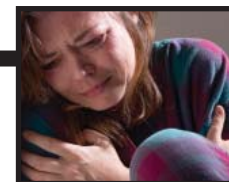


What makes this series so valuable is that each Bible event leads the reader or the group to discover the deepest truths of the Bible for themselves. This is done through insightful multiple choice questions which draw the readers to enter into the story and find for themselves its meanings and implications which they then can apply to their own lives.

The series is best “taught” by persons who encourage the group to do most of the talking and thinking. The teacher best acts as a leader in which the group discovers its way through the Scriptural events. The teacher may help the group when he or she believes that valuable truths have been overlooked, but the first discoverers should be members of the group itself. This stirs tremendous interest on the part of the group. This also relieves the teacher of the responsibility, under older systems of teaching, to carefully master all the truths of the text and present them in a way that would hopefully interest and “teach” the group.

Almost all teachers report that their classes or groups show much more interest than before and that teaching this series is much easier than it was under the older systems of teaching.

Individuals who use these lessons for their own personal study find this investigative method interesting and meaningful. The reader is invited to sense the drama of each story in his or her own Bible and be led to discern the spiritual truths that are packed into each story.



Where is GOD *When I Need Him?*

From the “Bible Events” Series

NATIONAL BIBLE READING
CAMPAIGN



CONTENTS

Event 1	When Things Get Tough	1
Event 2	When Will It End?	3
Event 3	Who Is To Blame?	5
Event 4	God's Help When We Want To Give Up	7
Event 5	How Do I Decide?	9
Event 6	Things Can Change	11

National Bible Reading Campaign

Church Starts International

P. O. Box 177

Henrietta, Texas 76365

billdavis@churchstarts.com

www.churchstarts.com

Materials Adapted from the Serendipity Bible

© 1998, 1996 by Serendipity House. Used by permission.

© 2003 Ted Lindwall

Where is GOD *When I Need Him?*

In every life, there are occasions of great perplexity, when no one but God can understand us and no one but God can meet our need. We may pray, but it may seem like God did not hear us and we are left wondering, "Where is God when I need Him?"

In the last words Jesus spoke on earth, he said, "***Look, I am with you always, even to the end of the world***" (Matthew 28:20). He assures us that he is always with those who are His and that He is in control of our lives. But we are impatient when our prayers are not answered immediately and our faith may begin to weaken. God said through one of His prophets, "***My ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts***" (Isaiah 55:8). The wonderful news is that His thoughts are better than ours, and His ways for us are better than ours.

Probably the best way to understand God's way of responding to our great needs is to enter into the life experiences of people in the past who faced the question and received God's answer to their needs. The Bible is full of the stories of men and women and young people who struggled with the question of how and when God would demonstrate His power and mercy in their lives. Six such life-histories are included in this series of studies, and they should help each one understand with more clarity, faith and blessing the answer to the question, "Where is God when I need Him?"

First Bible Event

WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH**Job 1:1-22**

My best friend died in a car wreck. My grandfather died of cancer. My sister's husband abandoned her and their children. God is supposed to be good and loving. How can He permit such things to happen?

We know that we must have hard experiences in life, but what can we do when it seems like everything goes wrong at once? The story of Job begins to answer that question.

JOB'S FIRST TEST

1. What impresses you about Job?

- ☐ his wealth
- ☐ his faith
- ☐ his religious observance
- ☐ his restraint
- ☐ his acceptance of loss

2. Had you been Job, how would you have reacted after all these losses?

- ☐ If any more messengers come, I'm not home!
- ☐ There is no God!
- ☐ If all can be lost so quickly I can't be attached to anything or anyone.
- ☐ The Lord gave and has taken away; may his name be praised.

3. How did Satan choose Job?

- ☐ Job posed the greatest challenge.
- ☐ Job would least expect trouble.
- ☐ God put Satan up to it.
- ☐ Job had the most to lose.
- ☐ God had the most to lose.

4. How did Job view his possessions?

- ☐ the fruit of his labor
- ☐ the result of an upright life
- ☐ gifts from God
- ☐ of little real value
- ☐ meaningless compared to family

5. How do you react to Job's response to his misfortune?

- ☐ disbelief ☐ curiosity
- ☐ skepticism ☐ admiration

6. What exactly did this test mean for Job? (And which question is most pressing for you?)

- ☐ Do I love anything more than God?
- ☐ Is God my friend or foe?
- ☐ Do I blame God for my losses?
- ☐ Do I love God just for the benefits?

7. If you lost everything in a day, what would be your biggest question?

- ☐ Why me?
- ☐ How could I have prevented this?
- ☐ What can I learn from this?
- ☐ Where is God?
- ☐ How can I recover?
- ☐ What will my insurance cover?

8. Sometimes I wonder if I really do love God more than my:

- ☐ spouse ☐ work ☐ children
- ☐ activities ☐ home ☐ self

9. What in your life has been "carried off, put to the sword, burned up, or blown away"?

10. After all of Job's losses, he responded by worshiping God. What can you praise God for right now?

11. What is the greatest challenge to your faith? What are your hopes and expectations for this course?

Second Bible Event

WHEN WILL IT END?**Job 2: 1-10**

Few people ever suffer as much as Job. His story should encourage us when we think that our lives are almost intolerable.

What seemed to be Job's secret in his enduring so many terrible problems? Listen carefully to his story.

God has already allowed Satan to attack everything Job had, except Job himself. As a result, Job lost his possessions and all 10 of his children. Now, Job would suffer what would be a very painful and possibly fatal illness.

JOB'S SECOND TEST

1. Why did God allow Satan to afflict Job again?

- ☐ to prove Satan was wrong
- ☐ to punish Job
- ☐ to test Job
- ☐ to strengthen Job
- ☐ God couldn't prevent it.
- ☐ It's a mystery.

2. This story shows that Satan:

- ☐ knows what's happening on earth
- ☐ knows what's going on in heaven
- ☐ accuses believers
- ☐ has little power
- ☐ is limited by God

3. What was Job's wife saying?

- ☐ What Satan wanted Job to hear
- ☐ "Look where your integrity has gotten you"
- ☐ "Be honest with your feelings"
- ☐ "Curse God so you can die"
- ☐ "It's too late for integrity"

4. After this, some friends came to "comfort" Job. What would you have said or done to help Job?

5. How could Job make such strong statements of faith (**Job 1:21, 2:10**) after such tragedies?

- ☐ What happened to him hadn't really sunk in yet.
- ☐ His faith in God was all he had left.
- ☐ He thought if he were faithful, God would give everything back.
- ☐ It was ingrained in him from a lifetime of faith-training.
- ☐ It shows this is fiction - no real person would respond that way!

6. What happened the last time your faith was seriously tested?

- ☐ I flunked.
- ☐ I quit before I finished.
- ☐ I passed after remedial work.
- ☐ I did about average.
- ☐ I passed with flying colors.

7. What do you need to do to be ready for the next test?

- ☐ Study more
- ☐ Work on my priorities
- ☐ Take out some insurance
- ☐ Know that God is with me

8. What trouble or suffering are you going through right now? What are you thinking as you "sit among the ashes"? If you could appear before God's heavenly council, what question would you ask?

9. Do you think Job had actually come to the place of accepting his losses (**Job 1:20-21, 2:10**)? What, if anything, keeps you from accepting your loss?

10. In light of the suffering you've experienced or observed in others, do you find yourself feeling more like Job or his wife? How can you keep trusting God even when the end isn't in sight?

11. How do you think Job was able to maintain such a positive perspective about living with pain? What is one step you can take to move in that direction?

Third Bible Event

WHO IS TO BLAME?**John 9:1-41**

Without any doubt, the innocent suffer. One obvious reason is that in a world of sin, the innocent are hurt by those who live only for themselves, but there are other reasons as well. The Jews believed that every illness was due to the sin of the sick person, or as a punishment on the family. The disciples were perplexed when they saw a man who was born blind. Was he suffering because of some sin as a baby? Or was he unfairly suffering for some sin of his parents? Jesus said that the popular religious ideas were wrong and that God could turn such suffering into blessing. Think about what this story might mean to your life.

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

1. What was behind the disciples' question, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> judgment | <input type="checkbox"/> curiosity | <input type="checkbox"/> theological uncertainty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> a trap | |

2. What did Jesus' reply show about how he viewed the man's affliction?

- ☐ He and his parents were sinless.
- ☐ He was an exception to the rule.
- ☐ The standard theology of the day was full of baloney.
- ☐ The man was born blind so that Jesus could miraculously heal him.
- ☐ Suffering like this just happens.
- ☐ The purpose of the blindness was more important than its cure.

3. Why did Jesus spit and make mud in healing the man?

- ☐ to add variety to his practices of healing people
- ☐ to provoke the Pharisees by breaking their Sabbath rules, since treating illness and making mud were considered "work"
- ☐ to gain the man's confidence since saliva was believed to have healing properties
- ☐ to give the man a part in the healing process

4. Why did some of the Pharisees take a stand against Jesus?

- ☐ because he violated their Sabbath restrictions
- ☐ because he violated their concept of the Messiah
- ☐ because it never occurred to them their regulations might be wrong
- ☐ because they started from their own bias instead of the miracle
- ☐ because they were "blind"

5. How does this story illustrate Jesus' statement in verse 5: ***"I am the light of the world"***?

6. The man progressed in his understanding of Jesus: from a man (v. 11), to a prophet (v. 17), to one worthy of following (v. 27), to one "from God" (v. 33), to one who should be worshiped (v. 38). How has your view of Jesus and your commitment to him progressed over time?

7. How would you measure your spiritual vision now (and how could it be corrected)?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20/20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20/200 | <input type="checkbox"/> legally blind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> near-sighted | <input type="checkbox"/> far-sighted | <input type="checkbox"/> a few blind spots |

8. What hard questions do you have about life, particularly regarding suffering? In spite of them are you able to affirm the basic spiritual reality "One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see"?

9. How can you relate to the blame this man lived with from a society that said he was blind because of sin? From whom have you felt blame for your pain?

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> my family | <input type="checkbox"/> my friends | <input type="checkbox"/> the church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the medical community | <input type="checkbox"/> myself | <input type="checkbox"/> God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ | | |

Fourth Bible Event

GOD'S HELP WHEN WE WANT TO GIVE UP

1 Kings 19:1-18



The heroes of the Bible were anything but perfect. Elijah, the great prophet, suddenly ran out of faith and courage. What does God do with His children who fail so miserably in their faith? Elijah's story should encourage every one of us.

King Ahab, influenced by his foreign wife Jezebel, had led Israel into idolatry. Just before this, the power of God came upon Elijah in amazing ways: (1) In a contest with the prophets of Baal, Elijah demonstrated the Lord's superiority over Baal resulting in the execution of the false prophets according to the Law of Moses. (2) Then after a long drought God sent rain in response to Elijah's prayer; and (3) afterward the Lord empowered Elijah to outrun Ahab's chariot.

ELIJAH & GOD'S GENTLE WHISPER

1. Why did Elijah run away?

- ☐ He needed some "R and R."
- ☐ Jezebel was furious about what he did to her prophets.
- ☐ He wasn't ready for another fight.
- ☐ Ahab's troops outnumbered his.

2. Why did Elijah pray to die?

- ☐ He was afraid.
- ☐ He was depressed.
- ☐ He was totally drained.
- ☐ He was full of self-pity.
- ☐ He was having a faith crisis.
- ☐ He felt all alone and unsupported.

3. What did Elijah need the most?

- ☐ Physical replenishment
- ☐ Some peace and quiet
- ☐ A spiritual retreat
- ☐ An attitude adjustment
- ☐ Some answers about life
- ☐ Fellowship with other believers
- ☐ A fresh vision of God

4. What was God saying through the wind, earthquake, fire and whisper?

- ☐ "I'm in control."
- ☐ "Stop whining and listen to me."
- ☐ "Don't expect me to be so dramatic all the time."
- ☐ "You're not alone."

5. What was God saying to Elijah in verses 15-18?

- ☐ "Your ministry is far from over."
- ☐ "Trust me."
- ☐ "Stop moping and get moving."
- ☐ "You're not alone."

6. After a great victory, I usually:

- ☐ Bask in it
- ☐ Rest
- ☐ Anticipate a letdown
- ☐ Move on the next challenge

7. Which, if any, of the answers in question 2 sound like you? Which of the choices in question 3 do you need the most?

8. How is God trying to communicate to you right now? What's the message of the "gentle whisper"?

9. In your healing from the pain of your past, how do you sense God whispering to you, "You're not alone" - in terms of God's presence? In terms of the support of those God has "reserved" for you?

10. When you feel drained by the pressures or injustices of life, what do you do? Is there any action you can take to find God? Or do you have to wait for God to call you out of your "cave"?

Fifth Bible Event

HOW DO I DECIDE?**Acts 16:6-15**

Paul was a man who lived to do everything God wanted of him. Even so, Paul met circumstances in which it was very difficult to know what God wanted of him. It seemed like God could only say “No,” but Paul traveled in vain from one place to another without apparent affirmation from God. What should we do when we need to make decisions, but God doesn’t seem to give His answers?

1. How do you think Paul felt when the Holy Spirit kept him from preaching in the great province of Asia?

- ☐ Look, God, you are wasting my time.
- ☐ I am sure you will show me the way, God.
- ☐ Is there something wrong with me?
- ☐ Are you trying to teach me patience?
- ☐ Don’t these people deserve the gospel?
- ☐ What do my companions think about my silence?

2. The Spirit not only said “No” to Asia, but now said “No” to Bithynia. How would you have felt?

- ☐ OK, Lord, I give up!
- ☐ You must have some real special place waiting for us.
- ☐ All right, I’ll go elsewhere.
- ☐ I wish you would make up your mind, God.

3. Paul had a strange dream that a man from Macedonia, across the Aegean Sea was calling for him to go over and help the Macedonians. How do you think Paul’s travel companions felt?

- ☐ Paul, you are making this up!
- ☐ Wow! Something really big is going to happen.
- ☐ No wonder God said “No” before.
- ☐ We will have an easy time in Macedonia.

4. How quickly did Paul and his companions act on the revelation Paul had received?

- ☐ They had a debate about the voyage across the sea.
- ☐ They made arrangements to leave immediately.

5. When getting to the important city of Philippi, what did Paul do?

- ☐ He announced a city-wide preaching campaign.
- ☐ He seemed to be waiting for something.
- ☐ On the Sabbath, he went to the traditional place where Jews met to worship.

6. Only women were at the meeting place. Why do you think this was God’s plan?

- ☐ God was still frustrating Paul in what he would have wanted.
- ☐ God was going to give a woman the privilege of being the first known Christian convert in Europe.
- ☐ God was demonstrating that women are as important to Him as men.
- ☐ God was working on Paul’s attitude.

7. In your opinion, what best describes Lydia?

- ☐ She was a person of action and spiritual decision.
- ☐ She must have been outstanding as a business woman.
- ☐ She was as concerned for her family’s salvation as for her own.
- ☐ She wanted to serve God anyway she could.
- ☐ Her faith is proven by her generosity

8. How do you identify with Paul and his companions?

- ☐ It seems like God often tells me what I cannot do more than what I can do
- ☐ I have peace to follow God even when His plan is not altogether clear to me
- ☐ Whenever I feel frustration in knowing God’s will, I wonder if something really big is about to happen.

9. If you could meet Lydia, how would you feel?

- ☐ You are exactly the kind of friend I need.
- ☐ You and I are alike in many ways.
- ☐ I think you are too impulsive.
- ☐ You should not be so pushy.
- ☐ I would like to be more like you.

Sixth Bible Event

THINGS CAN CHANGE**Job 42:7-17**

Job's story would be very incomplete without the last chapters. Job found that, as hopeless as things once seemed, God would restore his health and fortune. One of the main lessons of faith is to wait until God makes things better. Job's story illustrates this.

After God allowed Satan to destroy Job's health, wealth, and children, forlorn Job was visited by three friends who insisted Job must be guilty of some sin. Though Job angrily complained and questioned God, he still didn't curse the Lord. As the book nears its end, God speaks and makes judgment concerning Job and his "comforters".

JOB IS RESTORED

1. Why did Job's friends need to go to Job and offer a sacrifice?

- ☐ Because they were wrong
- ☐ Because God was angry with them
- ☐ Because they had sinned
- ☐ Because they violated Job

2. Why was Job restored?

- ☐ Because he repented (v. 6) of his doubts and complaints
- ☐ Because he forgave his friends
- ☐ Because he prayed for his friends
- ☐ Because of God's grace
- ☐ Because he was righteous
- ☐ Because it was God's plan

3. Why did Job's family and friends, from whom he had been alienated, come to comfort him now?

- ☐ Because he didn't get everything back overnight
- ☐ To relieve their guilt
- ☐ To get back on his good side
- ☐ Because it's easier to comfort someone after things get better

4. Why did Job receive twice as much as he had before?

- ☐ For good measure
- ☐ As compensation for his "pain and suffering"
- ☐ To provide a storybook ending
- ☐ To vindicate Job clearly and fully
- ☐ God loves to bless people

5. Does God always promise a happy ending? What does "acceptance" mean when things don't get better?

6. Are you aware of anything that could interfere with you receiving God's blessings? Do you have a need to make amends? Is there anyone you need to forgive?

7. How do you think Job would have answered the question, "Where is God when it hurts?" Would his answer be different now than it was after he lost everything? How would you answer the question?

8. How can you keep your hope that "things can change"? How does the Bible's perspective of God's ultimate and eternal justice encourage you?

9. In the end Job was affirmed by God and comforted by others. What have you appreciated about this group? Close by thanking God in prayer for each other.