?

ZOPHAR ADVISES REPENTANCE (Job 11:13-20).

What was Zophar's suggestion? Why did it not fit Job's case? Job 11:13-20.

Zophar's call on Job to repent was similar to Eliphaz' appeal in Job 5:17-27. He too assumed Job's guilt. Notice the contrast in Job 11:17 to Job's earlier portrayal of his ultimate end in darkness (Job 10:21, 22). But Zophar persisted in calling on Job to repent. "The speeches of Job's friends have been compared to wheels, revolving on the same axle. They vary in detail, but agree in basic sentiment."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 530.

Consider the errors in Zophar's argument in Job 11:13-20:

Verse 13: Zophar seems to imply that Job had neglected God. Job had consistently sought the Lord.

Verse 14: The idea that Job's suffering had resulted from his sin was false. God called him a righteous man.

Verses 15, 16: Faith does not eliminate calamity entirely. Faith transcends fear of calamity, suffering, and the experience of genuine misery.

Verses 17-19: The picture of uninterrupted security is unrealistic in this life. Faithful Christians often experience insecurity and unfair opposition. But Zophar's words were a "message of hope" when considered as a prediction of the future life. (See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 163.)

To have friends we must stand by them in adversity. During General Grant's presidency, a man by the name of Conkling had become involved in a scandal in the Senate. The general attempted in every way to befriend and shield Mr. Conkling. Another man reasoned with him, "General Grant, how is it you are willing to be his friend? Do you believe he did right?"

"No, sir, I don't."

"How is it, then, that you are on his side now?"

Grant's reply is a classic. "When is the time to show a man's self friendly except when his friend has made a mistake? That is not the time to leave a man when he has made a blunder or a mistake."

Was Zophar Job's true friend? List the characteristics of true friendship.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 9-11 from a different version. Compare what Job said with the psalmist's appeals to God when confronted by treacherous "friends" recorded in Psalm 55. Also compare Job's statements with the psalmist's in Psalm 71.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think of the attempt to encourage persons with a terminal disease by telling them, "Jesus is the great Healer; He will certainly heal you"?
2. Based on your study of Job's experience, what counsel would you have for persons who are convinced that their suffering is the result of personal sin?

SUMMARY: The first step in resolving confusion is to recognize it for what it is, as Job began to do in chapters 9 and 10. Another insight we gain from this study is that insensitivity is based on a lack of recognition of others' feelings and needs. True friendship is sensitive and responsive.

ATTENTION:

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Trusting Through Trials



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 12-15.

MEMORY TEXT: "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his" (Job 12:13, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Even though we do not fully understand why God allows trial, we should follow Job's example of trusting that the Lord knows best.

JOB LONGS FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT: Job 12 through 14 summarize both Job's attitude toward his friends and his confidence in and relationship with God. Job had been injured by his friends' ignorant diagnosis of his problem. In these chapters we find him reacting against their accusations and expressing his hurt feelings with some sarcasm. He longed for social support and friendship.

"Things will go wrong with every one; sadness and discouragement press every soul; then a personal presence, a friend who will comfort and impart strength, will turn back the darts of the enemy that are aimed to destroy. Christian friends are not half as plentiful as they should be. In hours of temptation, in a crisis, what a value is a true friend! Satan at such times sends along his agents to cause the trembling limbs to stumble; but the true friends who will counsel, who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul—oh, such help is worth more than precious pearls!"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1163.

SARCASM AND REBUKE (Job 12:1-25).

Job answered Zophar. "Job for the first time really pours scorn upon his friends. Invective, however, appears as a secondary purpose. His main object is to justify his previous assertions: (1) that the whole course of earthly events, whether good or evil, must be attributed to God, and (2) that his sufferings entitle him to plead with God and demand to know why he is so punished."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 530, 531.

What is your reaction to Job's response to Zophar and his other friends in Job 12:1-6?

Job pointed out the contrast between his own situation and that of the prosperous wicked. They have "contempt for calamity" (Job 12:5, JPS). "Robbers live untroubled in their tents, and those who provoke God are secure" (verse 6, JPS). But blameless Job is a tortured laughingstock.

Do you agree with Job's evaluation of God's work in the earth? Job 12:7-25.

Job pointed to nature as substantiating his contention that the wicked prosper. Even among animals, over whom God rules, the violent gain the upper hand. Job's argument is that God is Sovereign over all the affairs of earth. He causes the wicked to prosper, but when His will determines, He reduces them to nothingness. He causes droughts and floods (verse 15). "Erring and causing to err are from Him" (verse 16, JPS). "He exalts nations, then destroys them" (verse 23, JPS).

"Thus Job implies that the reason for his troubles resides with God, not with himself. In this way he is countering Zophar's assertion. . . . People become victims of catastrophes regardless of their social status or moral standing. Therefore, it is with this God that Job must settle his complaint, not with the God of the comforters."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 212.

Does the rest of Scripture agree with Job? Does God cause evil? Did He cause Job's suffering? Certainly God is sovereign over the world and its events. What is the message of Job chapters 1 and 2?

ARGUING WITH GOD (Job 13:1-28).

What did Job find wrong with his friends' attempt to justify God's dealings with mortals? Job 13:1-16.

Zophar had expressed the wish that God would come and speak to Job to clear up his wrong thinking. (See Job 11:5.) In this passage Job indicates that he would welcome such an opportunity. Job accused his friends of defending God with false arguments. He spoke of them as "doctors who don't know what they are doing" (Job 13:4, TLB). They were "doctors who can't heal" because they "cover up . . . [their] ignorance with lies" (TEV). Job was speaking of doctors of the soul, those who attempt to heal the common problems of life. Often such counselors cover up their ignorance with false theories and ideas.

Job's assertion in verse 10, that God would reprove his friends for their false ideas of what He was doing, was verified later. (See Job 42:7.)

Job 13:15 and 16 read differently in English versions. The JPS version renders verse 15: "He may well slay me; I may have no hope; yet I will argue my case before Him." (Compare the RSV.) This suggests that Job would trust God to give him a fair hearing, even though He should take his life. Other versions read as does the KJV. For example, the NIV reads: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face." In either translation, Job's confidence emerges clearly. "From the depths of discouragement and despondency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God. Triumphant he declared: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' "—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 163, 164. Verses 17 and 18 prove that Job was speaking confidently.

What did Job want God to do for him? Job 13:17-28.

If only God would take away Job's fear, show him the sin that had caused his suffering, and stop treating him like an enemy (verse 24), Job would be satisfied. Implied is the idea that God was the cause of his troubles.

How do you handle the feeling, which Job had, that God is treating you like an enemy? What restores your faith?

**THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE AND THE SLEEP OF DEATH
(Job 14:12).**

In chapter 14 Job noted that life is fleeting and indicated that he wanted to die. (Compare chapter 3.) Some scholars believe that chapter 14 is in a form of Hebrew poetry known as inverse parallelism. In this type of literary structure, the writer begins with thought A, then introduces thought B. Next he enlarges on thought B, then finally returns to thought A. If chapter 14 is intended to be an inverted parallel, it can be divided as follows:

A¹ Verse 1—Human lives are full of trouble.

B¹ Verses 2-9—They are like flowers and trees that soon are cut down. But there is hope that they will sprout again.

B² Verses 10-21—Humans die, but there is hope that they will live again.

A² Verse 22—Human lives are full of pain.

Such parallelism ties verses 1 and 22 together, thus explaining that verse 22 does not refer to a dead person's feeling pain after death. This explanation fits well with the context that clearly portrays death as an unconscious sleep until the time of the resurrection.

How does Job 14:1-6 continue the idea of the frailty of human beings that Job was talking about in Job 13:28?

Mankind "vanishes like a shadow and does not endure" (Job 14:2, JPS). "His days are determined" (verse 5, JPS). Job was anticipating death because fallen humans die, not because of specific sins in his life (Job 13:23).

**What is the difference between a human being and a tree?
Job 14:7-12.**

The stump of a tree might sprout again (verses 7-9), but "people die, never to rise" (verse 12, TEV). Even so, Job had the hope that he would awake when the heavens are no more (see verse 12). His concept of death was biblical. Death is an unconscious sleep (Job 14:12, 21; compare Eccl. 9:5, 6, 10; John 11:11). Only God has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). He bestows immortality on His people when the righteous dead are raised (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

Are you afraid to die? Why or why not?

JOB REPEATS HIS DESIRE FOR DEATH (Job 14:17-22).

What made Job long for death? Job 14:13-17.

Job's hope of living again after death was made certain by Jesus' resurrection. (See John 14:19; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; Rev. 1:18.) All who belong to Christ, who are victorious because His righteousness has been counted for them and bestowed upon them, will be raised as He was. (See 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom 5:1, 2; 6:5; 8:9, 10; Rev. 3:5, 21.)

The "service" period mentioned in Job 14:14, NIV, refers to the time Job would be unconscious in the grave. Verse 15 expresses Job's faith that God would not forget him. To every sufferer who clings to the hope of a resurrection, death can bring blessed relief from pain. "O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55). Who else but our wise and loving God could take His enemy's worst curse and make it part of the solution to suffering? Who else could offer an eternity of life without pain, grief, and death?

Verse 17. What is sealed or sewn up? "Some interpret vs. 16 and 17 as a description . . . of His [God's] promise of forgiveness, and translate the verses thus: 'For then thou wouldest number my steps, thou wouldest not keep watch over my sin; my transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and thou wouldest cover over my iniquity.'"—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 537.

What is intended by the use of the mountain illustration in Job 14:18-20?

Job's mistake was not in his understanding of death. He knew that death is a state of unconsciousness. (See Job 14:12, 21.) Job's mistake was in thinking God was taking his life. In fact, God forbade Satan to take Job's life (Job 2:6). The Lord took the lives of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:30-34; Deut. 11:6). God took the lives of the antideluvians and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. But He was not responsible for the murder of James, Paul, or Peter. What God allows, He does not necessarily cause! Job had not understood this.

How would you present the Bible teaching regarding death to answer the spiritists and the New Age followers?

ELIPHAZ REPROVES JOB FOR IMPIETY (Job 15:1-35).

A false light. "By seeking to make him [Job] guilty before God, . . . they brought a grievous test upon him, and represented God in a false light."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140. After Job's graphic description of the shortness of life recorded in chapter 14, Eliphaz spoke what may be the most hurtful words in the book of Job. We need to note what he had to say in order to learn what *not* to say or think under similar circumstances.

What cruel accusations did Eliphaz make? Job 15:1-6.

In spite of Eliphaz' accusation, it is in a sense impossible to "undermine piety and hinder devotion to God" (verse 4, NIV). Recall the experiences of Joseph and Paul. Someone may influence us for good or bad, but we make our own choices. They are responsible for their influence, but we are responsible for our actions and reactions.

Notice the cutting, sarcastic questions Eliphaz used to ridicule Job in verses 7-16. Eliphaz perpetuated a lie of the father of lies: that it is impossible to be Godlike and Christlike. In what guise have you heard this lie?

In what ways did Eliphaz overstate the case that the wicked suffer? Job 15:20-30. What did Eliphaz say about the rewards and relationships of the wicked? Job 15:31-35. Compare James 3:11-14; 4:4.

Experience proves that wicked people may or may not suffer in this life as much as Eliphaz said. Half-truths are half false and should be avoided. Mark Twain is said to have observed, "You never know when you're going to get hold of the wrong half!"

Not all destruction comes as a result of our sin. Only by God was Job spared and only by God are we able to "live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "Satan's power upon the human family increases. If the Lord should not soon come and destroy his power, the earth would ere long be depopulated."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 304.

Why do you think God protects the wicked—sometimes granting them prosperity and long life?

FURTHER STUDY: If you have other versions of the Bible available, read Job 12-15 in those versions in order to sharpen your understanding of what was taking place. Study David's testimony in Psalm 69. What do you learn from his response to his problems that can help you understand this week's lesson?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When others share their sufferings with you, do you respond to their needs or to their complaints? When asked for reasons for your belief or behavior, do you offer opinion or truth?
2. Suppose that, unlike the case of Job, someone's sufferings are the direct result of personal sin. How can such a person have peace with God and be reconciled to the inevitability of the suffering?

SUMMARY: In spite of his ordeal and arguments, Job began to make spiritual progress. He moved from being concerned about trying to understand his physical pain into the area of the social effects of his illness. In doing so, he expressed his belief that he could still trust God. Job reacted against his friends' accusations by expressing his hurt feelings with some sarcasm. He longed for social support, but instead, Eliphaz returned even greater sarcasm.

Our Advocate on High



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 16-18.

MEMORY TEXT: "And now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high" (Job 16:19).

KEY THOUGHT: Although we cannot understand all the circumstances of our lives, we are assured that, in the midst of trial and discouragement, we have an Advocate who faithfully presents our case in the heavenly court.

GOD OUR DEFENDER. In this section of the Bible book we are studying, Job contrasted the effects of his friends' well-intentioned-but-cruel words with the assurance he had that both his Witness on high and upright men were on his side. Even though Job could not suppress the thought that God had caused his distress, he was convinced that God was his greatest defender in the heavenly court.

Bildad echoed Eliphaz' cruel words. But Job's confidence that the righteous "shall grow stronger and stronger" (Job 17:9, NASB) can encourage us in similar circumstances. Job had no written Scripture, as we do, enabling him to compare what he had heard with inspired truth. He had truth passed on by word of mouth and his personal relationship with God by which to measure the words of the friends who did not understand him. If in the midst of trial the Scriptures were taken from you, and you were isolated from understanding friends, would the knowledge you had previously gained from the Bible and your relationship with God be sufficient to sustain your faith?

**JOB CONTINUES TO MISUNDERSTAND GOD'S ROLE
(Job 16:1-11).**

Job seems to have become increasingly pained emotionally about the way he felt God was treating him and about the lack of support he was getting from his "miserable comforters" (verse 2).

What choices did Job indicate we have in choosing what we should say to the afflicted? Job 16:1-5.

It is easy to condemn others when we have not experienced what they are undergoing. One of the blessings that comes from our trouble and suffering is that we are better able to sympathize with and comfort others whose experience is similar to ours.

"How about the words we speak in our homes? Do we criticize and blame, as did the friends of Job? Or have we learned to be understanding and caring?

"How about the words we speak on the job, in casual travel, in the office, in the classroom, in the pulpit, and in the committee room? Are they constructive? Do they bring encouragement to our listeners? Or do they reveal our own inner conflicts and insecurity?"—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, p. 45. (Compare Matt. 12:34-37.)

"Verse 7 marks a transition. Job turns from complaints against his comforters to an enumeration of his own sufferings."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 541.

What was Job's first complaint? Job 16:7. According to Job's understanding, who were united against him? Job 16:8-11.

"All that Job had suffered at the hands of men . . . all these calamities Job attributes to God Himself. In so doing, he commits a common error of mankind—that of blaming God for those evil displays of human nature that are incited by Satan."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 542.

Job said, "O God, you have worn me out; you have devastated my entire household. You have bound me—and it has become a witness" (Job 16:7, 8, NIV). Had God done these things? Does He ever do such things? Illustrate your answer.

JOB APPEALS TO HIS ADVOCATE (Job 16:12-21).

Job 16:12-14 suggests that, without pity, God crushed Job and his household. Job was wrong on two counts: God does not afflict the innocent; Satan does. And God never afflicts the guilty without pity. Retribution is enormously distasteful to God—even when His justice demands it. (See Isa. 28:21; Eze. 18:30; 2 Peter 3:9, 10.)

What argument did Job use as evidence that he should not have been suffering as he was? Job 16:17. Why do you think the argument was invalid?

"There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. 14:3). This is the argument Paul used to prove that all need to be justified by God's grace alone (Rom. 3:10-20). But Job had been justified and was in a justified state when his calamities struck (Job 1:8; 2:3). Even so, our justified condition is no argument against suffering. *God allows the trials of justified people for reasons other than their guilt.* He will make known those reasons in the kingdom. We must trust His wisdom.

In spite of the attacks that Job viewed as being made on him from all sides, on what did he rely for vindication? Job 16:19-21. (Compare with Ps. 56:8-13.)

"Since there is no earthly party who will come to his defense, Job asserts that his *witness is in heaven*. . . . This heavenly witness is his *defender*. Who is this heavenly defender? . . . Considering the various passages in which Job thinks about arguing his case before God, the best candidate for the defender that can be found is God himself."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 264.

How right Job was! At every stage of history our loving Lord has presented in heaven the cases of His maligned people—whether they were innocent or guilty but repentant. And since the cross, the mediatorial ministry of Jesus Christ makes it possible for believers to realize the everlasting covenant promises. (See Heb. 9:15.)

What can our Advocate do for us to make our heavenly records such that we would be willing for all to see? (See 1 John 2:1, 2; Rev. 3:5.)

FAITH RISES ABOVE SUFFERING (Job 17:1-9).

"By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken," and a "broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov. 15:13; 17:22). Job wanted someone to understand him, rather than mock him. Chapter 17 sadly reveals Job's lack of social support.

Job's misguided friends contributed to his readiness for the grave. (See Job 17:1, 2.) So did David's friends and the Messiah's, of whom the psalmist prophesied: "Reproach hath broken my heart; . . . I looked for some to take pity, but there was none" (Ps. 69:20). There is One who can be counted on to heal "the broken in heart" (Ps. 147:3). That is what God promises to each person who comes to Him with "a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart" (Ps. 51:17).

What did Job call upon God to do? Job 17:3-5. Compare Ps. 56:1-6.

"Lay down now" (KJV) can be translated "give now a pledge." "The terms used in this verse are law terms. Job calls upon God to go into court with him. The 'pledge' refers to the money that the court requires before it undertakes the investigation of the case. . . . It seems that Job desired God to give bond that He would enter into litigation with Job on equal terms."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 543.

How did Job express his determination to stand firm for God despite the treatment he was getting from people? Job 17:6-9.

Job saw himself as a "byword" (verse 6), a public example of doom to his contemporaries. But "the patience of Job" (James 5:11) has become a byword. "The righteous" (Job 17:9) are believers who have received the free gift of God's righteousness. (See Isa. 32:15-17; Rom. 8:9, 10.) They are empowered to maintain their faith, in spite of life's struggles. (See Rom. 8:18, 28.) Suffering merely hardens their resolve to serve Christ.

Would you be willing to testify to your Sabbath School class of the special strength the Lord has given you to endure sorrow, disappointment, calamity, or suffering? How has your spiritual strength grown despite the difficulty?

WHAT IS THE BASIS OF OUR HOPE? (Job 17:10-16).

What do you believe made Job think that he could not find "one wise man" among those around him? Job 17:10-12.

The NIV translates verse 10: "Come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you." Job's friends attempted to turn ignorance into enlightenment without divine illumination. At the same time as they were suggesting that "it is always darkest before the dawn" (see verse 12), they were contributing to the darkness.

How would you answer Job's question, recorded in Job 17:13-16? In view of his expectation of certain death, what hope would you hold out for him?

Farther on in the book, Job answers his own question (Job 19:25-27). Evidently it took a little time for the truth of the resurrection to register with him. David cherished this hope: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me" (Ps. 49:15). With the eye of faith, Isaiah envisioned the resurrection morning: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isa. 26:19).

Jesus predicted the day when He will raise the dead: "For a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28, 29, NIV). The apostle Paul echoed the refrain: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Cor. 4:14). "We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13, NIV).

Paul had the hope of someday being immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-54). He had the hope of having a perfect body and mind (Isa. 33:24). He had the hope of living in an immaculate world, surrounded by sinless beings living in the closest fellowship with God Himself (Rev. 7:14-17; 21:3-5).

Do the Jobs among us have any reason to despair? Look up now and praise the Lord for His salvation.

BILDAD INSISTS THAT CALAMITY OVERTAKES THE WICKED (Job 18:1-21).

Bildad gave no evidence of having paid much attention to the grief, frustration, and despair that Job expressed. Bildad stated that it is the wicked who have overwhelming problems. Ultimately that is true. But in the meantime, in this sinful world, both righteous and wicked have problems that seem overwhelming. Sometimes the wicked are very prosperous. In this chapter, Bildad did not directly accuse Job of being wicked, but he implied it rather clearly.

To what did Bildad claim Job had likened his friends? Job 18:1-4.

Job had not accused his friends of being vile. In his anger, Bildad misrepresented the facts. In the verses that follow, Bildad vividly described the fate of the wicked.

Read Job 18:5-21 in a modern version, if available, in order to understand more clearly what Bildad described as happening to the wicked. What do you understand to be the intention of the following illustrations in Job 18?

verses 5, 6—the candle _____

verse 8—the net _____

verse 12—“hungerbitten” (KJV) _____

verse 16—roots and branches _____

What reasons did Bildad give for these results? Job 18:8, 14, 15, 21.

Bildad's observations are partly true. They parallel the cause-and-effect prophecy in Deuteronomy 29:18-28. But the law of cause and effect does not account for those times when the “curse causeless” (Prov. 26:2) comes upon innocent people.

Can you refer to other passages of Scripture indicating that ultimately Bildad's predictions for the wicked were accurate? Why was this message irrelevant in Job's case?

FURTHER STUDY: Study James 3, noting particularly the eight words or phrases in verse 17 that characterize "the wisdom that is from above."

How should we respond to those who cast contempt on us? "Of the bitterness that falls to the lot of humanity, there was no part which Christ did not taste. There were those who tried to cast contempt upon Him because of His birth, and even in His childhood He had to meet their scornful looks and evil whisperings. If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example.... But to every temptation He had but one answer, 'It is written.'"*—The Desire of Ages*, p. 88.

How to turn our tormentors into friends. In *The Grace of Giving*, Stephen Olford tells of a Baptist pastor, Peter Miller, who lived in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, during the American Revolution and enjoyed the friendship of George Washington. Michael Wittman also lived in Ephrata. He did all he could to oppose and humiliate the pastor.

One day Michael Wittman was arrested for treason and sentenced to die. Peter Miller traveled seventy miles on foot to Philadelphia to plead for the life of the traitor.

"No, Peter," General Washington said. "I cannot grant you the life of your friend."

"My friend!" exclaimed the old preacher. "He's the bitterest enemy I have."

"What?" cried Washington. "You've walked seventy miles to save the life of an enemy? That puts the matter in different light. I'll grant your pardon." And he did.

Peter Miller took Michael Wittman back home to Ephrata—a friend. (Adapted from Stephen Olford, *The Grace of Giving* [Miami: Life Publications Int'l., 1986], p. 53.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If, when you were sick, your friends were to condemn you as a great sinner, how would you answer them?
2. What practical effects does the "blessed hope" produce in people's lives?

SUMMARY: Despite good intentions, anything less than truth can only hurt those whom we attempt to comfort. If we would make an honest attempt to understand God's character and His dealings with humanity, what a blessing we would be!

"My Redeemer Liveth"



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 19, 20.

MEMORY TEXT: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

KEY THOUGHT: Job knew that eventually he would be vindicated, even if he had to wait until the resurrection. Then his body would be restored to health, and he would see God. We may not find relief from suffering and misunderstanding while on earth, but soon Christ will come to make all things right.

JOB STATES THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS SUFFERING AND HOPE. Job was confident that at the end of time he would be raised to see his Lord (see Job 19:25). He closed chapter 19 with a warning that his friends would face divine wrath for the way they were misrepresenting truth. But Zophar's statements show that he had not seriously considered Job's response.

One helpful approach to Bible study is to do your best to enter into the feelings of those involved in what you are reading. The same approach applies to life. "In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys, and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 134.

JOB REBELS AT BEING MISUNDERSTOOD (Job 19:1-22).

"Job is no stoic. He is not insensible to his friends' attacks. On the contrary, their words sting him, torture him, wound his soul. Bildad's attack has been the cruelest of all. Job's reply indicates how deeply affected he really is."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 547.

Read Job 19:1-6 as if you were Job, expressing his thoughts. The friends shamelessly "crush . . . [Job] with words" (verse 2, NIV). Verse 4 may be paraphrased: "If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone" (NIV).

The Hebrew verb for doing wrong used in this verse "refers to an inadvertent mistake, the kind of wrongful act that everyone commits by reason of being human. . . . Remaining confident that he has never sinned as gravely as his misfortune suggests, Job refuses to concede that he has done anything more serious than some unintentional blunder."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 283.

Therefore his friends' accusations demonstrate their desire to exalt themselves above him (see verse 5). "In fact," Job says, "God has wronged me by punishing me despite my innocence" (verse 6).

How did Job feel that God was treating him? Job 19:7-12.

Can you think of other examples in Scripture of God's people blaming Him for their trials? How patient the Lord is to listen to our repeated complaints about His dealings with us! In his suffering, Job's eyes were closed to the role of Satan, but our eyes are open. The book of Job and other parts of Scripture inform us. How unfair and foolish we are to blame our loving Lord for that which the adversary has caused!

Whom did Job list as being among those who failed to give him the kind of support he needed? Job 19:13-20.

When your loved ones and friends blame you for something you have not done, are you tempted to accuse God of injustice? How can you endure such a trial and remain true to the Lord?

JOB EXPRESSES HIS BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION (Job 19:23-27).

Job began with a strong faith in God. But one reason God allowed him to be tested was to strengthen his faith even more. In the midst of his pain and discouragement, Job's faith wavered. But we become increasingly aware that his faith was growing.

In chapter 19, Job sounded a ringing note of triumph: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (verse 25, KJV). "And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes" (verses 26, 27, NIV).

"From the depths of discouragement and despondency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God. . . .

"For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day. Are you tempted to give way to feelings of anxious foreboding or utter despondency? In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling His promise."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 163-165.

What did Job want done with his words of faith? Job 19:23, 24.

"Job wishes his record to be cut deep into the rock with an iron chisel, and the chiseled-out groove to be filled with lead. This very practice is known to have been followed in ancient times, as, for instance, with the Behistun inscription."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 549. Job's words have been indelibly etched on the minds of millions by their inclusion in the Bible and in Handel's *Messiah*.

Review some other passages of Scripture that reiterate Job's hope. Dan. 12:2; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

Why is the truth of the resurrection the ultimate answer to the questions Job raised?

JUDGE NOT (Job 19:28, 29).

Of what did Job remind his friends? Job 19:28, 29.

These verses are translated in the New International Version: 'If you say, 'How we will hound him, since the root of the trouble lies in him,' you should fear the sword yourselves; for wrath will bring punishment by the sword, and then you will know that there is judgment.'

Job's friends had been verbally harassing him because they believed his troubles were the direct result of his own sin. Job consistently resisted the temptation to accept their verdict. Despite his fallen, sinful human condition, he had constantly maintained a right relationship with God and had not committed any sin to warrant the kind of calamity that had come upon him. With renewed confidence in his ultimate vindication, Job warned his friends that they would have to face their words in the judgment.

Why is condemnation of others so spiritually dangerous to ourselves? Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 2:1-4, 17-24 (compare Rom. 14:13; James 4:12).

Because we are so readily inclined to sin, in sitting in judgment on others we unwittingly condemn ourselves. Job's friends accused him of self-righteousness because he would not admit that his suffering was the result of personal sin. But they were self-righteous in the extreme in presuming to draw such a conclusion.

"A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies. . . .

"We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others. Finite men can judge only from outward appearance. To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 123, 124.

List some of the ways in which our criticism of others affects our relationship with God.

ZOPHAR DESCRIBES WHAT HE UNDERSTANDS TO BE THE FATE OF THE WICKED (Job 20:1-19).

The chapters that record the misunderstandings of Job's friends mirror many of today's conversations. By listening to them we learn how to avoid saying and thinking that which hurts. We can learn how to become more Christlike in the way we deal with others.

What was the relevance of Zophar's speech to the problem facing Job? Note especially Job 20:5-10, 13-19.

Zophar intended Job to conclude that his godlessness had resulted in personal suffering. Interpreted as a description of the *ultimate* fate of the wicked, it is difficult to take issue with Zophar's speech. But considered as a description of the usual fate of the wicked in this life, the speech is faulted by realities of human existence. Consider the speech from both perspectives:

Job 20:1-19 applied to this present life:

Verse 5: The earthly joy of some godless people extends for many years.

Verse 10: The children of a wicked person are not necessarily required to "make amends to the poor" (NIV). Rarely is it required that "his own hands must give back his wealth" (NIV).

Verse 14, 15: "His food" does not necessarily "turn sour in his stomach" (NIV). Wealthy wicked people sometimes have long, healthy lives.

Verse 18: In this life, the wicked often "enjoy the profit" (NIV) from their trading.

Job 20:1-19 applied to the ultimate fate of the wicked:

Verse 5: Since life is brief at best, the joy of the wicked "lasts but a moment" (NIV). Compare Psalm 37:1, 2, 10.

Verse 7-9: The wicked will, indeed, "perish for ever." Compare Malachi 4:1, 3.

Verses 12-18: The wealth of the wicked will be consumed. Compare James 5:1-9.

Interpreted either way, Zophar's speech did not apply to Job. How do you react when the counsel given you is irrelevant to your need?

TRUTH OUT OF CONTEXT (Job 20:20-29).

Consider the truth of Zophar's predictions regarding the fate of the wicked. Compare Job 20:20-28 with:

Matt. 25:46 _____

2 Thess. 1:7-9 _____

2 Peter 3:7 _____

Rev. 6:14-16 _____

Rev. 20:9, 14, 15 _____

Zophar used the *truth* regarding the ultimate annihilation of the wicked to underline a *falsehood*. His point was that Job was one of the wicked who would be finally annihilated. Truth should never be used as a hammer to destroy the dying hopes of struggling souls.

In Zophar's way of thinking, why do the wicked have to suffer the kind of fate he had just described? Job 20:29.

Zophar's "speech represents the narrow-minded, legalistic, critical attitude of the friends at its height. It is scarcely possible to emphasize more fearfully and graphically than Zophar does, the theory that the wicked rich man is punished by God. To Zophar, Job is a godless man, who is enduring the results of his own sins. He is guilty of unjust gain; therefore God consumes his possessions. Zophar seeks to stifle the new trust in God that Job has expressed."—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 552.

What encouragement could Zophar have brought to Job?
Prov. 11:30, 31; 13:21; Isa. 35:4-10.

If Zophar had dwelt upon the wonderful rewards for those who trust in the Lord, Job's spirits would have been lifted.

**Do you make a specialty of the ministry of encouragement?
What positive results have you seen?**

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 19 and 20 in different versions, if available. Because those who love a lie would suffer extreme discomfort with an eternity of truth, they will not have to endure it. (See Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:14, 15.) The following texts clarify the answer to the question, What is truth?

- Deut. 4:1, 2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5, 6; Rev. 22:18, 19.
- 1 John 2:4, 21; 5:10; James 3:14.
- 1 Tim. 1:5-16.

"It is a fact widely ignored, though never without danger, that error rarely appears for what it really is. It is by mingling with or attaching itself to truth that it gains acceptance. The eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil caused the ruin of our first parents, and the acceptance of a mingling of good and evil is the ruin of men and women today. The mind that depends upon the judgment of others is certain, sooner or later, to be misled.

"The power to discriminate between right and wrong we can possess only through individual dependence upon God. Each for himself is to learn from Him through His word."—*Education*, pp. 230, 231.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are any of my beliefs a result of a mixture of truth and tradition? How can I know? If I am able to identify some, what can I do to change? Consider the following behaviors that are based on what we believe:
 - What we eat and feed our family.
 - How we keep the Sabbath of the Lord.
 - By whose standards we establish the rules of our homes.
 - How we respond to those having problems.
2. Why do people sometimes react negatively after we have presented Bible truth to them? Is the fault sometimes ours? Do we sometimes put truth in a false context as Zophar did, or misuse it?

SUMMARY: Although the truth may be sharp and can cut, it does not wound as much as does a half-truth. We may not find relief from suffering and misunderstanding while on earth, but we can have the same assurance that Job expressed. Soon Christ will come to make all things right.

Glimpses of the Hidden God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 21-25.

MEMORY TEXT: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! . . . There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge" (Job 23:3, 7).

KEY THOUGHT: Job openly challenged the mistaken ideas of his friends and steadfastly inquired of God about those things he did not yet understand. God's patience in dealing with Job's desire for understanding encourages us to bring our problems and misunderstandings to Him.

CONFIDENCE LEADS TO INQUIRY. God invites us to "ask . . . seek . . . [and] knock. . . . For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7, 8, NASB). "To leave no chance for unbelief, misunderstanding, or misinterpretation of His words, the Lord repeats the thrice-given promise."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 130.

Doubt, distrust, and insecurity result in confusion. Job maintained a bedrock trust in the Lord. His relationship with the Lord enabled him to complain bitterly and ask specific questions about all that was wretched in his life. Only in such a secure relationship can Job or any of us confidently come to God.

Chapter 22 begins the last critical attempt of Job's friend's to persuade him to accept blame.

**JOB MAINTAINS THAT THE WICKED OFTEN PROSPER
(Job 21).**

Job did not want to be ignored. "Listen to what I am saying; that is all the comfort I ask from you" (verse 2, TEV). To be listened to can be comforting. A letter, a telephone call, or a personal visit that says, "I'm interested in what is happening to you," is comfort enough for most of us.

What was Job complaining about? Job 21:4. What real-life observation about the wicked did Job make that must have shocked his friends? Job 21:5-13 (compare Ps. 73:12-17).

Many of the wicked prosper. "The ultimate answer to the question posed by the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the saints is to understand that life is incomplete as we know it. Life is not really 'finished' and the books closed when friends gather around the grave."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, p. 51.

What did Job say about the attitude of the wicked toward God? What arguments did Job use to counter his friends' understanding of retribution? Job 21:14-26.

The wicked who prosper have no respect for God (verses 14, 15). But very often they are not punished in this life (verses 17, 18). To argue, as did Job's friends, that the wicked always suffer in this life denies the observable facts. Nor is it true, Job pointed out, that a wicked man's punishment is meted out upon his sons (verses 19-21). The divine principle is that children are not punished for the sins of their fathers (Eze. 18:17, 18, 20), even though they may suffer the results of those sins (Ex. 20:5).

All are subject to the sleep of death (Job 21:22-26). Retribution or reward comes later (Rev. 22:12). Job's "comforters" were ignoring the prosperity of the wicked (Job 21:27-30). They often are free from denunciation in this life (verse 31), and in death they are often honored and remembered with great respect (verse 32).

How would you explain to children that famous people, whose life records are stained with crime and impurity, are often highly honored in death?

ELIPHAZ AGAIN URGES JOB TO REPENT (Job 22).

Eliphaz accused Job of specific sins. "By seeking to make him [Job] guilty before God, and deserving of His punishment, they [his friends] brought a grievous test upon him, and represented God in a false light."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

What is the import of Eliphaz' questions in Job 22:1-4? What aspect of God's character does he overlook?

Our part in the great controversy is to be "a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men" (1 Cor. 4:9, NIV). Our righteousness and perfection are of vital interest to God. (See Matt. 5:20, 48; 1 John 3:7.) It provides evidence either of God's grace in our hearts or the power of the adversary over us. Of us, no less than of Job, it must eventually be said: "They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11, NIV).

Of what sins did Eliphaz accuse Job? Job 22:5-11. How did Eliphaz attempt to disprove Job's contention that the wicked so often seem to prosper? Job 22:12-20.

Job later provided evidence (in Job 31) to refute Eliphaz' accusations. The Lord also refuted them by calling Job His "servant" before and after Job was accused. (See Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7, 8.) A servant fulfills the purposes of service assigned by his or her master. "By his patient endurance he [Job] vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was."—*Education*, p. 156.

Eliphaz accused Job of saying that God does not see the wickedness or faithfulness of mankind (Job 22:12-14). Eliphaz said that the wicked are "carried off before their time" (verse 16, NIV; compare verses 19, 20).

If only Job would repent, Eliphaz asserted, God would totally restore him to a life of prosperity and health (verses 21-30).

In attempting to sort out what is true from what is false in Eliphaz' speech, what have you learned about the way God deals with us today?

JOB LONGS TO APPEAR BEFORE GOD (Job 23).

What did Job consider to be his major problem? Job 23:2-9.

Job's yearning plea, "If only I knew where to find him" (verse 3, NIV), reveals the trusting relationship possible between a weak sufferer and a powerful Saviour.

"Job's conscience testifies to his basic integrity and uprightness. He feels that if he can obtain the ear of God, he will be vindicated, once and for all. His basic complaint in vs. 1-7 is that he does not know how to find his way to God. He seems to feel that God will be kind to him, if only he can come into His presence."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 560.

The Lord is willing to come to us if invited (Rev. 3:20); He invites us into His presence (Matt. 7:7; 11:28). When we knock, He does not just *meet* us at His door, but He invites us in. There we may tell Him all our concerns and gratefully receive His comfort and reassurance (John 14:16-18, 23; 16:12-15). By His Spirit and through His Word some things become clear now; all will be made plain when Jesus comes.

What did Job begin to grasp about what was happening to him? Job 23:10. What claim was he justified in making? Job 23:11, 12.

"According to his faith, so was it unto Job. 'When he hath tried me,' he said, 'I shall come forth as gold.' Job 23:10. So it came to pass."—*Education*, p. 156.

In spite of his expression of confidence, what continued to trouble Job? Job 23:13-17.

Job did not fully understand; nor does any suffering saint. Although feeling hemmed in and terrified by what he could not see, Job was "not silenced" (verse 17, NIV). Nor should we be.

When hard-pressed by the enemy, have you found peace by pressing your petitions before the throne of grace? Can you testify to God's willingness to answer?

JUDGMENT AND VINDICATION ARE CERTAIN (Job 24).

How would you answer Job's question recorded in Job 24:1? Compare verse 12; 2 Peter 3:8-10.

Job's question was similar to that of the martyrs (Rev. 6:9-11). They cried out, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 6:10, NIV). Then they were each given white robes—representing their vindication in the heavenly judgment by virtue of the fact that, as living believers, they were clothed with the white robe of Christ's righteousness. (Compare Rev. 3:5.) They were told to "rest a little longer, until their fellow servants and their brethren, who are about to be killed as they were, might be made complete" (Rev. 6:11, literal translation).

The fact that they are to rest a "little longer" indicates that this is a pre-advent heavenly judgment. (Compare Dan. 7:9-14, 22.) The living brethren of the dead martyrs are judged and, if found clothed with the garment of Christ's righteousness (Rev. 19:7, 8), are sealed with the end-time seal of God (Rev. 7:1-3; 14:1-4). Thus they are made "complete" spiritually and ready to meet their Lord.

The answer to Job's question is that the Lord does have set times for judgment. (See Acts 17:31; Eccl. 12:14.) Even though God's wrath is presently "being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men" (Rom. 1:18, NIV), there is a pre-advent judgment in which the heavenly court passes final verdicts and decides ultimate sentences for professed believers.

Job's conclusion was wrong that "God charges no one with wrongdoing" (Job 24:12, NIV). Those whose names have been excluded from the book of life (Rev. 3:5) are judged during the millennium (Rev. 20:4) and finally destroyed (verses 7-9).

Note the cruel acts practiced by the wicked. Job 24:2-12. What similar acts are practiced today?

Verses 12-24 underline that the time will come when the wicked will be rewarded for their evil deeds.

What reasons can you see for the heavenly pre-advent judgment?

BILDAD STATES THAT PEOPLE CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD (Job 25).

Bildad's shallow perception of truth becomes apparent in verses 4-6. How sad to believe that humans are nothing but worms! Jesus humbled Himself to be made "a little while lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9, NASB). Thus He gave dignity to human creation. It is our precious privilege to "grow up into him in all things" (Eph. 4:15), "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, *attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*" (verse 13, NIV, italics supplied).

How would you answer Bildad's question: "How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?" (Job 25:4, NIV)?

The Hebrew of Bildad's question reads literally: "How can a man be justified with God? Or how can one who is born of a woman be pure?" Bildad correctly understood that a justified person is pure, or righteous. What he did not understand is that this state can be enjoyed by those who, by faith, receive the free gift of God's grace.

In the Bible, believers are often spoken of as righteous. Exodus 23:7 is correctly translated: "Do not kill the innocent and the *righteous*; for I will not justify the wicked" (italics supplied). Abel was righteous (Heb. 11:4); Noah was righteous (Gen 7:1; Heb. 11:7); Abraham was righteous (Gen. 15:6; 26:5; Rom. 4:11). But how? They were righteous by faith.

In what sense are believers in Christ righteous? The Greek of 1 John 2:29 translates literally: "If you know that He is righteous, you know also that every one who does righteousness has been born of Him." Then the ability to do righteousness results from the new-birth experience. "He who does right [the born-again believer in Christ] is *righteous*, as he [Christ] is righteous" (1 John 3:7, RSV, italics supplied). The Holy Spirit comes into the believer's heart and brings the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 8:9, 10). Righteousness within is Christ within by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Because of His presence the righteousness of Christ is counted for the believer.

If Bildad were right, would there be any hope for anyone to be saved? (See Matt. 25:46; Heb. 12:14.)

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 21-25 from other versions if available. Also restudy Psalm 22 and relate its message to the issues raised in the book of Job.

"In order to be candidates for heaven we must meet the requirement of the law: . . . (Luke 10:27). We can do this only as we grasp by faith the righteousness of Christ. By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 395.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A man who claims to be a justified believer regularly loses his temper with his wife and children. Would you accept his claim to justification? Why?
2. Job could have humbly given in to the accusations of his friends by admitting that his sins had caused his suffering. After all, he knew that he was a sinner. Do you think this line of least resistance was the obvious way to relieve himself of his friends' constant nagging?
3. A sister in your church who is a genuine Christian believer is impressed by Hebrews 12:14: "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (NIV). But she is distressed because, despite all her efforts, she does not feel holy. How would you help her?

SUMMARY: Job's questions indicate that God is willing for us to express the way we feel, and He wants us to come to a better understanding of Him. In Job's search for answers he correctly concluded that, even though in this life the wicked often prosper, they die like everyone else and are subject to ultimate punishment. Job's question about God's judgment is answered elsewhere in Scripture. God does, indeed, have times for judgment. But Job could not accept Bildad's contention that no one is righteous (justified, pure) in the sight of God. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

"I Hold Fast"



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 26-31.

MEMORY TEXT: "God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live" (Job 27:5, 6).

KEY THOUGHT: The Scriptures are the only true wisdom. We must continually learn the truth as God reveals it to us, and must be and do what the Scriptures reveal that God requires of us. The value of God's righteousness to us begins when we recognize our need of it and believe in God's willingness to bestow it freely upon us.

JOB'S CONCLUDING ARGUMENTS. Job agreed that the outer edges of God's ways are far beyond us (Job 26). In his continuing discourse (Job 27 and 28), he noted that the value and source of wisdom are concealed from all but those who know God (Job 28:20, 21, 23, 28). Job was certain of his integrity, of the ultimate destruction of the wicked, and of how to be wise—by fearing God and forsaking evil.

Job 29-31 summarizes Job's situation in the context of what he believed and practiced. He specifically spoke about God, about himself, and about people of differing age groups and stations in life. Throughout this monologue, Job yearned for his productive past, decried his ignominious present, and pleaded for God's answer.

JOB ACKNOWLEDGED THE POWER AND MAJESTY OF GOD (Job 26).

Read Job's response to Bildad in Job 26:1-3. Do you see these as simple questions or as a direct rebuke? What soul-searching questions did Job ask? Verse 4.

Whether Job asks, "How hast thou helped him that is without power?" (verse 2, KJV) or taunts, "What a help you are to the weak!" (NASB), the message is the same: Bildad's comments did not come from the Holy Spirit.

The remainder of chapter 26 reveals God's might and majesty.

Study the chart that follows to understand better the contrasts in the chapter:

Verse	One Truth	Verse	A Contrasting Truth
5	The buried dead cannot be seen by humans	6	Yet death and decay are seen by God
7	The heavens have no visible support	8	Yet clouds do not burst with their water
9	God's throne is hidden from us	10	Yet the horizon is visible
11, 12	He stirs up the sea and sky	13	But also calms them
14	These are paths of His ways	14	Yet who can understand His power?

Job 26 is both an unparalleled literary masterpiece and an enlightening declaration on the creative and sustaining power of God seen in the forces of the natural world and in the heavens.

What have you observed from nature about the power and majesty of God? "He who studies most deeply into the mysteries of nature will realize most fully his own ignorance and weakness. He will realize that there are depths and heights which he cannot reach, secrets which he cannot penetrate, vast fields of truth lying before him unentered."—*Education*, p. 133.

JOB MAINTAINS HIS INTEGRITY AND GOD'S (Job 27).

There are three parts to chapter 27. "In the first (vs. 1-6), Job maintains his integrity and his determination to remain faithful to the end. In the second (vs. 7-12), he denounces his enemies. In the third (vs. 13-23), he returns to the consideration of God's treatment of the wicked, and admits their ultimate punishment and destruction."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 568.

In what solemn way did Job preface his remarks? Job 27:2-4.

In verses 5 and 6 Job indicated that his spiritual and emotional restoration had reached the point at which he could affirm that his conscience was clear. He believed that God was on his side and that his friends' accusations were false.

Job, as well as Joseph, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Stephen, Paul, and John are "examples of human steadfastness [who] bear witness to the faithfulness of God's promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. They testify to the power of faith to withstand the powers of the world. It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest-tossed, that our Father is at the helm."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 575.

What did Job tell his friends that they already had the opportunity of knowing? Job 27:7-23.

Both Job and Moses (see Deut. 28:20) speak of the law of cause and effect operating over time. Job used excerpts clipped from the speeches of his friends to tell the truth about what eventually will happen to the wicked (see Job 27:13). Job here contrasted the sad reality of the downward slide of the wicked over time with the diligent search for wisdom that chapter 28 summarizes as fearing God and shunning evil.

When brainwashing attempts are used to convict you of guilt when you are innocent, how can you resist the temptation to falsely admit guilt to save yourself from further pain?

A POEM PRAISING THE SOURCE OF WISDOM (Job 28).

True wisdom is not new. Wisdom is portrayed as testifying, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old" (Prov. 8:22). We should continually search the Scriptures (see Acts 17:10, 11), allowing the "Spirit of truth" to guide us (John 16:13).

Why did Job list the results of human skill in mining and agriculture in his meditation on wisdom (Job 28:1-19)?

The search for natural treasure illustrates the search for supernatural riches. But when we have found natural treasure we have not found wisdom. What a precious privilege it is to possess and use a copy of the Scriptures!

"We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. . . . We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 599.

Who or what does not know the source of wisdom? Job 28:20-22. Where does God tell us that wisdom can be found? Job 28:23-28.

Wisdom is found "in humbly receiving the revelation that He has been pleased to give, and in conforming the life to His will."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 431.

What element is added to wisdom that makes it practical? Job 28:28.

A companion view of Job 28 is found in Proverbs 1-9. These chapters repeat the fundamental truth that wisdom is found in fearing God and forsaking evil. Reception of wisdom leads to uprightness.

How does Job's experience illustrate that wisdom is much more than factual knowledge?

JOB YEARNS FOR 'THE GOOD OLD DAYS' (Job 29, 30).

Chapters 29 and 30 contrast what Job was and what he is. When he was prosperous he was loved and honored; now that he is afflicted he is despised and rejected.

What previous experience with God and humanity did Job want repeated? Job 29:1-11.

In the prime of his life, Job felt abundantly blessed by God. His path earlier had been "washed with milk" (verse 6, RSV); it was full and rich. This indicates that there was a time when Job prospered (TLB). Notice that, in the midst of pain, what Job wanted most can be summarized as close social relationships: "God's intimate friendship" (verse 4, NIV) and his children around him (verse 5).

Read Job 29:12-17, and note how the characteristics of a good Christian leader are outlined: (1) Leadership begins with an effective relationship between what one is and what one does, (2) servant leadership is based on using God's gifts to meet others' needs, and (3) true leadership centers in justice and mercy.

"God requires that His people should not allow" oppression, and those who cause stumbling "should be brought to justice."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 519.

These verses speak specifically of Job's community services. It is his missionary report on helping the poor, orphans, widows, and blind and handicapped persons. It is our duty to emulate Job. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 530.)

By contrast with the past, how was Job being treated in the present? Job 30:1-15. From what two kinds of pain did he seem to suffer? Job 30:16-18.

Note that Job felt that God was causing his distress (Job 30:20-31). Depression and physical pain were like a tight collar that choked him both day and night.

Even though faithful to God, Job thought he was cursed. Were his trials a curse or a blessing? How would you support your answer from Scripture? How has your capacity to serve others been strengthened by life's trials?

JOB ATTESTS HIS PURITY (Job 31).

Chapter 31 could be titled "If . . . then . . ." Job considered the unthinkable, and "if" it were true, he was willing "then" to pronounce sentence on himself. Job was judging himself as Christians are exhorted to do in 1 Corinthians 11:31, 32.

"In this chapter he [Job] outlines the principles that regulate his private conduct. These principles may be outlined as follows: (1) chastity (vs. 1-4), (2) seriousness and sincerity (vs. 5, 6), (3) uprightness and purity (vs. 7, 8), (4) fidelity to the marriage vow (vs. 9-12), (5) fidelity to his servants (vs. 13-15), (6) benevolence toward the helpless (vs. 16-23), (7) freedom from covetousness and idolatry (vs. 24-28), (8) kindness to his enemies (vs. 29, 30), (9) hospitality (vs. 31, 32), (10) freedom from secret sins (vs. 33-37), (11) honesty in matters regarding property (vs. 38-40). . . . [This chapter] is unexcelled as an example of lofty idealism."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 580.

What plea did Job repeat? Why? Job 31:35-37.

These verses break up the pattern of Job's presentation. They seem to be parenthetical. Once again Job appealed to God as Judge. Verse 35 may be translated: "O that I had someone to give me a hearing; O that Shaddai [God almighty] would reply to my writ, or my accuser draw up a true bill!" (JPS). Job had his signed defense ready. His great longing was to have a declaration of innocence from God.

How did Job conclude his argument? Job 31:38-40.

Job's tragic experience began as the destroyer touched his farm, his workplace, his family, and finally his person. It would end with God restoring to him more than he had lost (Job 42:10, 12). Job ended his argument with a farmer's reality: if he had done wrong or neglected to do right the thistles and weeds would demonstrate that fact.

Have you ever speculated as Job did? If you had made other choices in life, what would be your circumstances now? Can you claim to have always made the right choice?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 25-28 in a different version. Search further in the book of Proverbs for the practical meaning of wisdom. Read "The Scriptures a Safeguard" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593-602.

Read Job 29:7-25 and Proverbs 31:10-31. Compare Job's and the wise woman's diligence in productive, nurturing behaviors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The crucial questions: In what areas of your life do you need to heed the counsel and wisdom of God? How can you allow more time in your daily schedule to listen to Him?
2. Job's friends put him in the position of having to justify his past manner of life. What dangers do you see in attempted self-justification?

SUMMARY: Like Job, we can "hold fast" our innocence in the face of disaster if our lives do not reproach us. As we become more Christlike we will emulate Job by tenderly caring for the needy, working in practical ways to alleviate human suffering.

The price of a soul
is not expensive.
It's priceless!



Far Eastern Division
June 26

"Perfect in Knowledge"



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 32-37.

MEMORY TEXT: "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?" (Job 37:16).

KEY THOUGHT: God alone has perfect knowledge. That is why He alone is capable of judging our standing before Him. Humans are prone to judge by appearances and to criticize others for what they dislike most in themselves. We need to leave judgment to God.

ELIHU ATTEMPTS AN ANSWER. To young Elihu, Job's three friends were "very old" (Job 32:6). He became more and more angry over their failure to see the point. When they finally ran out of words, he broke in to try to set them right. Elihu first explained why he felt it necessary to say something and what he hoped to accomplish (chapter 32). Then he tried to allay Job's fears (chapter 33) and to vindicate God (chapters 34-37).

Elihu contended that suffering is used by God to prevent human beings from falling into sin and destruction. Elihu argued that Job was saved from a worse fate by the calamity and illness brought by God. Elihu was partly correct, but not entirely so. We know that God was testing Job, but we are not told that his suffering was a preventive measure. Nor are we told that God caused Job's suffering. Elihu was closer to the truth than his associates, but, despite his great self-confidence, joined them in darkening counsel by words (Job 38:2).

ELIHU EXPLAINS HIS SILENCE AND PRESENTS HIS PHILOSOPHY (Job 32, 33).

Elihu was the son of Barachel the Buzite. The Buzites were descendants of Abraham's brother Nahor. (See Genesis 22:20, 21.)

Why had Elihu listened without speaking? What prompted him to join the argument? Job 32:4-15.

Elihu made it clear that, although he felt understanding had been given him by the Spirit of God (Job 32:8, 18), he was about to express his own opinion (Job 32:17). As did Job's other friends, Elihu mingled divinely revealed truths with personal applications to Job that are seriously open to question. Job had not said, "I am pure, and there is no iniquity in me" (Job 33:9, RSV). He had said that his just life, lived in faithfulness to God, did not warrant the suffering God had brought upon him.

What two main ways did Elihu indicate are used by God to keep back the soul of mankind "from the pit" (Job 33:18)? Job 33:14-22.

God warns that ruin will follow our continuing in a sinful course. The Lord is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) and Paul (Acts 26) each responded to God's warnings, punishment, and invitation. They changed course. Elihu was correct in saying that suffering can be disciplinary, but he was wrong in assuming that it was so in Job's case.

The need of a heavenly Mediator. Elihu had some understanding of the need for a Saviour and Mediator (Job 33:23-28; compare *Education*, p. 115). Understanding of this truth has expanded with the passage of centuries. Daniel saw "one like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13, RSV) interceding for mankind in the heavenly pre-advent judgment. But the full bloom of this truth became apparent only after the ascension of Jesus. (See Heb. 7:25; 8:1, 2; 1 John 2:1, 2; 1 Tim. 2:5.)

Describe the work of the Mediator throughout history and in the pre-advent judgment. What does the Mediator do for you?

ELIHU ENDEAVORS TO VINDICATE GOD (Job 34).

Elihu was not only young; he was arrogant. Yet some of his advice is worth heeding. He suggested that those listening to him should use spiritual discrimination that would enable them to sense the correctness of his viewpoint.

But Elihu misrepresented Job (verses 5-9). He identified Job with evildoers and attacked him for saying what he had not said—that there is no reward for right doing. How often we misrepresent people's words and acts and then attack them for what we think their position is!

What truths did Elihu state about God in Job 34:10-15?

What biblical principle illuminates Elihu's statement in Job 34:16-20? Lev. 19:15; Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6.

Job 34:2-15 was addressed to the "wise men." But beginning with verse 16, Elihu addresses Job directly. God cannot hate the right or love the wrong. Beginning with verse 21 Elihu "appeals to the omniscience of God as a guarantee that He will act justly. God knows each man's ability, disposition, circumstances, and temptations. He will not make the mistake of placing undue affliction upon man."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 589.

What four statements did Elihu suggest as expressing the ideal reaction to suffering? Job 34:31, 32.

For a young man who was angry at those who condemned without cause (Job 32:3) and whose words were going to "be of the uprightness of . . . [his] heart" (Job 33:3), Elihu is a disappointment. His harsh words in Job 34:33-37 must have hurt. His criticism helps us understand why "severity and fault-finding must be rebuked as the workings of Satan."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 609. The apostle Paul wrote that "at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things" (Rom. 2:1, NIV). What Elihu saw in Job, we see in Elihu.

Has anyone, in an attempt to help you, left you hurting more seriously than before they made the attempt? How can you avoid treating someone else similarly?

ELIHU CHALLENGES JOB'S POSITION (Job 35).

Again Elihu misquoted Job. Job 35:2 may be translated: "Do you think this to be right, that you said, I am more just than God?" Job had not claimed that his righteousness exceeded God's.

Elihu did not agree with Job's statement that a righteous person may suffer as much as a sinner. But in attacking this position (verse 3) he implied that Job was saying that the righteous have no ultimate advantage over the wicked. This was a distortion of Job's position.

Job was not the only servant of God to have his statements distorted. Paul was accused constantly of taking positions that he did not hold. (For example: Acts 21:28.) Even Jesus' words were distorted by His accusers. (See Matt. 26:61.) Since he used it to distort God's position to Eve in the Garden of Eden, this tactic has been one of Satan's favorite devices. Can you recall a recent example of Satan's using the critics of God's church and its leaders to distort their position?

The object of Elihu's statement in verse 5 "is to show that God is so great that He cannot be affected by human conduct. The greatness of God is illustrated by the loftiness and grandeur of the heavens and the clouds."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 591.

What are the implications of Elihu's questions in Job 35:6-8?

"Since God is so exalted, how could a mere human being accomplish anything *against him* (cf. 11:8; 22:12-13)? No person can affect God, not even by multiplying his sins. . . . Conversely one's righteous character cannot be presented as a gift to God. No amount of good works benefits God or puts him under obligation to anybody (cf. 22:2-3). . . . 'But human deeds for good or ill work out their consequences in society. . . . Elihu's argument is not that moral deeds have no spiritual significance, but rather that they cannot be used to persuade or compel God.'—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, pp. 465, 466. (Compare Rom. 3:20-26; Gal. 2:16.)

What false assumptions led Elihu to conclude that Job had no just cause for complaint? Job 35:9-16.

ELIHU APPEALS TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD (Job 36).

Elihu claimed perfect knowledge (Job 36:1-4). His simplistic comments hurt Job because of their lack of understanding of Job's true position. Elihu attempted to "speak on God's behalf" (Job 36:2). But "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and Elihu did not demonstrate much love.

Consider the extent to which each of the following statements from Job 36:5-15 is true.

Verses	Statement
6	God does not preserve the life of the wicked.
7-10	Affliction overtakes the righteous in order to make them willing to learn and to listen to God.
11, 12	Our prosperity depends on our repentance and obedience to God.
13, 14	The godless die early.
15	Ears that had been deaf to the sound of God's voice become sensitive as the result of adversity.

The cause of what happens to us may be outside our control. People can mistreat the innocent. (See Heb. 11:35-40; 1 Peter 3:13, 14; 4:15, 16.) Job did not deserve what was happening to him. Elihu's rebuke recorded in Job 36:16-19 demonstrated again that he was unaware of the true cause of Job's suffering.

"The Bible teaches us that pain is not an unmitigated tragedy to be avoided at all costs. The Bible describes a Lord who taught us how to suffer as well as to rejoice. The Bible does not promise us freedom from suffering, but it says, 'Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer.' Revelation 2:10, K.J.V.

"The gospel of Jesus imparts to the believer an endurance, a resiliency, a hope that enables him to meet the tragedies and annoyances of life with calm faith. Although Elihu correctly described suffering as a discipline, he did not understand the cause of human suffering."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, p. 74.

What advice did Elihu give, and what truths did he state?
Job 36:20-33.

GOD'S PERFECT WORKS (Job 37).

From his description of how nature demonstrates the power and control of God, what inferences did Elihu draw regarding Job's attitude toward God? Job 37:6-23.

Elihu's comments about nature emphasize the power of God but do not emphasize His loving relationship with that which He has created. One of the grandest contrasts between the Lord's speech in Job 38-41 and Elihu's is that, although Elihu is correct about the power and majesty of God, the Lord goes further by inviting us to consider the exquisite relationships in the world around us.

Yet Elihu's speech "prepares Job to abandon his avowal of innocence in an act of full submission to God as his Lord. He enjoins Job to realize that the proper human response to a display of God's splendor is the fear of God (37:21-24)."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 485.

What is the special relevance of Elihu's statements recorded in Job 37:23, 24?

"The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power and justice, and abundant righteousness he will not violate" (Job 37:23, RSV). God reveals Himself to those who by faith accept Christ as Saviour and Lord. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7). But Jesus said: "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, *and he to whom the Son will reveal him*" (Luke 10:22, italics supplied). Paul added: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:10). Our God, who is perfect in righteousness, bestows Himself by the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the one who accepts Christ by faith (Rom. 8:9, 10).

The JPS translation renders Job 37:24: "Therefore, men are in awe of Him whom none of the wise can perceive." The divine advice still is, "Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:16) or "estimation" (NASB). The Lord's comment about the one who "darkens counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2, RSV) can be applied to Elihu—and to all who can only partially understand the truth about God.

Summarize for yourself the great truths of which Elihu seemed to be ignorant.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 32-37 in another version at one sitting and attempt to feel the impact of Elihu's words. Meditate about individual independence as you read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 163, 164. If you have a copy available, try to experience the value of "The Knowledge Received Through God's Word" by reading *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 458-466. Also read about William Miller's Bible-study methods in the first part of the chapter entitled "An American Reformer" in *The Great Controversy*, pages 317-321.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How limited is your knowledge of God and His ways? Do you have a loving, edifying fellowship with Christ that enables you to understand better what God reveals? Do you continually ask the Lord for knowledge and constantly seek His understanding?
2. What similarities and differences have you observed between Elihu's answer to Job and the answers given by the other three friends?
3. Elihu said to Job: "Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, for this you have chosen rather than affliction" (Job 36:21, RSV). Was that fair and factual? Why is a judgmental spirit always dangerous to the spiritual life of the one who judges? Why is this spirit so damaging to human relationships?

SUMMARY: Because perfect or complete knowledge is far beyond any human, we should never deprecate one another. All of us still need to learn much about heaven's wisdom. We must apply what we learn in a practical, personal way to our day-by-day experience. Only in that way will we be able to retain the benefits of our learning experience and be able to share our insights with those who are hurting.

"Where Were You?"



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 38-41.

MEMORY TEXT: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding" (Job 38:4).

KEY THOUGHT: Created relationships testify to God's care. The Creator wants us to understand His sovereignty, our beginnings, and the far-reaching relationships of His created systems, including His great love for us.

THE LORD ANSWERS JOB. "The words and works of the Lord harmonize. His words are gracious and His works bountiful."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1151. God's speeches reveal the value He places on origins and relationships. In effect He was saying to Job: "Because I created this universe, including the world with all its forms of life, and because I rule over all and control the relationships that exist among living creatures, why should you doubt My capacity to control the affairs of your life? Why should you, with your limited vision, question the justice of My dealings?"

An individual's "unaided reason can explain nothing in the deep things of God, nor can he understand the spiritual lessons that God has placed in the material world. But reason is a gift of God, and His Spirit will aid those who are willing to be taught."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 423. As Job was willing to learn, we should be too. (See Job 42:5, 6.)

THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE REVEALS GOD (Job 38:1-38).

When the Lord answered Job, He did not directly explain why Job had been called upon to suffer. He wanted Job to understand that his greatest need was a more trusting relationship with Himself. He pointed Job to the book of nature as a means of revelation. Because Job lived before the first Bible book was written, there was yet no written revelation to point to.

The Lord spoke to Job "out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1; 40:6). "To Job the thunder and lightning of God's judgments were being directed at him. The storm image dramatized the fears and uncertainties that had plagued Job's life.

"But now the voice of God is heard above the rolling thunder. At last, thinks Job, he is to hear the answer to his question. Eagerly he looks heavenward."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, p. 76.

What questions did God first direct to Job that demonstrate the folly of those who question God's work of Creation? Job 38:2-7.

In Job's crisis, the Lord carried his mind to the genesis of all things, to origins. God did not begin by discussing with Job his present condition and its admitted confusion. Nor does God begin there with us. In the light of Creation, truth and error, right and wrong, wisdom and ignorance, can be distinguished. God wanted Job and his friends to realize how limited was their knowledge of God.

What two aspects of God's power are revealed by sea and sky? Job 38:8-11; compare Gen. 1:9, 10; Isa. 11:9.

Not only did God create the sea and sky but He also controls them. "While Satan is constantly devising evil, the Lord our God overrules all, so that it will not harm His obedient, trusting children. The same power that controls the boisterous waves of the ocean can hold in check all the power of rebellion and of crime. God says to one as to the other, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.' "—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1141.

What do you think would increase your faith in God's control over His creation and over the affairs of your life?

GOD'S CONTROL OF NATURE AND HUMANITY (Job 38:12-38).

What relationship can you see between sunrise and the way God reveals Himself to people? Job 38:12-15.

"At dawn the *wicked*, who love darkness, flee into hiding (cf. 24:13-17). The sun eclipses the *light* of the wicked, i.e., it deprives them of the good fortune and protection night offers them. The sun's rays prevent them from pursuing their evil designs. . . .

"These verses speak directly to Job's concern that the wicked prosper unchecked (chs. 21, 24). Yahweh counters Job's complaint with the position that his own command of the light confines the work of the wicked. . . . Although God grants a measure of freedom to mankind, the wicked never move outside his control."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, p. 497.

God challenged Job to explore and explain earthly elements. The unseen springs and "recesses of the deep" (verse 16, RSV) burst open at the Flood and cleansed the earth of wickedness. (See Gen. 8:2.) The unrecognized opening to the "gates of death" (Job 38:17, RSV), the unperceived beginnings of disease and eventual death elude the wisest scientist.

We may understand more about weather today than did the people of Job's day (Job 38:22-30), but much in this area of science still remains a mystery.

Read Job 38:31-38. The "chains of the Pleiades" (verse 31, RSV) may refer to the "chains" of gravity that bind this constellation together. By contrast, the stars that form the constellation Orion are traveling in different directions at great velocity. The Hebrew word *mazzaroth* (verse 32) may refer to the 12 constellations of the Zodiac. "Arcturus" here may refer to the constellation Ursa Major. God created the natural forces that control these bodies.

Although it appears that Satan uses weather to serve his purpose of destruction, the great Ruler of the universe has overriding control.

Even though the events of the natural world are ultimately under God's control and restraint, why is it incorrect to assume that they will always be favorable for Christian believers?

ANIMAL CREATION REVEALS GOD (Job 38:39–39:30).

In the remainder of chapter 38 and in all of chapter 39, God shifted His questions from the inanimate world to the animate.

"Job 39 to 41 is a mind-boggling revelation of God's care for His creatures. Nothing that science has learned since Job's day has detracted from this wonderful description of how the great Life-giver looks after His creation. In fact, as science continues to unveil the complexities of life, the miracle of divine care becomes more impressive."—Norval Pease, *Saint Under Stress*, p. 79.

As you study Job 38:39–41, what similarities do you see between the lion and raven, their young, and their food?

"Divinely implanted instincts lead the animals to do what it would be difficult or impossible for man to do."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 601.

Read Job 39:1–12. Apparently in Job's day the gestation period of animals like the wild goat was not known. Much about the habits of wild animals is not fully understood today. The term translated "unicorn" may be a reference to a wild ox.

What honored relationship is the ostrich incapable of accepting? At what does it excel? Job 39:13–18.

Every parent would do well to answer the question asked: "The wings of the ostrich wave proudly; but are they the pinions and plumage of love?" (verse 13, RSV). Of what value is it that she lifts herself to run or flee, yet is deprived of wisdom and has "no share in understanding" (verses 17, 18, RSV) or good sense?

What lessons did God draw from the contrasting figures of the war horse and the hawk? Job 39:19–30.

What do each of the Lord's descriptions of animals say to you about people and their relationships to one another and to Him? Why did God draw so much attention to animal creation when He answered Job? (Read Matt. 6:26.)

GOD DIALOGUES WITH JOB (Job 40:1-14).

These verses "mark a brief interlude in God's address to Job. It seems as if God is giving Job an opportunity to make a complete surrender at this point. . . . Job had expressed himself as anxious to argue his case with God. . . . Now, after God has given a new revelation of His wisdom, Job is asked whether he still feels himself qualified to be the plaintiff in a case against God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 605.

What do you make out of Job's response in Job 40:3-5?

"Although Job has been vexed that his misfortune has discredited his prestige (cf. 19:9; 29:20), he defers his personal honor to Yahweh's greater honor. He concedes that he is in no position to answer Yahweh. . . .

"While he does not wish to take up a new line of argument or to introduce other matters, he does not yet renounce the position he has taken *once*, yea even *twice* (cf. 33:14). He is saying that he continues to stand behind his avowal of innocence. However, the fact that he does not want to *add* to his case shows that he feels the impact of Yahweh's speech. His confidence of winning a debate with Yahweh has greatly diminished before the power of God's presence. But given this response from Job it will be necessary for Yahweh to continue his discourse to persuade Job to submit completely to his lordship."—John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, pp. 517, 518.

What straightforward questions and comments did the Lord next ask Job? How would you have answered? Job 40:6-14.

God reminded Job that it was foolish for him to reprove God, because he could not possibly understand what God understands or act as God acts. For Job to assert his innocence by contrast with the apparent injustice of God evidenced self-righteous pride (verse 8). Job had complained that the wicked prosper unpunished and unchecked. (See Job 21:30-33; 24:1-17.) God's answer was to challenge Job to exercise lordship and punish them (Job 40:9-14).

What cure for self-righteousness does the Bible offer?

BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN REVEAL GOD (Job 40:15-41:34).

The Hebrew word for *behemoth* is a plural form of a word for four-footed beasts and cattle. The plural form indicates "a large beast, the brute beast *par excellence*."—R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 93. Most commentators believe that it refers to the hippopotamus.

What can God do with behemoth that human beings cannot do? Job 40:19.

"Only his Maker can draw the sword against him" (JPS). Contrary to the mythical idea, God did not have to destroy behemoth to gain control over chaos. God created him and is well able to control him completely. For Job to enter successfully into contention with God he would first have to demonstrate his control over behemoth—an impossibility.

In what way did "leviathan" intimidate human beings? Job 41:1-8.

"With both the animate and the inanimate creation—with leaf and flower and tree, and with every living creature, from the leviathan of the waters to the mote in the sunbeam—the dwellers in Eden held converse, gathering from each the secrets of its life."—*Education*, p. 21.

"Leviathan" and other creatures of the "great and wide sea" (Ps. 104:25, 26) were to "look to . . . [God], to give them their food" (verse 27, RSV). But after sin came, the leviathan known to Job and his contemporaries was no pet. The description here makes many commentators believe that leviathan is the crocodile.

As with behemoth so with leviathan: "Any hope of subduing him is false" (Job 41:9, NIV). Note how leviathan incites fear (Job 41:12-34).

Verse 10 contains the point of the whole argument. "No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me?" (NIV). If Job could not resist a creature of God's hand, how could he stand against God?

If God can control leviathan, He is well able to control the affairs of our lives and restrain the evil forces that torment us.

FURTHER STUDY: Compare Job 38-41 with Psalm 104. Also evaluate the theory of evolution in the light of God's revelation in these chapters and 2 Peter 3:3-7.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Some people contend that there are sins in their lives that cannot be completely eliminated. How does God's message to Job in chapters 40 and 41 answer that contention?
2. Job 40:14 indicates that your "own right hand" cannot save you. Then what does save you? (See Eph. 2:8-10.)
 - a. Share an experience that illustrates your inability to save yourself.
 - b. Think of situations that could possibly arise for you this week. How can Ephesians 2:8-10 apply to your life this week?
 - c. How can you share with someone this week the truth that only Christ can save us?

SUMMARY: God questioned Job, as He does the scoffers of today, about nature's origins and how they demonstrate His power and majesty. God's control and direction of animate and inanimate nature prove His ability to control and direct our lives and His infinite capacity to restrain the forces of evil that threaten to destroy our fellowship with Him.

"Mine Eye Seeth Thee"



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 42.

MEMORY TEXT: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

KEY THOUGHT: True repentance precedes vindication and restoration. It results from the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin and His revelation of who God is and how He operates.

JOB'S PRAYERS: What sort of prayers was Job praying before his terrible ordeal began? From Job 1:5 we learn that he prayed intensely for his children. How were his prayers answered? His children were all killed in a storm.

Job must also have remembered his wife's spiritual development in his prayers. But Mrs. Job urged her husband to curse God and die. Undoubtedly Job prayed for his friends and neighbors, as well. But they were so critical that the term *Job's comforters* has become proverbial.

Job prayed for himself. Yet it must have seemed to him that the more he prayed, the worse things became. But Job did not give up praying. His extraordinary faith shines through. (See Job 13:15; 19:25.)

The conclusion of Job's story demonstrates two major points: (1) Job kept on praying in spite of the fact that his prayers did not seem to be working. (2) His prayers were answered in the end with greater blessings than he could have anticipated.

JOB SUBMITS HIMSELF TO GOD (Job 42:1-5).

After his remarkable revelation from God, Job's recognition of how much God cared for him and how great God is resulted in the confession of verses 2-6.

What did Job acknowledge in verse 2 before he repeated God's challenge to him in verses 3 and 4? What was different in the way Job now related to God as compared to his relationship with God before his trying experience? Job 42:5.

Job recognized that his attitude toward God was mistaken and that his understanding of God's power had been too limited. He repeated the questions that God had asked him in Job 38:2, 3. He was now ready to answer God's challenge because he now understood God much better.

"The most important lesson of the book of Job is found in this text [Job 42:5]. In this statement Job reveals the transition from a religious experience shaped by tradition to an experience based on personal communion with God. According to the tradition in which he had been reared, the righteous were not supposed to suffer. From his youth up Job had *heard* that God would deliver the righteous from all evil in this present life. But when he met suffering he was thrown into confusion, because it was contrary to what he had *heard* about God. His confusion was augmented by the attitude of his friends. Now Job has *seen* God. He knows that God possesses infinite power and graciousness, and he also knows that, even though he may suffer, he is God's child. God has made no attempt to explain to him *why* he suffers, but he is convinced that, whatever the reason, he need have no misgivings.

"Job's experience has taught him the meaning of faith. His vision of God has enabled him to surrender to the divine will. His commitment to God is now unaffected by his circumstances. He no longer expects temporal blessings as an evidence of Heaven's favor. His relationship to God is now on a firmer, more dependable basis than before. Job found a solution to his problems when he discovered that God was not limited by the traditions men had developed concerning Him."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 610.

How can we develop trust in God whatever life's circumstances?

JOB'S REPENTANCE (Job 42:6).

What was Job now able to do? Job 42:6.

"God takes the case of Job in hand Himself. His [Job's] patience has been severely taxed; but when God speaks, all his pettish feelings are changed. The self-justification which he felt was necessary to withstand the condemnation of his friends is not necessary toward God. He never misjudges; He never errs. Says the Lord to Job, 'Gird up now thy loins like a man'; and Job no sooner hears the divine voice than his soul is bowed down with a sense of his sinfulness, and he says before God, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 509.

Compare Job's repentance with other Bible examples. Isa. 6:5; Matt. 27:4-8; Luke 5:8.

In the cases of Isaiah and Peter "the manifestation of God achieved what no argument based on human tradition could accomplish."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 611. But Jesus "knew that Judas did not repent; his confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a looking for of judgment, but he felt no deep, heartbreaking grief that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 722.

What is involved in true repentance? 2 Chron. 7:14; Isa. 55:7; 2 Cor. 7:9-11.

True repentance is genuine sorrow for the sin itself, not merely for sin's consequences. True sorrow for the past is accompanied by turning away from the sinful habits and practices of the past. Job sorrowed for and turned away from self-justification that implied doubt of God's justice. Such repentance is God's gift to the willing, believing heart. (See Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25.)

Do you pray daily for genuine repentance? When forgiven, we are not to live in a constant state of mourning for our past sins. But we must constantly turn away from sin by allowing the Lord to control our minds.

GOD VINDICATES JOB BEFORE HIS FRIENDS (Job 42:7-9).

The fact that the Lord addressed Eliphaz indicates that he was the leader of the group.

What comparison did God make between the words of the three friends and Job's words? Job 42:7.

Job had been wrong in attitude, but right in confidence in God. His friends had been wrong in both. They assumed that the traditional doctrine of double retribution was correct—that God always prospers the righteous in this life and punishes the wicked. Their counsel to Job would have involved him in the selfish attempt to regain prosperity by admitting and repenting of personal sin that was supposed to have resulted in his affliction. This attempt would have implied that God had caused the affliction of a righteous man—a serious impeachment of His justice. Neither Job nor his friends recognized Satan's role in causing affliction, but Job retained his faith in the absolute justice of God, even though he could not understand His dealings.

For whom and by whom was a burnt offering to be made? Job 42:8, 9.

God wanted the three friends to learn the lesson of compassion and humility. Job was to be their intercessor for repentance and salvation.

"Everyone who has been free to condemn or discourage, will in his own experience be brought over the ground where he has caused others to pass; he will feel what they have suffered because of his want of sympathy and tenderness.

"It is the love of God toward us that has decreed this. He would lead us to abhor our own hardness of heart and to open our hearts to let Jesus abide in them. And thus, out of evil, good is brought, and what appeared a curse becomes a blessing. The standard of the golden rule is the true standard of Christianity; anything short of it is a deception."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 136, 137.

What distinction do you see between recognizing and exposing falsehoods, and condemning the individuals who teach them? How can we do the one and avoid the other?

JOB'S FORTUNE IS DOUBLED (Job 42:10-17).

What particular activity led to the end of Job's suffering? Job 42:10.

Job's prayers were now based on a more realistic confidence in and understanding of God. He apparently came to the conclusion that he could not blame his friends for reacting unfairly and unkindly when his own understandings and conceptions of God had not been entirely without fault. With compassion he prayed for them.

"Let us strive to walk in the light as Christ is in the light. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed, not only for himself, but for those who were opposing him. When he felt earnestly desirous that the souls that had trespassed against him might be helped, he himself received help. Let us pray, not only for ourselves, but for those who have hurt us, and are continuing to hurt us. Pray, pray, especially in your mind. Give not the Lord rest; for His ears are open to hear sincere, importunate prayers, when the soul is humbled before Him."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1141.

Job's relatives accepted him again and revisited him (Job 42:11). "Job's kindred had forgotten, forsaken, and turned against him (ch. 19:13, 14, 19). Now that his fortunes have been reversed, they come to help him celebrate. They seemed unwilling to risk their sympathy until they had evidence that things were coming out all right. In this trait they reflect a common human failing."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 611.

What can we learn about God's love and care as we study the record of how things turned out for Job after his severe trial? Job 42:12-17.

"By his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was.... 'So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.' "—*Education*, p. 156.

In what ways can suffering be a blessing? Is it fair that we should suffer since we had no choice but to live in a world of sin?

JOB'S SUFFERING HELPS US UNDERSTAND GOD'S SUFFERING (Isa. 52:13–53:12).

When God allowed Satan to cause Job to suffer, God knew that He would suffer with Job. God feels the pain of every sufferer. When He allowed sin to come into the world, He accepted the price of redeeming sinners.

How intense was the Messiah's suffering? Isa. 52:14. What was the cause of His suffering? Isa. 53:3–6.

Jesus' disciples "saw His face marked with the bloody sweat of agony, and they were filled with fear. His anguish of mind they could not understand. 'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' Isa. 52:14."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 690.

"Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted as a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. . . . But now, with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

Why did both Father and Son take satisfaction in Christ's travail upon the cross? Isa. 53:7–12.

"Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours, He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. . . . By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.

His victory is ours if we believe (Acts 16:31). His death assures believers of eternal life (John 3:36). He invites us to bear His cross after Him, overcoming sin and serving others through His power (Rev. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:12).

FURTHER STUDY: Read Job 42 in other versions if available. In order to appreciate how much Jesus suffered for us, read Matthew 26:36–27:50 and John 18:1–19:30, preferably at one sitting.

"Jesus here [Matt. 25:41–46] identifies Himself with His suffering people. It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was naked. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. When you were enjoying the food from your bountifully-spread tables, I was famishing in the hovel or street not far from you. When you closed your doors against Me, while your well-furnished rooms were unoccupied, I had not where to lay My head. Your wardrobes were filled with an abundant supply of changeable suits of apparel, upon which means had been needlessly squandered, which you might have given to the needy. I was destitute of comfortable apparel. When you were enjoying health, I was sick. Misfortune cast Me into prison and bound Me with fetters, bowing down My spirit, depriving Me of freedom and hope, while you roamed free. . . . Mark, selfish Christian: every neglect of the needy poor, the orphan, the fatherless, is a neglect of Jesus in their person."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 25, 26.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What new or broader truths have you learned from the book of Job? What do you understand about God that you did not understand as clearly before beginning this study?
2. What do you perceive more clearly about saving grace as a result of your own experience with suffering?
3. Does everything always turn out right and best in this life? Should we expect it to? If not, will it turn out right ultimately? Why?

SUMMARY: The book of Job presents sound theology, biology, psychology, and sociology. As history, drama, epic, play, the inspired revelation in the book of Job presents the breadth and depth of good and evil. It is incomprehensible without a trusting relationship between a perfect God and those who serve Him. But once we grasp the truth about God and see the accuser at work behind the scenes, we can make more sense out of suffering and trials and can look forward eagerly to the time when all wrongs will be made forever right.

Lessons for Third Quarter, 1993

First Lesson: The World of Timothy and Titus.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; Titus 1:4.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Timothy 1:2.

The apostle Paul deeply loved two of his sons in the faith. He is concerned for their spiritual well-being and their faithfulness to the divine calling. Who were these young ministers? What was the climate in their churches? What relevance do Paul's words to them have for us today?

OUTLINE:

- I. The Author of 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).
- II. Timothy, Paul's Son in the Faith (1 Tim. 1:2).
- III. Rich Blessings for Believers (1 Tim. 1:2).
- IV. The Church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3).
- V. Paul's Circumstances (1 Tim. 1:3).

Second Lesson: Teach Sound Doctrine

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 1:3-11

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Timothy 1:5, RSV.

False doctrine destroys Christian love between believers and leads them away from faithful conformity to the law of God.

OUTLINE:

- I. Timothy's Challenge in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3).
- II. Teach the Truth.
- III. The Nature of the Ephesian Heresy (1 Tim. 1:4).
- IV. The Truth Edifies (1 Tim. 1:4, 5).
- V. The Purpose of the Law (1 Tim. 1:6-11).

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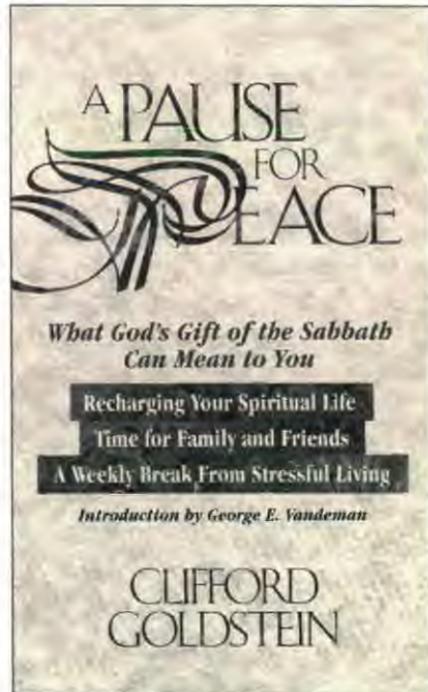
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FAR EASTERN DIVISION



Unions	Churches	Membership	Population
Bangladesh	68	8,227	116,600,000
Central Philippine	572	124,178	11,058,460
East Indonesia	456	63,111	17,045,943
Japan	106	12,994	123,609,000
Korean	503	102,422	64,623,401
Myanmar	141	14,277	42,125,998
North Philippine	1,065	160,868	33,930,660
South China Island	58	9,980	26,517,466
South Philippine	989	241,977	17,312,880
Southeast Asia	268	49,149	159,151,470
Sri Lanka	26	2,043	17,400,000
West Indonesia	452	64,485	164,354,057
Guam-Micronesia Mission	15	2,539	240,000
Totals June 30, 1991	4,717	856,230	793,967,355

Projects:

1. Micronesia Mission training center, Pohnpei
2. Global Mission, Kampuchea (Cambodia)
3. Development of Kitaura San-Iku Junior High School, Japan