

# Literature of the United Kingdom

## Year 1, Quarter 4

**This study covers the wisdom and poetry literature of the Old Testament, most of which was produced at the height of Israel's power and prosperity. We will study selected portions of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. For topical reasons we will also give attention to the book of Job, though it likely dates from earlier times.**

### **Outline**

#### **Week 1: Psalms of Dependence**

- ◆ Introduction and Psalm 6
- ◆ Psalms 70 and 77
- ◆ Psalms 23 and 131
- ◆ Psalm 139
- ◆ Psalm 143

#### **Week 2: Psalms of Praise**

- ◆ Introduction and Psalm 8
- ◆ Psalm 19
- ◆ Psalm 33
- ◆ Psalm 65
- ◆ Psalm 103

#### **Week 3: Psalms of Penitence**

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Psalm 32
- ◆ Psalm 38
- ◆ Psalm 51
- ◆ Psalm 130

#### **Week 4: Messianic Psalms**

- ◆ Introduction and Psalm 72
- ◆ Psalm 2

- ◆ Psalm 110
- ◆ Psalm 22
- ◆ Psalm 45

### **Week 5: Proverbs**

- ◆ Introduction and the Value of Wisdom
- ◆ Proper Use of the Tongue
- ◆ Slowness to Anger
- ◆ The Folly of Drunkenness
- ◆ Laziness: A Wasted Life

### **Week 6: Proverbs**

- ◆ The Value of Reproof
- ◆ Generosity
- ◆ Honest Business Practices
- ◆ One's Choice of Friends
- ◆ Attitude Toward Enemies

### **Week 7: Proverbs**

- ◆ The Destructiveness of Sexual Immorality
- ◆ The Joy of a Faithful Wife
- ◆ Good Children
- ◆ Seven Abominations unto God
- ◆ Assorted Proverbs

### **Week 8: Ecclesiastes**

- ◆ Introduction and the Vanity of Material Existence
- ◆ The Vanity of Wisdom and Pleasure
- ◆ The Diversity of Life's Experiences
- ◆ Selfish Ambition
- ◆ Greed and Wealth

### **Week 9: Ecclesiastes**

- ◆ Proverbs
- ◆ Thoughts on Good, Evil and Death
- ◆ Diligent Activity
- ◆ God in Our Youth
- ◆ The Whole Duty of Man

## **Week 10: Song of Solomon**

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ The Excitement of New Love
- ◆ A Longing for King Solomon
- ◆ The Depth of Married Love
- ◆ “Love is as Strong as Death”

## **Week 11: Job**

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Satan’s Attack upon Job
- ◆ Job’s Lamentation
- ◆ The First Cycle of Speeches - The Accusations
- ◆ The First Cycle of Speeches - Job’s Defense

## **Week 12: Job**

- ◆ The Second Cycle of Speeches - The Accusations
- ◆ The Second Cycle of Speeches - Job’s Defense
- ◆ The Third Cycle of Speeches
- ◆ The Speech of Elihu
- ◆ The Speech of Elihu

## **Week 13: Job**

- ◆ God Finally Speaks
- ◆ God’s Control of the Animal World
- ◆ Job’s Brief Answer
- ◆ Man, Behemoth and Leviathan
- ◆ Job’s Restoration

**Day 1: Introduction and Psalm 6**

The universal appeal of the Psalms continues almost 3,000 years after they were written. Because they communicate such rich insight into human life, they are valued for their comfort and encouragement. Because they extol the greatness of God, they are useful in worship. Because the Psalms are referred to in the NT more often than any other OT book, they are doctrinally pertinent. The sentiments of the Psalms are truly timeless; humans undergo similar experiences and share common emotions regardless of the era or covenant under which they live. The Psalms convey the essence of man's struggle in this world to cling to God amid the forces which try to destroy him. Many of these poetic verses or song lyrics were produced during an age when faith was strong, enemies were threatening, and God was very much in the conscious thought of the people.

In Psalm 6, David is overwhelmed by his human frailty and fearful of death. To David, God's response is slow, but he continues his appeal. Finally, when all seems lost, David is vindicated by God and stands triumphantly over his enemies. How many episodes in David's life might this psalm address!

1. What book of the OT is quoted more often in the NT than any other?
2. How does David interpret his present distress (Ps 6:1)?
3. Describe David's physical and mental state. What will God do for such a man?

**Day 2: Psalms 70 and 77**

As we have seen in our historical study of David's life, the great king was often threatened by enemies both before and after his enthronement. Such threats kept David humble and constantly drove him to God (Ps 70). Psalm 77 was composed by Asaph, a contemporary of David (comp. 1 Chr 15:16-17; 16:37; 2 Chr 29:30). This psalm again conveys the distress that is felt when problems are not as quickly resolved as man desires. Asaph wonders at the delay but does not abandon his faith. Instead, he strengthens himself by reflection upon the past works of God. Though the psalm seems unfinished, the basic message is clear: God has proven His power, love, and concern by His past interaction with man. Regardless of our circumstances, we must not lose our trust in Him to deliver us from our troubles.

4. Why does David urge God to hurry or make haste?
5. Describe Asaph's frame of mind. Will a faithful Christian ever feel deeply troubled?
6. What did Asaph's circumstances make him wonder about God?

### Day 3: Psalms 23 and 131

The 23rd psalm truly stands among the most cherished and beloved passages in the Scriptures. In it, David employs his experiences as a shepherd to illustrate his deep and abiding trust in God's care and leadership. David's confidence in God is so great that he would have no fear even in "*the valley of the shadow of death*" (Ps 23:4). This indicates that the Jews had some concept of continued existence after death however incomplete that concept may have been (comp. 2 Sam 12:23). Like Ps 23, Ps 131 is very appealing in its simplicity. David's reliance upon God allows him to dwell in peace without worrying about the issues of life which pride inflames. Leupold notes, "*Though it sings the praises of humility it does not make the mistake of having the writer pride himself on his humility, a mistake that is made only too easily*" (**Exposition of Psalms**, p. 907).

7. As a shepherd, what did David do (see 1 Sam 17:34-35)?
8. Where did David expect to dwell forever?
9. Discuss Ps 131:1 and contrast the Christian's frame of mind with that of the world.

### Day 4: Psalm 139

To a godly man, God's thorough knowledge of his life is a source of comfort and wonder. In Ps 139, David reflects upon God's knowledge of his thoughts, his circumstances of life, concluding, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it*" (139:6). David has learned from his days as a fugitive from Saul that God is aware of his every need wherever he goes (139:7-12). The psalm ends with an open invitation for God to examine his heart and motives (139:23-24). **Note:** While the Old Law was inadequate to establish fellowship with God upon the basis of true forgiveness, this psalm (and others) indicates that the Law did allow for an intimate relationship between man and God based upon the assurances of God's love and care. We may need to give the Law of Moses more credit than we usually give it.

10. Discuss: Would Ps 139:13-16 work for or against the practice of abortion?
11. What attitude(s) would make God's detailed knowledge of our lives uncomfortable?

### Day 5: Psalm 143

Psalms 140-143 all petition God for deliverance from enemies. David's distress is clear in Ps 143; his spirit is overwhelmed and failing and he is in need of revival (vv. 4, 7, 11). The life of the great king was certainly not one of tranquil royal bliss but threatened disaster on every hand. Through it all, David's dependence upon God did not waver.

12. David realizes that "*no one living is \_\_\_\_\_*." What makes him different, then, from the wicked? How does David describe himself in this psalm?

**Day 1: Introduction and Psalm 8**

God has so revealed Himself that godly men in every generation, no matter how primitive or sophisticated, are moved to meditate upon His greatness. David sees God's glory and power in nature, in His word, in His dealings with men, and in comparison with the dead idols of Israel's neighbors. David's humility before such transcendent greatness is his most redeeming character trait.

In Psalm 8 David marvels at the irrepressible name of God, so eloquently proclaimed even by children (Ps 8:2; comp. Mt. 21:16). In an age when stargazing was unaided by satellites and telescopes, the heavens still produce such awe that David wonders about God's interest in and involvement with man (Ps 8:3-5). In spite of man's sinfulness, which David so often laments, he continues to acknowledge the glory and honor with which man is endowed by virtue of creation - a crucial element missing from the atheistic, evolutionary model of origins.

1. Where is Ps 8:4-6 quoted in the NT? What is the only way that man can now achieve fully the ideal of dominion, glory and honor for which God created him?
2. Why do children so readily acknowledge the name of God when many adults won't?

**Day 2: Psalm 19**

While God's great creative power is revealed by the heavens and the solar cycles, nature paints an incomplete picture of God (Ps 19:1-6). The sure guide for daily life is the revelation of God's *thoughts*: His law, testimony, statutes, commandments and judgments (Ps 19:7-11). This is where a man truly comes to know the great Creator. Such contemplation makes David keenly aware of his sins, and he is led to ask for God's help in dealing with them.

3. What should men understand when observing the vast expanse of the universe?
4. What things will God's laws and statutes do for the man who fears Him?
5. What two kinds of sins are of concern to David?

**Day 3: Psalm 33**

Both the author and occasion of this psalm is unknown. The writer declares God as praiseworthy on the basis of His word by which all things have been created (Ps 33:4-9). Further, God is extolled for His controlling power over the nations (Ps 33:10-12), His intimate knowledge of every person (Ps 33:13-15), and His preservation of those who

trust in Him (Ps 33:16-19). Such confidence in God's protection and care results in joy and hope (Ps 33:20-22).

6. What qualities describe all of God's endeavors (Ps 33:4-5)?
7. Whom does the Lord see when He looks down from heaven?
8. When threatened with great danger, what should those who fear God do?

#### **Day 4: Psalm 65**

David in this psalm rejoices in his fellowship with God and praises Him for His abundant supply of material necessities. David's contentment shines through in this song as he contemplates the blessings which God has poured out upon him and the nation.

9. God hears \_\_\_\_\_.
10. What was a precious commodity in this parched part of the earth (Ps 65:9-10)?
11. How might an industrial society (as opposed to an agrarian society like Israel) tend to lose sight of God's blessings in nature?

#### **Day 5: Psalm 103**

David's emotions come bursting forth from this psalm as he thinks of God's blessing and support. He is overwhelmed at the comprehensive goodness of God (Ps 103:1-5). As he reviews history, David is able to see God's consistent mercy and forgiveness toward Israel (Ps 103:6-14). David's experiences have made him keenly aware of man's frailty and the brevity of life which stands in stark contrast to the eternal strength of God manifested through the ages (Ps 103:15-18). While the degree of spiritual enlightenment under the Mosaic covenant was inferior to the new covenant, these psalms of praise show a high degree of intimacy between David and God. God effectively manifested His character to the generations of old by His creation, His control of the affairs of men, His laws, His forgiveness of sin and His goodness.

12. What had David learned about God's character (Ps 103:8)?
13. What does God realize about men (Ps 103:14)? Why is this important for us to remember?
14. Where are the thoughts of Ps 103:15-16 taught in the new testament?
15. Where is the Lord's throne established? How far does His rule extend?

**Day 1: Introduction**

In all the pages of the Bible there is not a greater example of humility, courage, godliness, and faith than David. Indeed, God had declared, *“I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will”* (Acts 13:22). But according to its characteristic balance, the Scriptures also tell us of David’s great sins: adultery, murder, pride, injustice. What, then, sets David apart from Saul and from other kings who sinned? It is David’s **attitude** and **response** to his sins that makes him acceptable to God and an inspiration to those of us who also commit sin. David’s penitential psalms are soothing to the soul burdened by the guilt of sin.

1. T/F David never did anything as bad as Saul did.

**Day 2: Psalm 32**

It is uncertain whether this psalm was written in direct response to David’s sin with Bathsheba, but that episode perfectly fits the observations in the psalm. David tells of the physical and emotional effects of living with a burdened conscience (Ps 32:3-4). This burden is not relieved until David resolves to confess his sin unto God (Ps 32:5). The willingness of God to forgive should make Him our refuge (Ps 32:6-7). David encourages men to learn from his own mistakes and be humble and submissive before God (Ps 32:8-9). In this psalm, David refers to the “godly” (v 6), “he who trusts in the Lord” (v 10), and “you righteous” (v 11). But these are all people **who sin**, yet who seek God’s forgiveness when they do so.

2. Who is the “blessed” man? Where is this passage quoted in the NT?
3. How did David feel between the time of his sin and Nathan’s convicting parable?
4. What shall surround the one who trusts in God?

**Day 3: Psalm 38**

David writes this psalm when sin and its consequences are weighing most heavily upon him. While we cannot establish a certain correlation between suffering and sin, David seems aware that his present suffering is directly related to his transgression (Ps 38:1-5). David experiences inward turmoil and anguish (Ps 38:6-10); his friends and family are alienated from him (Ps 38:11); his enemies are multiplied against him (Ps 38:12-14, 19). Yet, he does not turn his back on God or shift blame upon others. He confesses his sin (Ps 38:18), entrusts himself to God’s care and protection (Ps 38:15-16), and asks that God would not forsake him (Ps 38:21-22).



5. Though David has sinned, he says “*I follow what is \_\_\_\_\_.*”
6. Describe in your own words David’s mental state because of his sin.
7. Discuss how the guilt of sin can affect our entire outlook on life.

## **Day 4: Psalm 51**

The grief and regret for sin is so expressed by David in this psalm as to touch the heart of every reader. Surely it is the most revealing confession of sin found in the Scriptures. First, David is stricken with the sense that sin is ultimately against God and its worst consequence is a breach of fellowship with Him (Ps 51:4, 11). David feels utterly overwhelmed by his own sin and the predominant sinfulness of mankind (Ps 51:5). While this passage is used by Calvinists to support total depravity, it is not Adam’s **inherited** sin that David grieves over but his own **practiced** sin. This godly man, so richly blessed by God with a throne, a royal covenant, and wives and children now stands guilty of adultery and murder. He feels totally polluted. As great as his sin is, David still believes that God will forgive him, and so he confesses his sin and pleads for forgiveness and cleansing (Ps 51:2, 7, 9, 12, 14). David shows great insight into the nature of sin and forgiveness from God (Ps 51:16-17); he realizes that the offering of sacrifices is not a ritual which substitutes for genuine, heartfelt regret. All of the Mosaic regulations concerning sacrifices, culminating in the sacrifice of God’s own Son, were designed to instruct man regarding the heinousness of sin. David is proof that God’s scheme in the Law of Moses worked effectively in the heart of those attuned to spiritual things.

8. What does David hope to do with the experience of his sin (Ps 51:13)?
9. How were David’s sins affecting him according to Ps 51:4?
10. When men sin, what response will God not despise?

## **Day 5: Psalm 130**

Again, this psalm indicates that Israel had a clear sense that God was forgiving and merciful, not harsh and unyielding. But the psalm also indicates that men sometimes have to wait to see the effects of God’s forgiveness. The author is patient as he waits for an indication that God will redeem the nation from its iniquities.

11. What does the psalm note about God’s mercy in relation to sin (Ps 130:3)?
12. With God is \_\_\_\_\_ redemption.
13. In what should a Christian hope even when the guilt of sin seems to make him worthless and undeserving of forgiveness? (see Ps 130:5)

**Day 1: Introduction and Psalm 72**

While the Old Testament has documented the fulfillment of the first two Abrahamic promises, the third promise - *"in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* - is still somewhat vague. Moses had spoken of another prophet to come (Dt 18:15, 18-19) and the Davidic covenant extended past Solomon into an unknown future. Over the coming centuries of prophetic revelation, a character sketch will emerge of a great One to come, the ultimate Anointed One, "Messiah," who would be prophet, priest, and king. David and Solomon begin to sketch the future Savior in various messianic psalms.

Psalm 72, a psalm of Solomon, stresses the universal and eternal reign of the Messiah.

1. How long would the righteous flourish under the reign of the King (Ps 72:7)?
2. How far was the King's rule to extend (Ps 72:8-11)?

**Day 2: Psalm 2**

This psalm speaks of the establishment of the Messiah's throne in spite of the opposition of human kings and rulers (Ps 2:1-6). This resistance is against both God and His Anointed, who is also identified as "My King" (2:6) and "My Son" (2:7). The actual fulfillment of this psalm in Jesus of Nazareth is still some 1,000 years in the future, yet it clearly describes the reaction of men to the rule of Christ.

3. According to Ac 4:25, who wrote this psalm?
4. Who did Peter and John say fulfilled this prophecy of resistance (Ac 4:27)?
5. How is Ps 2:7 used in Ac 13:33 and Heb 1:5?
6. With what kind of rod will the Son rule? Who has been given this rod (Rev 2:27)?

**Day 3: Psalm 110**

"It is not merely a coincidence that this psalm is quoted more often in the New Testament than is any other. This fact is a testimony to its importance" (Leupold, **Exposition of Psalms**, p 770). Jesus used Ps 110:1 as evidence to support His deity; Peter then quotes it in his Pentecost sermon (Ac 2:34-35). Paul alludes to it when speaking of the resurrection and the end of the Messiah's delegated rule (1 Cor 15:25) and again when exhorting Christians to *"seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God"* (Col 3:1). The author of Hebrews refers to the passage to demonstrate the superiority of Christ over the angels (1:13). Ps 110:4 is also used in Hebrews

to establish the order of the Messiah's priesthood (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20). The psalm continues the theme of resistance to the rule of the Messiah. God knew beforehand that men would reject His Son both while in the flesh and after His ascension. But this rejection would not hinder the work or rule of the Messiah; the gates of His kingdom remain forever open for any and all who wish to be "*delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Col 1:13).

7. What is the place of the Messiah's rule called (Ps 2:6; 110:2)?

8. The Messiah would rule in the midst of whom?

9. T/F Jesus was a king after David and a priest after Levi.

#### **Day 4: Psalm 22**

While the reign of the Messiah would be victorious, eternal and universal, it would not come without a price. This psalm indicates that terrible physical suffering would come to Him. He would feel abandoned by His Father (22:1), be scorned and despised by the masses (22:6-8), endure physical distress even unto death (22:14-17), and watch as His own clothes were stripped from His body and sold (22:18). The reaction of the Jews to Jesus, even to the fulfilling of the very words of this prophecy, shows that they did not understand the concept of a Messiah who must suffer and die. Thus, "*we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block ...*" (1 Cor 1:23).

10. Where is Ps 22:22 quoted in the NT?

11. What was God's reaction to the cries of Jesus (Ps 22:21, 24)? Did this prevent Jesus from dying?

#### **Day 5: Psalm 45**

The glory and splendor of the Messiah is magnified in this beautiful piece of poetry. Note the qualities mentioned in the opening verses: grace, blessedness, might, glory, majesty, prosperity, truth, humility, righteousness. Again, we find the author of Hebrews using this Messianic psalm to support the superiority of Christ, thus encouraging Christians with a wavering allegiance to remain loyal to Him (Ps 45:6-7; Heb 1:8-9).

12. What kind of scepter does Jesus hold?

13. What happens to the King's enemies in this psalm?

14. What is the Messiah called that reveals His divine nature?

**Day 1: Introduction and the Value of Wisdom**

The book of Proverbs is a collection of maxims from various sources. Solomon, by the abundance of wisdom granted by God to help him govern Israel, spoke 3,000 proverbs (1 Kgs 4:32), only a portion of which are preserved in Proverbs. Pr 25:1 indicates that King Hezekiah, who lived about 250 years after Solomon, compiled the section of Solomonic proverbs through 29:27. The words of Agur, a man otherwise unknown in the Bible, are included in Pr 30, and the words of King Lemuel (also unknown) are in Pr 31:1-9. The authorship of several passages in Proverbs is uncertain.

Proverbs clearly illustrates the unchanging nature of human behavior and character. The man who is observant of the behavior of others and intent on practicing the precepts of the Law of Moses would find the key to wise decision-making and avoid much grief and heartache in this world. Wisdom, personified in chs 1-9, encourages the young Israelite to *“seek her (wisdom - jj) as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God”* (Pr 2:4-5; see also 2:1-9).

1. Who is the ultimate source of wisdom?
2. What can godly wisdom provide (Pr 1:33)?

**Day 2: Proper Use of the Tongue**

Control of one's tongue is a recurring theme in Proverbs. Caution is given concerning those who delight in revealing secret and potentially damaging information (Pr 11:13; 16:28; 17:9; 20:19; 26:20-22). The Proverbs also counsel careful consideration before responding to delicate issues (Pr 10:19; 13:3; 15:23, 28; 18:13; 21:23). Lying is also branded foolish and destructive behavior (Pr 6:17; 12:19, 22; 19:5, 9; 21:28).

3. Who can be separated by a gossip?
4. How might a talebearer persuade someone to give him information (Pr 20:19)?
5. What often comes from a multitude of words?
6. What causes some to interrupt and hijack a conversation (Pr 18:13)?

**Day 3: Slowness to Anger**

Some people may have a natural disposition toward anger, others toward patience. But the wise work on controlling angry emotions, for they result in rash, hurtful words which hurt themselves and others (Pr 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11, 19; 22:24-25).

7. T/F Quick tempers and angry words can squelch problems before they get started.
8. The man who is slow to anger rules his \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Discuss the difference between anger and zealously standing for the truth.

#### **Day 4: The Folly of Drunkenness**

The state of intoxication has long been a humiliation and disgrace to humanity; it results in a loss of reason, spiritual appreciation, respect for others, verbal restraint and motor skills. Consequently, drunkenness leads to anger and violence, lust and fornication, inconsiderate or unintentional damage to the property and persons of others. This was recognized from earliest times and acknowledged in Proverbs: 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5. Yet men continue to make alcohol, advertise it, drink it and advocate its use.

10. Contrast the state of drunkenness with self-control, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23)?
11. Discuss the use of artificial stimulants or depressants in light of being a Christian.  
How should a Christian deal with disappointments, pains, stress, etc.?
12. When is the time to avoid drunkenness (see Pr 23:31)?

#### **Day 5: Laziness: A Wasted Life**

There are natural consequences to neglecting our responsibility of productive labor. God created us to be busy, and the nature of this world and human existence demands industry on the part of each individual. The slothful person is mentioned several times in Proverbs; he will always find excuses not to work and thus will always be dependent upon others: Pr 6:6-11; 10:4-5; 12:27; 13:4; 18:9; 20:4; 21:25-26; 24:30-34; 26:13-16.

13. What is the slothful man doing in Pr 26:13?
14. What quality does he lack according to Pr 20:4?
15. Comp. Pr 18:9 with Pr 24:31. Discuss how laziness leads to destruction.
16. How do these principles apply to spiritual things?

**Day 1: The Value of Reproof**

Proverbs contrasts the wise and the foolish by their appreciation of correction. The fool thinks he knows it all and takes offense when others venture to correct him. On the other hand, the wise man knows his limitations and his capacity for error and, desiring above all to be right in God's sight, welcomes appropriate reproof. See Pr 10:17; 12:1, 15; 13:18; 15:10, 12, 31-33; 17:10.

1. Why does a foolish man reject the counsel of others?
2. Whom will the scoffer seek to avoid?
3. What might make criticism hard to accept?

**Day 2: Generosity**

The Bible consistently praises generosity and condemns greediness. In fact, various passages indicate that prosperity is a by-product of generosity, not miserly hoarding (Pr 11:24-26). In connection with generosity is the attitude of compassion upon the poor (Pr 19:17; 22:9; 28:27); the godly man will not turn his eyes away from a person in legitimate need.

4. What is help to the poor called?
5. What do the rich and poor have in common (Pr 22:2)?
6. How might a man's generosity help him in the time of his own need?

**Day 3: Honest Business Practices**

Related to the quality of greed is dishonesty in business, or in OT terminology, using a "false balance" (Pr 11:1; 16:11; 20:10; comp. Dt 25:13-16). Pr 28:8 also warns against charging exorbitant interest and extorting from the disadvantaged. The man who will cheat, lie, threaten and otherwise act dishonestly for his own personal gain will make himself an enemy of God and his fellow men as well.

7. Can you think of an instance where you were deliberately taken advantage of in a business transaction? How did it make you feel?
8. What is called a "fleeting fantasy" (Pr 21:6)?

## Day 4: One's Choice of Friends

Our associates may tell more about us than we care to admit. Social pressure, the attitudes and behavior of our peers, is a powerful force that can cause us to do things we would not otherwise do. Perhaps there is not another truth so readily denied than this, for we all want to think we are stronger than the influences around us. But God's word consistently tells us that our chosen companions can lead to our downfall: Pr 12:26; 13:20; 22:24-25; 23:20; 24:1, 21. A further admonition is that to **have** friends one must **be** a friend (Pr 18:24).

- 9. T/F There are some people with whom a godly man shouldn't associate.
- 10. What can happen by associating with an angry man?
- 11. How would you advise the person who says: "I just don't have any friends at church. No one calls me, invites me to do anything, or speaks to me at worship."

## Day 5: Attitude Toward Enemies

Everyone who tries to do right will have enemies, for those who are not so inclined will be offended by such efforts. So how should we feel when our enemies suffer misfortune or harm? Our natural reaction might be one of joy, thinking they have gotten what they deserve, but we are warned against this (Pr 24:17-18). When Jesus said, "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,'*" (Mt 5:43), he was referring to the corruption of the Law of Moses by Jewish tradition. The Law did not countenance hatred for anyone, enemies included. Pr 25:21-22 says that one's enemy should be cared for (see also Ex 23:4-5).

- 12. What is wrong with the attitude that rejoices over the misfortune of another?
- 13. Where is Pr 25:21-22 quoted in the NT? In that context, why does Paul say it is wrong to personally avenge ourselves?
- 14. What might kindness toward our enemies accomplish?

**Day 1: The Destructiveness of Sexual Immorality**

Solomon could speak with some authority on the weakness of the male regarding sexual activity, for this is what led to his own downfall (see 1 Kgs 11:1ff). Three primary passages in Proverbs give a vivid and insightful description of a man seduced by the thrill of illicit sex (Pr 2:16-19; 5:1-20; 6:20-7:27). The elements of seduction: flattering words which appeal to the ego (2:16; 6:24; 7:5, 15, 21); physical lust (5:3; 6:25; 7:16-18); the illusion of secrecy (7:9, 19-20). So powerful is sensuality that it overwhelms concern for God's law, parental teaching, the ruining of character, the wrong done to one's own spouse as well as the spouse (and children) of the other - even the risk of disease, as in case of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Solomon's summary judgment on the fornicator: *"Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul"* (Pr 6:32).

1. With whom should a man's physical appetites be satisfied?
2. What is a warning sign of a loose, dissatisfied woman (Pr 7:11-12)?
3. Discuss how a man's weak ego can lead him into adultery.

**Day 2: The Joy of a Faithful Wife**

In contrast to the unprincipled, lust-driven, destructive harlot stands the spiritual, loyal and loving wife who builds her husband's character and self-worth. She is a gift from the Lord (Pr 18:22; 19:14) and a crown of his life (Pr 12:4). The classic description of an ideal wife is found in Pr 31:10-31. A woman of such character and industry will not only enrich her husband but will find her own sense of self-worth and meaning in life.

4. What does a wise woman do (Pr 14:1)? A foolish one? Discuss how this is done.
5. What is one of the most important aspects of a healthy relationship (Pr 31:11)?
6. T/F An ideal wife is delicate, brainless, and helpless and relies on her husband for everything.

**Day 3: Good Children**

Several proverbs address the impact of children upon their parents; children who honor their parents and make wise choices in life are a source of great pride while those who are rebellious and irresponsible bring grief and misery (Pr 10:1; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:13; 23:24-25; 29:3). But Proverbs also places significant responsibility for the shaping of children's character upon the parents, specifically in regard to corporal punish-



ment (Pr 13:24; 19:18; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15). Children are born with varying dispositions and character traits, and it is the job of the parents to mold and shape (or rid) these characteristics so that each child will learn what is acceptable behavior before God and men. Perhaps one of the most perplexing proverbs of all is 22:6, especially for parents whose children have left the faith apparently never to return. Does the proverb **guarantee** the steadfastness of a child's faith? First, proverbs are general truths, the way things usually are. Exceptions can be found to most of them. Secondly, the training of a child cannot rule out a change in adult life. Consider the reverse: can a child raised and influenced by *atheistic* parents become a Christian? Of course. Thirdly, no one can force a God-fearing life upon another; even Israel, God's own blessed child/nation, abandoned Him for idols. Fourth, it must be honestly admitted that some children of Christian parents were simply not trained as thoroughly, conscientiously and diligently in their earliest years of development as the parents maintain. Some parents have a faulty conception of what it takes to fully develop a child's moral and spiritual self-concept by Bible study, punishment, praise, love, example, devoted service to God, etc. This places a heavy responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of young parents whose children are in their formative years.

7. Is it "loving" to let a child go unpunished for bad behavior?
8. What is bound up in the heart of a child? What causes it?
9. What attitudes in society might discourage a parent from being a disciplinarian?

#### **Day 4: Seven Abominations unto God**

Pr 6:16-19 is a summary characterization of what the Lord hates in man's dealing with one another. A large portion of the world's ills are attributable to these factors. Note that murder and causing strife or discord are in the same category.

10. Why are some brethren not happy unless stirring up trouble in the church?

#### **Day 5: Assorted Proverbs**

Many other worthwhile topics are addressed throughout proverbs: treatment of animals (12:10); faulty human judgment (14:12); depression (15:13); pride (16:18); family discord (17:1); premature judgment (18:17); changing values (20:29); neighborly relations (25:17); uncertainty of the future (27:1); reputation (27:21); a guilty conscience (28:1); confession of sin (28:13); and adding to God's words (30:6). These timeless truths about human behavior in the Old Law show God's concern for lifting the character of man even while He was working on the long-term goal of spiritual redemption.

11. How does age change the way we look at things (20:29)?
12. What has God always expected men to do about their sins?

## Day 1: Introduction; the Vanity of Material Existence

Ecclesiastes can be a perplexing book if not correctly approached. First, it must be remembered that the author's view of eternal life is shrouded in darkness and mystery because Mosaic revelation did not fully address the subject. Even under the New Covenant, though we have more light than before, we do not have a thorough and detailed account of life beyond this world. Thus, the Preacher examines man's existence primarily upon its merits relative to this world.

Further, the book can be confusing simply because life, itself, can be confusing and at times contradictory. Consider the following synopsis of Ecclesiastes: "Life is a riddle, for which the Preacher tries to find the key. The meaning of life is not to be found in the acquisition of knowledge, money, sensual pleasures, oppression, religious profession or folly. Either of these things prove empty or something happens against which they are helpless. Even God's hand at times is inscrutable. Man is so made that he must always try to make sense of the universe, since God has set eternity in his heart; yet God alone knows the whole pattern" (**New Bible Dictionary**, p 296).

In Ecc 1:1-11, the Preacher considers human history and nature and concludes that "*all is vanity*." By this he doesn't mean that life isn't worth living, for he goes on and teaches the responsibility to live with respect to God. He is questioning the worth of life apart from God. There is a certain monotony to the process of life: natural forces continue in cycles in order to make the earth habitable, and human achievements, though they differ in detail, have a certain sameness. "*There is nothing new under the sun*," and whatever is considered "success" is destined to be excelled by later generations and forgotten.

1. T/F The new testament sheds more light on eternal life than the Law of Moses.

## Day 2: The Vanity of Wisdom and Pleasure

While the Preacher's self-description resembles Solomon (Ecc 1:16; 2:9), such a conclusion is not without problems. Whoever he is, he affirms that he sought great wisdom only to find that wisdom, alone, leads to grief and sorrow (Ecc 1:18). The more we understand how things **ought** to be, the more painful reality becomes. The Preacher also indulged himself with every pleasure only to find that "*all was vanity and grasping for the wind*" (Ecc 2:1-11). While the Preacher judges wisdom to excel folly (Ecc 2:13-14), he notes that death, the great equalizer, comes to the wise and the foolish (Ecc 2:15-26).

2. Do material things **alone** satisfy the soul? Do fleshly pleasures?
3. What happens to a man's possessions when he dies?

4. What aspects of labor are to be enjoyed? How is the purpose of labor corrupted?

### **Day 3: The Diversity of Life's Experiences**

Human life is so diverse and varied that it encompasses a wide spectrum of experiences (Ecc 3:1-8). This beautiful poetic verse, however, elicits the question, "When?" *When* is the proper time for weeping and laughing, loving and hating, etc.? Man's judgment alone is insufficient to answer the question; God's guidance is needed to clarify and define our circumstances so that we may respond appropriately. This is wisdom.

5. How should the truth of this passage help us deal with failures and disappointments?

6. If wisdom is responding appropriately to the situation at hand, what is foolishness?

### **Day 4: Selfish Ambition**

Many people are so consumed with climbing the career ladder that they neglect their families, friends, brethren in their ascent. When they do eventually reach the top, they often stand there alone, for they have abandoned and alienated everyone else. This is vanity (Ecc 4:4-12).

7. What makes our labors and efforts in life worthwhile (Ecc 4:8)?

8. What does a man "buy" when he invests in relationships (Ecc 4:9-12)?

### **Day 5: Greed and Wealth**

While the Preacher has already spoken from his own experience about the vanity of material possessions, he now elaborates further on greed and other abuses of wealth (Ecc 5:8 - 6:12). First, greed is never satisfied; it always wants more. Secondly, worries increase as possessions increase. Thirdly, wealth not properly handled destroys people. Fourth, for all a man's efforts and worries and heartaches concerning his wealth, he can't take it with him when he dies. Fifth, a man can labor for riches and have it taken away by others. On the other hand, the man who enjoys the good of his labor, who enjoys his work and is content with what he has whether much or little, is blessed by God.

9. Explain Ecc 5:11 in everyday terms.

10. Why might it be difficult for the rich to sleep?

11. A stillborn child is better than whom?

**Day 1: Proverbs**

A variety of proverbs are given in Ecc 7 which arise from the Preacher's observations about life. The questions below introduce some of the proverbs for discussion:

1. What does the house of mourning do for man (Ecc 7:2-4)?
2. What kind of person unduly laments the past (Ecc 7:10)?
3. T/F God allows both prosperity and adversity to befall men.
4. What should we remember when we hear unkind words spoken against us (7:21)?

**Day 2: Thoughts on Good, Evil and Death**

The Preacher contemplates the righteous, the wicked and death in Ecc 8:10 - 9:12. He notes that wickedness is encouraged by the lack of swift punishment (Ecc 8:11) but eventually his days will come to an end (Ecc 8:13). In the meantime, the wicked are seen to prosper, the righteous sometimes suffer, and men are unable to fathom the hand of God in what they see (Ecc 8:14 - 9:1). But the knowledge of eventual death should be an incentive for the wicked to live a better life; in this life is hope for change and improvement, but death seals one's fate.

5. Why is a living dog better than a dead lion?
6. Why should we give our all to things in this life (Ecc 9:10)? What does this mean?
7. What do time and chance do?

**Day 3: Diligent Activity**

Some use the uncertainty of life as an excuse for inactivity, but the Preacher instructs us to be diligent and busy for that very reason (Ecc 11:1-8). It must be accepted things are going to happen (clouds will rain and trees will fall), but we must press on and do what it takes to build a prosperous life and not worry about all the eventualities, especially the ones we cannot control. We cannot anticipate what God will cause or allow, we may not understand His dealings (we are not expected to and faith does not depend upon it), but we are responsible to go ahead and do as He commands.

8. T/F We cannot always know ahead of time the results of our efforts.
9. With days of joy come many days of \_\_\_\_\_.

## Day 4: God in our Youth

The Preacher recognized a tendency in his own day even as we see in ours, that living a godly life is something to be done “later” (Ecc 11:9 - 12:8). The days of our youth offer unlimited joys and possibilities: strong bodies for the pursuit of any desired activity, sound minds which thrive on stimulation, endless reservoirs of strength which fuel the pursuit of pleasure, excited wonder which revels in the discovery of new things, the blossoming of love and the beginnings of family. Such a rich immersion into the joys of life can easily overwhelm a young person to the point that God is reduced to an after-thought. “I have plenty of time to get back to God,” some reason. Others forget about God completely and spend their youthful energies on sin. But the Preacher reminds them that God will call them to account for their activities.

But some become so distracted with youthful pursuits that God never fits into their lives until life begins to wind down. Youthful suppleness is replaced by arthritic stiffness; swiftness afoot becomes a shuffling gate; cataracts now dim a world once clear with promise; boldness and daring now cower before the fear of falling. In short, the ability to enjoy the world is so diminished and death is so near that little is left to offer God. What an empty and frightening feeling that must be!

10. How might some elderly persons view the remaining years of life?
11. What do Ecc 11:9 and 12:7 say about the Preacher’s belief in an afterlife?
12. According to your experience, do many elderly people become Christians late in their lives? If you answer “no,” why not?

## Day 5: The Whole Duty of Man

The Preacher has now taken a fairly comprehensive look at earthly life. He has determined that human life is essentially an endless cycle of repeated events and that, so far as the world goes, man doesn’t make much of a difference. The meaning of life is not to be found in materialism, fame, authority, personal achievement, or any other worldly reward, for “*time and chance happen to them all*” and death is just around the corner. Even treachery and oppression will not bring happiness; it cannot be seized by force. But even the wise are not satisfied on the basis of wisdom alone, for no one will be able to answer all the conundrums of life to his satisfaction. The whole of life can be summarized without philosophers, monastic solitude, ascetic deprivation or meditation upon the cosmos: “*Fear God and keep His commandments, for **this** is the whole duty of man*” (Ecc 12:9-14). For the man or woman who does so, it will be well with their soul.

13. What knowledge should encourage us to think carefully about every aspect of life?
14. Is the Preacher’s conclusion regarding life different from the Christian’s today?

**Day 1: Introduction**

Controversy and disagreement have attended efforts to deal with this book through the centuries. As one comments: “The history of interpretation of the Song of Songs is no feather in the cap of biblical exegesis” (ISBE, Vol. 1, p. 606). The frank sensuality of the book tends to make people uncomfortable and reluctant to take it at face value. Thus, many hold the book to be an allegory of Jehovah and Israel and/or Christ and the church rather than a personal relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite woman. But such a view presents its own difficulties. First, there is no textual warrant for making it an allegory. Secondly, it is arbitrary. Why not allegorize Job or Jonah as well? Thirdly, it doesn’t remove the sensual language, and it seems less consistent to apply such sensuality to Christ’s relationship to the church than to a husband and wife.

The book is an affirmation of the sexual nature of man, a poetic celebration of the godly passions which fuse man and woman into one flesh. “The physical, sensual, even erotic element in life is neither evil nor a ‘lower’ aspect of human beings. It is a gift of God. This book’s place in the Scriptures frustrates any attempt to denigrate the sensual aspect of human life” (ibid, p. 608). “It also provides an object lesson in close personal relationships which is badly needed in the western world by showing that spirituality is not inconsistent with spontaneity and a lack of self-consciousness during moments of greatest physical intimacy” (ZPEB, Vol. 5, p. 489).

1. Consult a dictionary for the definition of an allegory.

**Day 2: The Excitement of New Love**

In chapters 1-2, King Solomon and the Shulamite rejoice over their love for each other. Solomon is portrayed as one in whom all the daughters of Jerusalem delight (vv. 3-4) but the Shulamite is the fortunate recipient of his love. Their passions are stirred by physical attractiveness, jewelry, scents and the sanctity of their bedroom in their own home. The Shulamite exults at the approach of Solomon and excitedly anticipates a springtime trip away with her love (SS 2:8-14).

2. Does 1:6 suggest that the Shulamite was a city-dweller or from the country?
3. Discuss the importance of physical attractiveness to a romantic relationship. How important is it? What about our culture’s emphasis upon it?

**Day 3: A Longing for King Solomon**

The Shulamite has an intense longing for Solomon in SS 3:1-5, but the cause of the longing is not revealed. Perhaps she is insecure, afraid that his affections have

wandered. Maybe she is worried. She cannot rest until she searches through the streets and finds him. Intense love for another makes one vulnerable; the welfare of the one loved often brings anxiety. The remainder of the chapter tells of the glorious arrival of the King.

4. The Shulamite cannot rest until she does what?

5. T/F Solomon's rule was so secure in Israel that he had no fear for his safety.

## **Day 4: The Depth of Married Love**

Both Solomon and his Shulamite wife praise each other's beauty and attractiveness in chs. 4-6. Note the picturesque language of a people attached to their land: goats, sheep, gazelles, lions, leopards, pomegranates, lilies, myrrh, frankincense, henna, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, mountains, honeycomb, gardens, springs, fountains, etc. In SS 5:2-8 the Shulamite again finds herself longing and searching for Solomon. This is possibly a dream considering what is said in v. 2 and the unlikely occurrence of the king's wife being beaten and stripped naked by the watchmen in v. 7. Solomon has apparently come looking for his wife at night, but she rebuffs him having already washed and dressed for the night. When she has a change of heart and goes to the door, her husband is already gone. The Shulamite enlists the help of the daughters of Jerusalem to look for Solomon, and if they find him they are to tell him that his wife is "lovesick," anxious for his return.

6. Discuss the importance of remaining "in love" with one's wife or husband. What are the dangers of "letting oneself go" after marriage?

7. Compare SS 6:8 with 1 Kgs 11:3. Do you think SS is toward the beginning or end of Solomon's reign?

## **Day 5: "Love is as Strong as Death"**

As the love-poetry concludes, Solomon and his wife continue to express their great desire for one another (chs. 7-8). The Shulamite asks to be set as a seal upon the heart of her husband (SS 8:6), for "jealousy (is) as cruel as the grave." There is no more miserable feeling than to love someone who does not love in return. In SS 8:8-10, the Shulamite is possibly reflecting upon the chastity of her childhood. Her brothers praise the sister who is a "wall," one of strong morals and resistant to promiscuity. But of the sister who is a "door," open to immorality, they vow to "enclose her with boards of cedar." The Shulamite declares that she has been a wall, and now in marriage enjoys the release and indulgence of physical passions.

8. What does mutual trust contribute to the marital relationship?

9. What influences many young women today to be a "door" instead of a "wall"?

**Day 1: Introduction**

The book of Job has historically been associated with the other poetical/wisdom literature of the Old Testament even though Job appears to have lived in the patriarchal age. Whereas the Song of Solomon scaled the lofty heights of human love, Job plumbs the depths of human misery and suffering. The explanation of life's inequities under the rule of an infinitely powerful, good and righteous God has perplexed every generation of man. Consider the following observations:

*"Although God does not execute immediate rewards for every action, a time will come when God will judge each person and render a just recompense. Therefore God can be both just and sovereign in allowing the righteous to suffer, for He will ultimately vindicate His own. On the human side, it is affirmed that one who endures great pain can challenge God to know why this is his lot and simultaneously hold on to his faith and be confident that the attack against him is not a proof that he has failed; one may endure the sharpest trials confident of his innocence before God"* (**International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, Vol. 2, p. 1074).

*"... God does not answer Job's questions or charges, but though he proclaims the greatness of his all-might, not of his ethical rule, Job is satisfied. He realizes that his concept of God collapsed because it was too small; his problems evaporate when he realizes the greatness of God. The book does not set out to answer the problem of suffering but to proclaim a God so great that no answer is needed, for it would transcend the finite mind if given ..."* (**New Bible Dictionary**, p. 599).

1. Would Job 1:5 and 42:16 suggest a patriarchal or Mosaic time-frame for Job?

**Day 2: Satan's Attack upon Job**

The first two chapters of Job set the stage for the debate to follow. Job will never be told of these behind-the-scenes activities. Answer the following questions on chs. 1-2:

2. Why did Satan say Job served God?

3. How did Job initially respond to the loss of his children and his possessions?

4. What did Satan hope Job would do to God when stricken with disease?

5. T/F The only person who stood by Job in his misery was his wife.

6. Why did Job's three friends come to see him?



### Day 3: Job's Lamentation

When Job finally speaks (Job 3), he questions his own existence asking why he did not die in the womb or at birth. "Why" is asked no less than six times (3:11-12, 16, 20, 23). So deep is Job's grief that he longs for death (3:21), but even at this early stage of his story it is clear to godly men that suicide is not an acceptable option. His anguished soul is in need of comfort, but he will not find it from his friends.

7. What has happened to Job (3:25)?

### Day 4: The First Cycle of Speeches - The Accusations

Job 4-31 consists of three cycles of speeches between Job and his friends. In the first cycle (Job 4-14), Eliphaz speaks much that is true but draws the erroneous conclusion that all suffering can be explained as God's punishment for sin (4:7-8). Many today, even some in the Lord's church, hold this view. To bolster his argument, Eliphaz claims to have seen a vision (4:12-16) and boldly professes that he is right (5:27). Bildad is even more blunt in his assertion that Job's sons were guilty of sin and that Job is insincere and has forgotten God (8:1-7, 13). Again, there is a kernel of truth in what Bildad says, i.e., "*God will not cast away the blameless ...*" (8:20), but he wrongly assumes that Job's suffering is prima facie evidence that God has cast him away. Zophar is yet even harsher insisting that God has not punished Job enough (11:6). He takes Job's declaration of innocence to be an unwillingness to repent (11:4, 13-20). As the old saying goes, *with friends like these, who needs enemies?!*

8. What does Eliphaz admit about Job (4:3-4)?

9. To what does Bildad appeal in his argument against Job (8:8-10)?

10. What does Zophar imply about Job in 11:10-11?

### Day 5: The First Cycle of Speeches - Job's Defense

Job protests that he is unaware of any sin in his life (7:20). But if there is a sin unknown to him, he wonders why God will not forgive it (7:21). If the argument of his friends is correct, then no blessing should ever come to man, for all men are sinful: "*But how can a man be righteous before God?*" (9:2). In his agony of soul and confusion of mind, Job feels far removed from God and unable to approach Him or reason with Him (ch 9). Job voices humanity's need before Jesus came into the world and became the ultimate Mediator between God and man: "*For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both*" (9:32-33). While Job's friends have oversimplified God's dealings with man, Job cannot fathom why God seems intent on destroying him as He would His enemy (9:21-24; 10:1-7, 15; 13:24). Though Job has many unanswered questions about his situation, his devotion shines through: "*Though He slay me, yet will I*

*trust Him*" (13:15). Job's faith demonstrates that a man who turns away from God because of his misfortune does so without justification.

**11.** How does tragedy make a person feel (Job 7:7)?

**12.** What two things does Job ask that God **not** do (Job 13:20-21)?

## ***Outline of Job by Chapters***

### ***Introduction***

**Chapters 1-2** --> Job is afflicted.

**Chapter 3** --> Job's lamentation.

### ***The first cycle of speeches:***

**Chapters 4-5** --> Eliphaz's accusations.

**Chapters 6-7** --> Job's response.

**Chapter 8** --> Bildad's accusations.

**Chapters 9-10** --> Job's response.

**Chapter 11** --> Zophar's accusations.

**Chapters 12-14** --> Job's response.

### ***The second cycle of speeches:***

**Chapter 15** --> Eliphaz's accusations.

**Chapters 16-17** --> Job's response.

**Chapter 18** --> Bildad's accusations.

**Chapter 19** --> Job's response.

**Chapter 20** --> Zophar's accusations.

**Chapter 21** --> Job's response.

### ***The third cycle of speeches:***

**Chapter 22** --> Eliphaz's accusations.

**Chapters 23-24** --> Job's response.

**Chapter 25** --> Bildad's accusations.

**Chapters 26-31** --> Job's response.

### ***The speech of Elihu:***

**Chapters 32-37**

### ***God's challenge to Job:***

**Chapters 38-41**

### ***Job's vindication and blessing:***

**Chapter 42**

**Day 1: The Second Cycle of Speeches - The Accusations**

Eliphaz has little new to add in his second speech (Job 15). Appeal is again made to ancestral tradition (15:17-19) without considering its applicability in the present case. Eliphaz hopes that his description of the fate of the wicked will shake Job into repentance (see 15:20-26). More color is added to Eliphaz's picture by Bildad who waxes eloquent on the supposed universal misfortune of the wicked (Job 18). Neither of the men have provided any depth of argument; they have merely said, "This is the way it is because the fathers said so, and because we believe that God cannot allow the wicked to prosper." Neither in Job nor in his friends is there any concrete understanding of a resurrection and judgment wherein ultimate justice will prevail. Zophar sings the third verse of the same song (Job 20). In these three speeches, further pressure is placed upon Job to abandon his claim of innocence and admit his sin. How difficult this must have been for Job. Already made vulnerable by his horrible circumstances, his friends are trying to take away from him the only thing he is sure of: his *innocence*.

1. To what does Eliphaz appeal in defense of his argument (Job 15:7-10)?
2. Does everyday life teach that the innocent is always blessed and the guilty always suffers? Why do these men keep insisting that this is so?

**Day 2: The Second Cycle of Speeches - Job's Defense**

Job continues to maintain his innocence and his wish for a mediator (Job 16:17, 21). Though mocked and scorned in his suffering, Job will not give up (17:9). Job makes his strongest statement yet that God has wronged him (19:6-22). Even still, "*I know that my Redeemer lives*" (19:25) he says. Finally, Job responds to the argument advanced by his friends. The wicked often **do** prosper (21:7-21). In a passage similar to later reflections in Ecclesiastes, Job sees death as the common fate of great and small (21:22-26). What, then, is the advantage of righteousness? Suffering brings all these questions to mind.

3. What does Job say he would do if he was in his friends' place (Job 16:4-5)?
4. What has added to Job's suffering (19:13-15)?
5. Where does Jesus teach that the wicked are blessed by God in material things?

**Day 3: The Third Cycle of Speeches**

It is now obvious that Job and his friends are at an impasse. They will not accept his claim of innocence, and he will not admit to sin which has brought on the calamity. In frustration Eliphaz wildly accuses Job of sin (Job 22:4-11) and Bildad rattles on about

the transcendent power and righteousness of God (Job 25). Zophar is silent. Job still longs for a hearing before God (23:1-7), and confesses the sovereign but hidden workings of God (23:8-10). Like many who have come after him, Job laments the violence and treachery upon the earth with apparent impunity: *“Yet God does not charge them with wrong”* (24:12). In a direct appeal to God, Job reflects upon his past prosperity, honor, influence (29:1-25), and he affirms his moral and spiritual integrity (31:1-34). In between (Job 30), he details his sufferings. *“I cry out to You, but You do not answer me ... But You have become cruel to me ... Oh, that I had one to hear me! ... Oh, that the Almighty would answer me ...”* (Job 30:20-21; 31:35).

6. What gives comfort to the godly man in the day of distress (Job 23:11-12)?
7. Describe what kind of man Job was from Job 31:1-34.
8. Even though Job feels mistreated by God, what will he not do (Job 27:1-6)?

#### **Day 4: The Speech of Elihu**

Elihu’s contribution to the debate is hard to assess; indeed scholars through the centuries have debated his character and his words. Elihu is angry with Job *“because he justified himself rather than God”* (Job 32:2); and he is angry with Job’s friends for condemning Job without evidence (32:3). Elihu rebukes Job for insisting so strongly on his innocence (33:8-11); it is possible that God has been trying to tell Job something that Job cannot hear through his self-righteousness (33:12-14). He continues to rebuke Job for accusing God of injustice (34:5-12); Job should have reacted more humbly (34:31-32).

9. Why did Elihu wait until now to speak?
10. Are older men always wiser than younger men?
11. What does God desire men to do regarding their sins (Job 33:27)?

#### **Day 5: The Speech of Elihu**

Elihu faults Job for suggesting that his righteousness surpassed that of God (35:2-3). Job has not waited patiently for God’s vindication, but God has patiently endured Job’s foolish talk (35:13-16). Elihu upholds the justice of God in the affairs of men (36:1-12) and says that Job is on shaky ground in his criticisms of God (36:13-23). Elihu’s speech ends with praise for what can be seen of God in nature: *“He seals the hand of every man, that all men may know His work ... Listen to this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God”* (37:7, 14).

12. Even if we do not understand our circumstances, what should we not accuse God of?
13. Describe God from Job 37:23-24.

**Day 1: God Finally Speaks**

Job had begged for his day in heaven's court and challenged God to show him his fault (Job 10:2; 13:3, 22; 23:3; 31:35), but when God finally speaks it is not what Job expects. God doesn't give Job a "behind the scenes" explanation of Satan's accusation and his resultant afflictions; He simply presents Himself as the all-capable creator and sustainer of the universe. In Job 38:1-38, God is now the challenger: Does Job even know the mechanical operation of the world around him? If not, how can he begin to assume anything about God's operation in the unseen world?

1. How does God describe the words that Job has spoken?
2. How is Job limited as a human being (see especially 38:16, 21, 37)?

**Day 2: God's Control of the Animal World**

Job 38:39 - 39:30 rebukes the modern evolutionist even as it did the ancient Job. God declares that He is responsible for the different animals, and His management of the animate world cannot be significantly altered or improved upon by man. Who, then, is Job to criticize God for mismanaging his life? Job's mistake is not in failing to recognize God's transcendent power, for this he acknowledges in Job 9:4-10; 12:7-25; 26:5-14. His mistake is in failing to tie this power together with God's inherent goodness toward man. Job has let his grievous circumstances alter his perception of God; he now sees God as his **enemy** rather than his friend. This is something which no one can afford to do for, when taken to its ultimate end, it fulfills the accusation of Satan. Jesus expects men to draw a similar lesson from nature: *"... do not worry about your life ... Look at the birds of the air ... your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field ... Now if God so clothes the grass of the field ... will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ... But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ..."* (Mt 6:25-34).

3. Describe the character of the wild donkey. Did these qualities naturally develop?
4. Is an ostrich dumb because its brain didn't evolve?
5. The natural disposition of a horse makes it suited for what?

**Day 3: Job's Brief Answer**

God is not through with Job but pauses long enough to elicit a feeble answer from him (Job 40:1-5). God says that Job has rebuked Him. Does this mean Satan was right

about Job? No, for although Job has challenged God in his pain and ignorance, he has not abandoned God. Job didn't merely serve God for personal advantage.

6. What effect does God's direct manifestation to Job produce?

7. What might this suggest about the times of our own weakness and doubt?

## Day 4: Man, Behemoth and Leviathan

God continues His lesson in sovereign power by referring to His control over proud men and untamable creatures (Job 40:6 - 41:34). The identification of the behemoth and Leviathan is uncertain. Most commentators say they are the hippopotamus and crocodile; others think they are dinosaurs. The point of this section is to affirm to Job that nothing happens in this world without God's permission. God is not the **direct cause** of everything, but all that happens is **known** and **permitted** by God. In the midst of suffering, the man of faith is comforted and strengthened by this knowledge. If not for God's ultimate control, human life would be a nightmare of insanity.

8. What is a man actually doing when he accuses God of wrong (Job 40:8)?

9. God said, "Everything under heaven is \_\_\_\_\_."

## Day 5: Job's Restoration

Job is brought to the dust of humility simply by the appearance of God and the reminder of His divine power (Job 42:1-6). This is enough of an explanation for Job; he confesses his ignorance and repents. God then turns His attention to Eliphaz: *"My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has"* (Job 42:7-9). Why such strong words against those who were zealously defending God's honor? First, their reasoning made God responsible for all the evil in the world. Secondly, according to their view, the wicked man would feel justified by his blessings. Thirdly, they wrongly accused Job of sin and were lacking in mercy and compassion toward him. Zeal without knowledge is a dangerous thing; it is what led to Jesus' crucifixion. Job, the one whom they so bitterly opposed, now offers a sacrifice on their behalf. The story of Job has a happy ending (Job 42:10-17), but this is not the moral of the story. God's faithful children will not always be repaid in this life for their suffering, but afterward will enjoy the riches of heaven (see Rom 8:18).

10. Who treated Job better, his friends or God? How should this make us careful?

11. How much did God restore to Job?

12. Do you think Job was a real or mythical person? (See Ezek 14:14, 20; Jas 5:11)

13. Discuss how this book can be of practical help in times of suffering.