

POETRY

JOB – SONG OF SOLOMON

TMBC Course #5



Leader's Guide

Dear Bible Study Leader,

Thank you for joining us in this study of the five Poetic books of the Bible. God is very concerned about the hearts of His people and poetry speaks to our hearts. In these books God speaks to the hearts of His people when they are suffering (Job), worshiping (Psalms), needing wisdom for the difficult decisions of daily life (Proverbs), doubting (Ecclesiastes), and expressing the intimacies of marriage (Song of Solomon).

If this is your first Bible study course to lead, welcome and I want to give you some words of encouragement that the Apostle Paul told Timothy, his son in the faith: “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1-3).

I want to encourage you to nurture believers and help the church grow. Remember, as we move through the study, ask yourself and your group the following questions:

- What does the Word of God say?
- What does this passage mean? And then most importantly;
- What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply God’s eternal principles to my life today?

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart and if you have these three questions in mind and search for their answers, then this course will be truly fruitful and profitable in your life and in the lives of those you will be leading through this study. I trust and pray that as we study these books of God’s poetry and wisdom, and then as you lead others, you will grow in the knowledge of God and in your relationship with His Son, Christ Jesus.

The thoughts and ideas given in this introduction are to help you be more effective in your study and leading. It is my prayer that the experience of this study will continue to help you in your journey and nurture you in your faith as you continue to grow in your spiritual life and lead others in their spiritual journey.

Praying for our Lord’s richest blessing upon you and your ministry,

Dick Woodward
Pastor and author of the Mini Bible College

Leading the Bible Study Group

The Mini Bible College has prepared this devotionally practical survey of the foundational books of the Bible. Your role as teacher is to guide your group through the study sessions and exercises, helping them to understand the concepts, discover the eternal principles and, most importantly, apply them to their lives. This is a survey study that will take almost four months and is designed to be more than just a course. This study is part of a strategic plan to provide you with the tools to nurture and grow personally and help your church grow both spiritually and numerically.

To help you we have provided the following tools:

- This Leader's Guide
- A Leader's Manual
- Report forms
- Audio of Job through the Song of Solomon
- A study booklet on Job through the Song of Solomon
- A set of 10 workbooks for the students

GETTING STARTED

Before class

- Personally start inviting people to come to this spiritual banquet. ““Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests” (Matthew 22:9-10).
- Prepare yourself in prayer for those who will attend. If possible, pray for them by name. Only God can change the hearts of people, and prayer is the most powerful tool. “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” (Luke 18:1).
- Ask for help. Do not try to do everything yourself. Invite one or two people to help with music, singing, greeting, and keeping records for the class.
- Review the lesson and understand the lesson objective.
- Become familiar with the material; listen, read and study each lesson and memorize the Bible verse before class time.
- Be sure all materials are ready for each class.
- Make sure the meeting area is adequate and comfortable for the class.

During class

(Remember to try to keep the class time to one hour and a half.)

- Greet everyone as they arrive. Remember how nice it is when you are welcomed? Extend God's welcome to all. Have someone serve as the greeter and introduce people to one another if they are not already acquainted.
- Open with a time of worship and prayer, asking God to help you and each one understand and apply the God's Word to your lives.

- Recite the memory verse.
- Listen to the audio lesson.
- Work through the workbook, inviting discussion with a focus on application. We trust the questions will raise interesting discussion and understanding that will lead to application. If the group is large (more than 10), consider dividing it into smaller groups of three or four people to encourage discussion. Be sure to monitor the time and be careful that the conversation does not detract from the focus of the lesson and the study of God's Word.
- Thank all for coming and encourage attendance to the next class.
- Challenge the students to invite others to join the Bible study.
- Encourage the students to memorize the biblical passages of the lessons each week.

After each class

- Gather up all materials.
- Restore the meeting room to the proper order.
Leave things more orderly than you found them.
- Fill out and file report forms.
- If you are meeting in someone's home, be sure to thank them for their hospitality.

Special Instructions for Teaching Auditory Learners

It is important to remember that those who cannot read and write learn and retain information differently than those of us who are literate. The auditory learners learn from listening and telling what they have heard. Illiteracy was not an obstacle in Jesus' day. It is good to remember and even tell those in your class that most of the disciples and the majority of the people who first shared and spread the Gospel could not read or write.

In many ways, auditory learners have a greater capacity to learn what they hear than we who must write something down to remember it. Take the time, therefore, to allow your students to hear the Scripture and the lessons, pausing the message and even going back to listen again to a portion if it was not understood, and then allow them to respond to questions. When auditory learners can "story back"—tell in their own words what they have heard and learned—it indicates that they have properly grasped the principle. Therefore, use the study questions to guide the study time as it will help in the learning process. Ask the questions out loud and encourage all to participate and this will lead them into a deeper understanding of God's Word and a stronger relationship with His Son, Jesus the Christ.

The Outward Man and the Inward Man

Chapter 1

Audio Lesson: Old Testament # 46



Objective: To understand the purpose of the Bible's five poetry books and how they fit with the rest of Scripture.



May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

—Psalm 19:14

God's Word includes five poetry books, also known as "wisdom books" or "the writings": Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. In these books, God speaks to the hearts of His people when they are suffering (Job), worshiping (Psalms), coping with the decisions of daily life in marriage, parenting, friendships, money, and business (Proverbs), doubting (Ecclesiastes), and expressing the intimacies of marriage (Song of Solomon). As we read these five books, we should feel the finger of God pressing on our heart. His desire is for us to be changed from the inside out, and biblical poetry deals with the heart perhaps more than any other part of Scripture.



1. **True** or false? The poetry books are also called "wisdom" books.
2. **True** or false? Poetry is the language of the heart.
3. True or **false**? Most people do not enjoy reading the poetry books of the Bible because they are not very interesting.

4. True or **false**? The people who wrote the poetry books never wrestled with doubt.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. The messages contained in the poetry books address people _____.
(choose all that apply)

- a. When they have no problems.
- b. Who have all the answers they need.
- c. When they are doubting.**
- d. When they are suffering.**
- e. Who want to conquer kingdoms.
- f. When they are worshipping.**
- g. When they are being intimate in marriage.**

6. How long has suffering been experienced by God's people?

- a. Never
- b. Only since the time of Jesus
- c. Occasionally during times of our disobedience
- d. Always**

7. Which of the following are books of poetry? (choose all that apply)

- a. Psalms**
- b. Numbers
- c. Job**
- d. Joshua
- e. Esther
- f. Song of Songs**
- g. Ecclesiastes**
- h. Ruth
- i. Proverbs**

8. Which of the following was used as a hymn book for Israel's worship?

- a. Song of Songs
- b. Leviticus
- c. Psalms**
- d. Ezra

9. Who wrote most of the Proverbs?

- a. David
- b. Moses
- c. Saul
- d. Solomon**

10. How is the book of Ecclesiastes best described?
- a. **As a warning to us from experience**
 - b. As a collection of songs
 - c. As rulebook for leaders
 - d. As a history of kings
11. When the Bible speaks of our heart, what does it mean?
- a. The organ that pumps blood
 - b. The physical center of our being
 - c. **The inward, spiritual person**
 - d. The outward, physical person
12. Which part of us is made in the image of God?
- a. Our body
 - b. **Our heart, or, in other words, our spirit**
 - c. Our face
 - d. Nothing
13. What is the role of the outward person, or body?
- a. To show people what God looks like
 - b. To teach us through the pain we suffer
 - c. To control our spirit
 - d. **To express our inner spirit**
14. How can our heart change?
- a. **Only God can change our heart.**
 - b. We can change if we have a strong will and try hard enough.
 - c. If we develop new habits, our heart will change.
 - d. It does not matter because it does not need to change.
15. How does God use the poetry books to help change us?
- a. They give us practical steps on how to change.
 - b. If we memorize them, our minds will change.
 - c. **They are devotional in nature and address the needs of the heart.**
 - d. They have all the rules we need to know.



Have you ever experienced God changing your heart? In what ways? What deep needs of your heart do you want Him to help you with? What change do you want God to make in your heart?



Thank God that He cares about not only your behavior, but also about the deepest needs of your inner person. Ask God to speak to your heart during this study of the Poetry Books of the Bible. Ask Him to change your heart however He wants to.



Going Deeper

1. Since the poetry books are the language of the hearts of God's people, what do these five books, and the fact that God mentions the heart 1,000 times in the Bible, tell us about the way God values the heart? (Consider 1 Samuel 16:7) _____

2. Specifically, what part of a human being is being addressed when the Bible refers to the heart? _____

3. How does the book of Job tell us our hearts should respond to suffering? (Consider Job 35: 1-7) _____

4. Consider Jeremiah 17:9, 10. In light of these verses, how do the great prayers of David in Psalms 139: 23, 24 and 51:10 show us what to do about our hearts? _____

5. According to the book of Ecclesiastes, in what three ways did Solomon look for the meaning of life, and why did he decide that the meaning of life could not be found in those three places? _____

6. Explain three ways the Song of Solomon allegorically pictures our relationship to the risen, living Christ. _____

7. How could Solomon have so much amazing wisdom, as demonstrated in the book of Proverbs, and still be one of the greatest failures who ever lived? _____

Hurting Hearts

Chapter 2

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #47



Objective: To introduce the book of Job as the Bible's foremost book on the problem of suffering.



"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

—Job 1:21

God's people have always suffered. Life is difficult and perplexing, and becoming a Christian does not take us out of our troubles. But God has a message for us when our hearts are hurting: Pain and suffering are inevitable, but misery is optional. That is the message of the book of Job.

The book of Job is one of the greatest poems ever written. It can also be read as a three-act play that begins with a conversation between God and Satan, continues with conversations between Job and his friends about his problems, and ends with God restoring all that Job had lost and more. In the first act, God allows Satan to remove all of Job's blessings, including his wealth, his children, and his own health. Job passed these tests by not turning away from God, but he did not understand his problems. Most of the book tells how he and his friends wrestled with the question of why we suffer. In the end, God tells all of Job's friends that they were wrong, and then he restored Job's blessings.



1. **True** or false? Many people feel that the book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible.
2. True or **false**? The best way to come to scripture is to say, "When I know it and understand it, then I will obey and do it."

3. **True** or false? The book of Job is a poem.
4. True or **false**? When we suffer, God wants us to submit without asking any questions.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. Who is the book of Job written to?
- a. People who have no problems
 - b. People who are hurting**
 - c. Pastors and priests
 - d. Non-Christians
6. How can we learn whether scripture is true?
- a. Study for years to understand it.
 - b. Try to prove that it is false.
 - c. Come to it with a heart willing to obey it.**
 - d. Ask religious leaders to explain it.
7. Read Matthew 5:4. How does this verse relate to the book of Job?
- a. Job is an illustration of this verse.**
 - b. Job contradicts this verse.
 - c. Jesus taught that Job did not have enough faith.
 - d. Jesus explained that Job's suffering was not relevant to the Christian life.
8. How do we receive God's blessings in suffering? (choose all that apply)
- a. By learning to ask the right questions**
 - b. By accepting all suffering as what we deserve
 - c. By listening for God's answers to our questions**
 - d. By believing God's answers to our questions**
9. When do we grow most spiritually?
- a. When all is well
 - b. When we become very influential
 - c. Only after being a Christian for ten years
 - d. When we go through trials and testing**
10. According to the conversation between God and Satan in the beginning of the book of Job, why did Job suffer?
- a. Because he was unrighteous
 - b. Because he was righteous and God allowed Satan to test him**
 - c. Because he asked God too many questions
 - d. Because he did not know enough about God

*Blessed are those
who mourn, for they
will be comforted.*
—Matthew 5:4

11. How did Job respond to his suffering?
- a. He cursed God.
 - b. He abandoned his faith.
 - c. He remained faithful.**
 - d. He celebrated.
12. When Satan attacked Job's health, what limit did God place on Satan?
- a. Satan could only attack Job for one month.
 - b. Satan could only cause minor pain.
 - c. Satan could do anything he wanted, even kill Job.
 - d. Satan could do anything except take Job's life.**
13. What is the most important thing we can do when a friend suffers?
- a. To be near and available**
 - b. To say all the right words
 - c. To fix every problem
 - d. To stay far away



Do you ask God questions when you suffer? What do you ask Him? Have you ever heard Him answer?



Thank God that He is always with you, even when you suffer, and thank Him that Jesus has overcome the world. Ask God to use you to comfort other people in their pain and suffering.



Going Deeper

1. If the book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible, what does that tell us about how God prioritizes the ministry of giving comfort to hurting hearts? _____

2. Ultimately, who was responsible for the suffering of Job? (Consider Isaiah 45:7) How does this book answer the question, “Why do the righteous suffer?” _____

3. Explain how the dialogue between Satan and God teaches us that the evil one attacks God’s people within the limits of the permissive will of God. What is the difference between the permissive and the directive will of God? _____

4. Since God tells Job’s friends at the end of the book that they were wrong in everything they said about God and about Job, how should that influence the way we read their discourses? _____

5. Explain how the book of Job is like a commentary on the second beatitude of Jesus, which says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4) (Consider Job 14:10, 14 as examples of the right questions that God desires we ask when we want to experience the comfort and blessing Jesus promised to give us when we are mourning.) _____

6. Demonstrate how Job looked in, looked up and then looked around to discover the solution to the paradoxical why of his suffering. _____

7. Precisely, when and why did God double all his blessings and why did He not double his children? _____

Look In, Look Up, and Look Around

Chapter 3

Audio Lesson: Old Testament # 48



Objective: To learn the right perspective on our suffering from the example of Job.



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

—Job 19:25-27

After Job's friends finished telling him how sinful he must have been to deserve such suffering, a young man named Elihu told them that they had all been asking the wrong question. Job needed to look up and see God's perspective on his suffering because he had been thinking of his faith only in terms of what he would receive from God, not what God would receive from him. When Job encountered God, he repented and then prayed for his friends. After he had prayed for them, God restored his blessings and gave him double of what he had before God had allowed Satan to test him.

Like Job, we can learn from our suffering. Our mourning can lead us to ask the right questions about life and eternity. It can also lead us to listen to God for the answers to our questions. Job waited a long time for his answers, but God did not remain silent forever. And finally we can let our mourning bring us to a place of believing God's answers to our questions. When we do, we will experience the blessing and comfort of salvation.



1. True or **false**? All four men who spoke to Job agreed on every issue.

2. True or **false**? Whenever we suffer, it is always because we have sin in our life.
3. **True** or false? After Job encountered God, he no longer claimed that he was completely righteous.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. What is the subject of the long middle section in the book of Job?
- a. **It is a discussion about why Job is suffering.**
 - b. It is Job's arguing with God.
 - c. It is a good text for us to learn why we suffer.
 - d. It shows us what we should do when a friend is suffering.
5. In the discussions between Job and his friends, who gets blamed for Job's suffering? (*choose all that apply*)
- a. **God**
 - b. The weather
 - c. Satan
 - d. **Job**
 - e. **Job's children**
 - f. Random chance and bad luck
6. What did Job claim to his friends?
- a. That he understood why he was suffering
 - b. **That he was righteous**
 - c. That God allowed Satan to afflict him as a test
 - d. That God did not really exist
7. Which of the following commendable attitudes did Job have?
- a. He was asking the right questions.
 - b. He was listening for God's answers.
 - c. He was believing God's answers.
 - d. **All of the above**
8. In what way does the book of Job prophesy about Jesus?
- a. **Job believed that his Redeemer would come one day.**
 - b. Job's friends told him he needed a Savior.
 - c. God told Job that Jesus would die on a cross to pay for his sins.
 - d. There is no hint of Jesus in the book of Job.
9. Why did Elihu think it was appropriate for him to speak?
- a. He was older than the others.
 - b. He was more educated than the others.
 - c. **He knew that wisdom comes from God's Spirit.**
 - d. He wanted to encourage Job's friends about how right they were.

10. Who or what should be the focus of your life?
- a. Yourself
 - b. Your family
 - c. Your work
 - d. God**
11. What did Job repent of?
- a. All of his past immorality
 - b. Worshiping false idols
 - c. His old perspective of God**
 - d. Having such foolish friends
12. Which direction does God want us to look?
- a. In
 - b. Up
 - c. Around
 - d. All of the above**
13. Which of the following describes a mature Christian?
- a. Someone who expects only to receive things from God
 - b. Someone who expects to receive from God and to give to Him**
 - c. Someone who never expects to receive anything from God.
 - d. None of the above
14. When we suffer as followers of Christ, we should; *(choose all that apply)*
- a. Allow the suffering to help us ask the right questions.**
 - b. Allow the suffering to bring us to a place that we listen to God.**
 - c. Allow the suffering to bring us to a place where we believe God's answers to the right questions.**
 - d. Allow others to see us suffer and complain



What is your motivation for being a Christian: what you expect God to do for you, what you expect to do for God, or some of both? What does the book of Job teach us about those who only expect to receive from God and not give?



Thank God for all you have received from Him. Ask Him what He wants you to give Him and what how He wants you to serve Him.



Going Deeper

1. During the longest section of the book, the dialogue between Job and his friends, what was a common premise they all held together, and what was the focal point of their sharp disagreement? _____

2. How did Job view himself throughout this dialogue before God intervened and spoke with him in a whirlwind? _____

3. How can we explain the complete reversal of Job's view of himself after he saw God and spoke with God? _____

4. After he saw God, why did Job despise himself, and of precisely what did he repent? _____

5. At the worst part of his suffering (Job 19: 25-27) Job receives perhaps one of the oldest and most quoted Messianic prophecies in the Bible. When he claims he will see his Redeemer, does he mean in his flesh or without his flesh? _____

6. In the last chapter of the book (chapter 42: 5, 6), when Job claims that he has heard of God but now he sees Him, does he mean in the way he has just literally seen Him, or does he mean that he now understands God, or both? What do you think? _____

7. How can you apply this marvelous and magnificent "Saga of Suffering" to your own suffering? _____

Thirty Biblical Reasons Why People Suffer

Chapter 4

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #49



Objective: To learn many of the reasons given in the Bible that explain why we might experience suffering.



Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

—2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Why do the righteous suffer? That is a question people have asked for thousands of years. Not only does the book of Job address that question, so do many other parts of Scripture. In fact, the issue of suffering comes up in nearly every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible gives many reasons that help us understand why we suffer.

Many people believe and teach that God wants His people never to be sick, poor, or suffering in pain. But that idea is not found in the Bible—or in the experience of Christians throughout history and in the world today. In fact, the difficult trials that biblical characters went through served to build their character, strengthen them, and teach them about faith. There is purpose in our pain. Though suffering is never enjoyable, it can have many benefits for the people of God.



1. True or **false**? The book of Job is the only book in the Bible that deals with the question of suffering.
2. True or **false**? Anyone who suffers frequently is not living according to God's principles, because God doesn't allow good people to suffer.
3. **True** or false? Some letters in the New Testament address the suffering of God's people.
4. **True** or false? Suffering can have very good results in the life of a Christian.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7. What did Peter tell suffering people about the purpose of their suffering?

- a. They were suffering needlessly.
- b. Suffering tested and proved their faith.**
- c. They deserved their suffering.
- d. Holy people make themselves suffer.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

—1 Peter 1:6-7

6. Why did James say to “consider it pure joy” when we encounter trials?
 - a. Because suffering is the only way to pay for our sins.
 - b. Because pain is only an illusion.
 - c. Because persevering in trials leads to maturity and the “crown of life” that God promised.**
 - d. Because Christians are supposed to be happy all the time, even when suffering.
7. What is the source of all true comfort?
 - a. Other Christians
 - b. Family
 - c. Money
 - d. God**
8. When you need someone to counsel you about a problem, what kind of counselor is best?
 - a. Someone who does not have any problems.
 - b. Someone who has experienced the same kind of problem and been comforted by God.**
 - c. Someone who has the same problems and does not know how to deal with them.
 - d. It does not matter, as long as that person is a Christian.
9. What did God tell Paul about his weakness?
 - a. Christians should not have weaknesses.
 - b. God would answer if Paul prayed harder.
 - c. Paul had not yet earned an answer to his problem.
 - d. Weakness helped Paul depend on God and display God's strength.**

10. Which of the following do we need most for the work of God to be done through us?
- a. A lot of education.
 - b. Exceptional talents and skills.
 - c. Enough money.
 - d. An understanding of our inadequacy.**
11. What does the Bible say about tears?
- a. They are pointless.
 - b. They are like seeds that will grow and produce a harvest.**
 - c. They are only for non-Christians.
 - d. They are only for women and children.
12. When do we experience God's miracles and compassion?
- a. When everything is going well in our lives.
 - b. When we get holy and righteous enough.
 - c. When we have great needs and cry out to Him.**
 - d. When we least expect to.
13. What does it mean when Christians suffer for their own mistakes?
- a. God is treating them as His own children.**
 - b. God has abandoned them.
 - c. They have lost their salvation.
 - d. Satan is punishing them.

Here are 30 reasons God's people suffer. This list is not to be used to point at others, as Job's friends did, but to help you examine and perhaps understand why God is allowing suffering to touch you or those near and dear to you.

1. God sometimes wants His people to make the great discovery that He is the source of a very special quality of comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
2. God sometimes uses suffering to train, equip, and prepare qualified ministers of comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:5-7)
3. God sometimes wants His people to learn that He is the source of a very special quality of wisdom they must have in their crisis of suffering and to live in this world. (James 1:2-8)
4. God is fiercely committed to our spiritual perfection. (Matthew 5:48; 2 Timothy 3:17)
5. God sometimes wants His people to learn how to access the grace He has made available to all of His people. (2 Corinthians 9:8; Romans 5:2-5)
6. God sometimes wants to grow spiritual character in the lives of people He is calling to difficult but fruitful ministry. (Romans 5:2-5)
7. God sometimes wants His people to develop the drive and motivation that come from their suffering through their suffering through very difficult experiences when they are young. (Lamentations 3:27)
8. Suffering can sometimes be God's "seminary" in which God trains and prepares qualified ministers of the Gospel. (2 Corinthians 6:3-13; 11:23-28)

9. God sometimes desires to give His children “miracle milestones” while they are suffering, that will encourage them and inspire them to believe as they confront present and future challenges to their faith. (Psalm 23:1-6; 3:3-8)
10. God needs a “highway” on which He can travel into this world and show the people of this world His salvation through the way His people live when they are suffering. (Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke 3:4-6)
11. God sometimes uses suffering to turn the weakness of His people into a showcase in which He can exhibit His power and His strength. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 3:5; Galatians 4:13-15)
12. God sometimes reveals the inadequacy of His people as a prerequisite before He proves His own adequacy to His people and through His people. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
13. God sometimes wants His people to forsake their pride and learn humility. (Proverbs 8:13; 2 Corinthians 12:7)
14. God sometimes wants to use the tears His people shed, in their experiences of suffering, as precious seeds God is sowing in the garden of their lives that will yield much fruit for them and for their God. (Psalm 126:5-6)
15. God sometimes uses suffering as a “cutback” even though it may appear to be a “setback.” (John 15:1-5)
16. God wants the whole world to know that a great Treasure lives in His people and that great Treasure is responsible for all the mighty works that are accomplished through His people. (2 Corinthians 4:4-10)
17. God sometimes wants His people to experience growth in their eternal, inward man, while their merely temporal, outward man is perishing. II Corinthians 4:4-10
18. God wants to teach His people the difference between earthly treasures and heavenly treasures. (Hebrews 12:26-29, 1 John 2:17)
19. God is preparing His people for eternity by burning out of His people everything that is contrary to the spiritual, holy and eternal essence of His nature. (Hebrews 12:29; 1 John 3:3)
20. God’s people are sometimes reaping a harvest of corrupt seeds they have planted in the garden of their lives. (Galatians 6:7-8)
21. God sometimes uses suffering to chasten His children when they are living in sin and disobedience. (Hebrews 12:5-13; John 1:12-13; Jeremiah 29:11-14)
22. God sometimes uses suffering when the risen, living Christ is standing at the door of a person’s life, patiently knocking through His rebuke and chastisement in order to have an intimate, lordship relationship with those who call Him Savior. (Revelation 3:19-20)
23. God’s people sometimes suffer in the “hog pen” provided by their loving heavenly Father to bring them to their senses as prodigals and turn them in repentance toward their Father’s home. (Luke 15:11-20)
24. God’s people sometimes suffer chastisement because God wants to give them a share in His holiness. (Hebrews 12:10; 2 Peter 1:15; 4:1)
25. God’s people sometimes suffer because this world hates Jesus Christ and persecutes those who represent and proclaim Jesus Christ to this world. (Matthew 5:10-12; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:11-12; Revelation 2:10)
26. God sometimes wants to purify the faith of His people. (2 Peter 1:1-7)
27. God’s passionate followers of Jesus Christ sometimes suffer because it is their calling to follow the example of their suffering Savior. (2 Peter 2:21)

28. God's people sometimes suffer because they are entering the Kingdom of God through the door of tribulation. (Acts 14:22; John 3:3, 5)

29. God uses sickness and death sometimes to show His people that only Jesus Christ can solve life's two most unsolvable problems. (John 11:1-45)

30. God is sometimes establishing His relationship with His people by using the shepherd's staff of suffering to make His people lie down in green pastures, in this life and in the life to come. (Psalm 23)



Have trials and suffering helped you grow as a Christian? In what ways? Now that you have had this lesson, how will you respond differently next time you suffer?



Thank God for the many ways that your trials can help you grow closer to Him and how they give Him an opportunity to work in your life. Ask Him to help you stand firm and be encouraged in the midst of your suffering. Ask Him to show you someone who is suffering who you can encourage and help.



Going Deeper

1. As you examine all of these Biblical explanations for the suffering of God's people, why would you say God has given us all these explanations? _____

2. Does God promise us that we will understand everything as we walk with Him? (Consider Isaiah 55) Why or why not? _____

3. Do you think we should love God for allowing the hard reality that His people do suffer? Explain your answer. _____

4. As we consider these 30 Biblical explanations, should we consider this to be an exhaustive list? Why or why not? _____

5. How should we use this list ourselves and how should we share this list with those we know who are suffering? _____

6. Why should we not tell them, "The explanation for your suffering is number 21, 22, or 24"?

7. Why should we prayerfully consider these explanations and encourage others to do the same, asking God to show us which of these explanations may be relevant in our suffering? _____

Responding to Life's Trials and Problems

Chapter 5

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #50



Objective: To understand more about how suffering is used in our lives and how we can respond to it in a way that honors God.



I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

—Romans 8:18

When we first encounter suffering in the Christian life, we do not really understand why. As we grow and learn from the Bible, however, we begin to find many reasons that people suffer. Great benefits can come out of the trials we face, especially when we are able to stand firm in our faith through them. Even though life puts us through trials and problems, God uses the process to mature us, to affect other people, and to glorify Him. This chapter continues to examine many of the biblical reasons we suffer.



1. **True** or false? Trials and tribulations help prepare believers to minister to each other.
2. True or **false**? The apostle Paul never experienced any hardships.

3. True or **false**? Jesus always helped His people avoid their trials.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. Who is responsible for doing the ministry of the church?

- a. The pastor
- b. Teachers
- c. All Christians**
- d. Men

5. Which of the following is most important in our trials?

- a. Getting out of them
- b. Avoiding them before they start
- c. The character and attitudes with which we respond to them**
- d. Confessing the sins that caused them

6. Which common item does the Bible use to describe Christians?

- a. A sharp knife
- b. A hammer
- c. A fine garment
- d. A clay pot**

7. According to Paul, what is a key to experiencing the power of Jesus?

- a. Sharing in the suffering of Jesus**
- b. Memorizing many Bible verses
- c. Attending church regularly
- d. A pilgrimage to Jerusalem

8. Which part of your life is eternal?

- a. Your physical body
- b. Your suffering
- c. The visible part
- d. The invisible part—your spirit**

9. What part of us does God burn away?

- a. All of our desires
- b. Everything that we are attached to
- c. Everything that is contrary to His nature**
- d. Eventually, every part of us

10. How many reasons are involved each time you suffer?

- a. Only one
- b. Usually several**
- c. Always 30
- d. We never can know how many reasons or which ones.

11. What promise did Jesus give us about suffering, especially persecution?

- a. **We will receive a heavenly reward.**
- b. God will immediately destroy our enemies.
- c. If we have faith, we will never experience persecution.
- d. God will honor our attempts to retaliate.



What kind of seed are you sowing into the garden of your life? Are you sowing more seed into the things of your earthly nature or into the things of the Spirit? What changes do you need to make to produce more eternal fruit?



Thank God for His promise of eternal blessing. Pray that He would help you remain focused on the eternal things of the Spirit rather than on your earthly nature, which soon will pass.



Going Deeper

1. What did Jesus promise His followers regarding tribulation? (Consider John 16:33; 12:24-28)

2. Since the poetry books are addressed to the heart or inner man of God's people, and the first of the poetry books is about suffering, how can you relate this first poetry book to the emphasis of Paul that, though our outward man is perishing through suffering, our inner man can be renewed every day? (Consider 2 Corinthians 4: 7-18)

3. Which dimension of our being is the eternal part of us? Relate that to the reality that God is interested in growing and maturing the heart or the inner man of His people by permitting, or even directing suffering into their lives.

4. Have you shed tears of suffering that have proven to be seeds planted in your life that have brought forth much spiritual fruit for God? (Psalm 126) Explain.

5. How does God use suffering to burn out of us everything contrary to His holy nature, and in this way, to prepare us for the eternal state with Him forever? (Hebrews 12:26-29)

6. When God chastens His people through suffering, does this mean that He does not love them, or does it confirm the miracle that they are His children and He is their Father? (Consider Hebrews 12: 5-11) Explain.

7. Relate these Scriptures that tell us about access to the grace of God to the teaching of Paul in these same verses, that we should rejoice in our tribulations or suffering (2 Corinthians 9:8; Romans 5:2-5). _____

He Maketh Me Lie Down

Chapter 6

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #51



Objective: To introduce the book of Psalms and learn how it can help us worship.



*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul,
He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
Your rod and your staff comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

—Psalm 23

The book of Psalms is a worship book of songs, poetry, and prayers. There are 150 psalms written by various people, including David, Asaph, priests, temple musicians, one by Solomon, one by Moses, and others. In some of the psalms, the writer is talking to God about God; these are psalms of praise. In others, the writer is talking to God about man; these are psalms of prayer. And in the third kind of psalm, the writer is talking to man about God; these are psalms of preaching. When reading psalms, it is important to understand who the writer is addressing and who he is writing about.

Four major themes are found in the psalms. One kind of psalm tells us about those who are blessed—how and why God blesses those who love Him and serve Him faithfully. Another kind expresses the emotions we feel—from fear and despair to joy and celebration. Another clear theme in the psalms is worship—praising God and giving Him honor. The fourth theme is prophecy—psalms that told something about the coming of the Messiah.

The best-known psalm is Psalm 23, a “blessed man” psalm that portrays God as a wise and gentle shepherd who cares greatly for His sheep. It is one of the most beautiful descriptions in the Bible of the relationship between God and human beings.

1. **True** or false? The book of Psalms was the hymnbook of God’s people.
2. True or **false**? The psalms have much truth in them, but they are not very good poetry.
3. True or **false**? Our blessings are accidental; there is no reason for them.



Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. Which of the following are purposes of psalms? (*choose three*)
 - a. **Praise**
 - b. Entertainment
 - c. **Prayer**
 - d. **Preaching**
 - e. Judgment
 - f. Storytelling

5. Which of the following seems to be the most common theme in the book of Psalms?
 - a. **The “blessed man” theme**
 - b. The “end of time” theme
 - c. The “obey the law” theme
 - d. The “angry God” theme

6. Which of the following are key elements in the psalms? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Adventures
 - b. **Emotions**
 - c. Science
 - d. Bitterness
 - e. **Experiences**
 - f. **Worship**

7. Why do some of the psalms contain curses on enemies?
 - a. Because God wants us to curse our enemies
 - b. **Because they were written long before the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus said to love our enemies**
 - c. Because God wants people to know how angry He is
 - d. Because the book of Psalms is not inspired like the rest of Scripture

8. What is a messianic psalm?
- a. **A prophecy about Jesus**
 - b. A story about Israel's history
 - c. A prayer for help
 - d. A teaching on the law
9. Who wrote most of the psalms?
- a. Paul
 - b. Moses
 - c. Elijah
 - d. **David**
10. How does Psalm 23 portray God?
- a. As a king
 - b. As a priest
 - c. **As a shepherd**
 - d. As a musician
11. What is the key to receiving all the blessings of Psalm 23?
- a. Being a shepherd for other people
 - b. **Submitting to the Lord as your personal shepherd**
 - c. Becoming mature enough not to need a shepherd
 - d. Spending a lot of time with sheep



Is there a time in your life when you asked the Lord to be your shepherd? How has He guided you and cared for you since then?



If you know the Lord as your shepherd, thank Him for His love and tell Him you trust Him to take care of all your needs. If you do not know Him as your shepherd, will you consider asking Him now? Talk to God and tell Him that you need Him to be your shepherd. Ask Him to come into your life and help you follow Him each day. If you have asked the Lord Jesus to be your shepherd, tell someone, perhaps the leader of this Bible study group so that they can help you grow in your faith.



Going Deeper

1. Relate the green pastures, the quiet or still waters, the paths of righteousness, the table of provision, the full cup and all the other blessings of this blessed man to the opening statement of the psalm. _____

2. How does the author establish his relationship with his Shepherd? _____

3. How does this psalm profile the believer's philosophy of life? _____

4. How does this psalm profile the believer's philosophy of death? _____

5. How does this psalm profile the believer's prescription for failure? _____

6. In what ways does this psalm present the greatest description in writing of the relationship a human being can have with God? _____

7. Since the word "mercy" in the last verse means "unconditional love" and the word "follow" can mean "pursue," in what way is the last verse of this psalm one of the greatest expressions of the love of God in the Bible? _____

Profiles of a Blessed Man

Chapter 7

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #52



Objective: To understand what kind of person God promises to bless.



Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way or sit in the seat of mockers. His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

—Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 1, like many blessed man psalms, presents both positive and negative truths. We learn what blessed people do *not* do, and then what they do. Then we learn how the godly are blessed and the ungodly are not. The theme of the “blessed man” psalms is that our convictions and our choices in life have a lot to do with how our life turns out and how God establishes us.

What are the blessings of the blessed person? Like a flourishing tree, a blessed person is stable because of deep roots, bears fruit because of his love for God’s Word, lives long and well, prospers in whatever he does, and remains secure in his relationship with God. When we read psalms that describe those who will receive these blessings and those who will not, it is important to ask ourselves this question: Which one am I?



1. **True** or false? It is possible to have a very personal relationship with God.

2. True or **false**? Sheep survive pretty well without a shepherd.
3. **True** or false? Psalm 23 is a good outline for our worship.
4. **True** or false? The blessings we receive are directly related to our relationship with God.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. In what ways do shepherds take care of sheep? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. They lead them to water they can drink.**
 - b. They train them to take care of themselves.
 - c. They set them on their feet when they fall.**
 - d. They make them lie down in submission.**
 - e. They lead them to safe pastures.**
 - f. They make them hunt for their food.
 - g. They protect them.**
 - h. They lead them away from any kind of hardship.
 - i. They provide for them.**
6. What does Psalm 1 explain?
 - a. Why righteous people and sinners reap the same rewards
 - b. Why wicked people prosper
 - c. How righteous people earn their salvation
 - d. How God blesses the righteous and lets the wicked perish**
7. What does the blessed person do?
 - a. Spends most of his time with wicked people
 - b. Listens to ungodly counsel
 - c. Loves God's law and meditates on it**
 - d. Pursues fame and wealth
8. What did God's law require Israel's kings to do?
 - a. Copy God's law and read it daily**
 - b. Take a census every five years
 - c. Become a priest before ruling as king
 - d. Plant a tree near a stream
9. What benefits does a blessed man receive? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. He becomes rich.
 - b. He never has any problems.
 - c. He bears God's fruit in God's time.**
 - d. He wins every argument and defeats every enemy.
 - e. He lives a long time.**
 - f. He prospers in everything he does.**

10. What is the Bible's primary emphasis when it uses the word "prosperity"?

- a. Success in business
- b. Spiritual richness**
- c. Many servants
- d. Importance in society

11. What are the consequences of being unrighteous?

- a. An easy life of comfort
- b. True happiness and peace
- c. Many friends and few enemies
- d. An unsatisfying and unstable life**



Have you ever sought for things that did not lead to contentment and lasting satisfaction? What were they? Why were they not successful? What can you do to experience God's blessings?



Thank God for His Word. Ask Him to help you hunger for His Word and to delight in His ways. Pray that you will be obedient and follow where He leads you, to a blessed life.



Going Deeper

1. How does the blessed man, delighting in God's Word and meditating on it day and night, relate to the metaphor of him being like a tree planted *by streams of water*? _____

2. What positive characteristic of the blessed man is profiled for us by the negative statement that he does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly or the wicked? _____

3. In the same way, what are we being told about this man when we read that he does not stand in the way of the sinner? _____

4. What does it mean when we read that he does not sit in the seat of mockers? _____

5. What is the connection between the fact that he does not sit in the seat of the mockers and all the blessings he enjoys? _____

6. Give four examples of how the blessings of this man are not a coincidence but a banquet of consequences. _____

7. In what way is the First Psalm a pattern for all the blessed man psalms that will follow? _____

Blessed is Everyone

Chapter 8

Audio Lesson: Old Testament # 53



Objective: To understand why some people are blessed and others are not.

(Leader: Read all of Psalm 128)



Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. I know that the LORD is great, that our LORD is greater than all gods.

—Psalm 128:1-2, 5

Many people believe that God should bless everyone regardless of the choices they have made and the convictions they have held. But the Bible is very clear that many of the blessings that come from God are conditional. The blessed man is blessed because of his faith and his choices.

The psalms promise blessings to those who love and fear the Lord and walk in His ways. In the book of Job, however, Job's friends told him the same thing and that he must have sinned in order to suffer so much. God told these friends that they were wrong. Does that mean that the psalms contradict the book of Job? No, the blessed man psalms are general principles, not absolute rules. We learn from them that people generally reap what they sow, and when people like Job suffer, they are exceptions to the rule. And it is important to remember that Job eventually was blessed. From an eternal perspective, obedience to God always brings blessing.



1. True or **false**? The “blessed” psalms and the book of Job contradict each other.

2. True or **false**? Blessed people are never tested by God.
3. **True** or false? The blessings of God can impact families, cities, and countries.
4. **True** or false? Without God, you cannot be a truly good parent.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. According to Psalm 128, who is blessed?
 - a. Everyone
 - b. Everyone who is perfect
 - c. Everyone who fears the Lord and believes in Him**
 - d. Everyone who memorizes this psalm
6. How do God's blessings fit with plans for the future?
 - a. His blessings help fulfill our plans.
 - b. His blessings help us fulfill His plans.**
 - c. His blessings do not impact the future. They are simply for our pleasure.
 - d. He only gives His blessings after we have accomplished His plans.
7. Who does God work through first in order to bless a nation?
 - a. The government
 - b. Economic investors
 - c. The church
 - d. Families**

*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city the watchmen stand guard in vain.
In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves.
Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth.
Blessed is that man whose quiver is full of them.
They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gates.*

—Psalm 127

8. Which of the following can *never* result in futility?
 - a. The labor of human beings
 - b. Building a church or temple
 - c. Being concerned about the right things
 - d. The work that the Lord does**
9. What is Satan's best strategy for hindering God's people?
 - a. Destroying families**
 - b. Corrupting spiritual leaders
 - c. Attacking governments
 - d. Making people sick

10. What does the Bible say about children?

- a. They are a hindrance to ministry.
- b. They are not important.
- c. They are a great blessing from God to parents.**
- d. They are good laborers.

11. How can human beings accomplish works that are truly good and lasting?

- a. By cooperating with each other
- b. By following the Lord's plans and depending on His strength**
- c. By developing a good strategy
- d. By working at least sixteen hours each day



In your family and your work, whose strength do you depend on? How important is it for God to be the builder of your life?



Ask God how He wants your blessings to fit with His plans. Thank Him for including you in His purposes. Ask God to protect and bless your family so that you can be a living testimony to all of His blessings.



Going Deeper

1. How does Psalm 128 describe the way the blessed man fits into God's strategy for impacting spiritual communities, cities, nations and the world? _____

2. Do the first verses of Psalm 128 teach that everyone is blessed or are the blessings based on conditions? If on conditions, what are they? _____

3. What do Psalms 127 and 128 have in common? _____

4. Since the metaphor of the bow and arrows represents the relationship between parents (the bow) and their children (the arrows), what is the strategy of Satan today? _____

5. Since we're told in Psalm 127 that having children is a good thing and the blessed man has a quiver full of them, does this mean that those who do not have children are not blessed people? Explain your answer. _____

6. After Solomon gives his swan song of regret about being concerned, working hard and building the wrong things, why does he then give those two strong verses about the blessings of having children? _____

7. According to Psalm 128, who besides the Lord is the fountainhead of this blessed family unit? _____

Solutions to Stress

Chapter 9

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #54



Objective: To learn about the emotional psalms and how they help us cope with the anxieties of each day.



Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer. Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

—Psalm 4:1, 6-8

Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. But you, O God, will bring down the wicked . . . But as for me, I trust in You.

—Psalm 55:22-23

Psalms with an emotional theme are often prayer psalms, where the psalmist is talking to God about human beings—usually himself. They teach us that when we bring our feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, discouragement, despair, or anything else to God, He helps us through those feelings and leads us into gratitude and worship. These psalms teach us that God allows us to talk to Him about anything, even our negative feelings, because He is interested in us. He hears us and answers us when we have a conversation with Him. When we receive answers from Him, we should be very encouraged. Life should never be the same again.

When we are experiencing emotional distress, we can always find a psalm that expresses similar emotional distress. The conversations with God that were written by David and other psalmists are useful guides for our own conversations with God. We can follow their example and find rest, trust, and peace to overcome our stress.



1. **True** or false? Prayer psalms are often filled with emotion.
2. True or **false**? Distress is not found in the psalms because it is a sign of spiritual immaturity.
3. **True** or false? God wants our prayers to be two-way conversations with Him.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. How does God respond when we tell Him of our distress?
 - a. He refuses to listen to us.
 - b. He hears us and ministers to us.**
 - c. He tells us we should be stronger.
 - d. He tells us to think more positively.
5. What does it prove when God answers our prayers?
 - a. That He cares for us and knows our needs**
 - b. That He will give us what we want to get us to stop complaining to Him
 - c. That we must have impressed Him with our spiritual maturity
 - d. That we said the right words
6. What is the most important part of our conversations with God?
 - a. When we tell Him our needs
 - b. When we pray for others
 - c. When we confess our sins
 - d. When He speaks to us**
7. When we decide to do what is right and trust God, what are the results?
 - a. Discouragement and disappointment
 - b. Wealth and fame
 - c. Joy and peace**
 - d. Pain and poverty

(Leader: Read Psalm 55)

8. What emotions and attitudes did David express when he wrote Psalm 55? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Grief**
 - b. Peace
 - c. Submission
 - d. Anger**
 - e. Fear**
 - f. Patience
 - g. Pain**

9. What emotions and attitudes does God allow us to bring to Him? (*choose all that apply*)

- a. Grief
- b. Peace
- c. Submission
- d. Anger
- e. Fear
- f. Patience
- g. Pain
- h. Any kind**

10. What does the Bible tell us to do with our burdens?

- a. Carry them alone
- b. Leave them behind
- c. Get others to carry them
- d. Cast them on the Lord**

11. When can we come to God?

- a. Only when we have really big burdens.
- b. We cannot. Only holy righteous people can.
- c. Anytime with any problem, big or little.**
- d. Sometimes when we need help.

12. What should we do when we have stress and problems? (*choose all that apply*)

- a. Complain
- b. Pray**
- c. Try to forget them
- d. Become angry
- e. Listen to God**
- f. Be strong and not let anyone know
- g. Do what is right**



Have you ever prayed to God when you were distressed? How easy or hard was it to tell Him how you felt? In what ways did He answer?



Whatever emotions and attitudes you are experiencing in your life today, talk to God about them and ask Him to help you trust Him. Thank Him for hearing you and for promising to answer.



Going Deeper

1. What emotions was the author feeling in Psalm Four? _____

2. What did he mean when he wrote that he communed with his own heart? _____

3. What did he decide to do that changed his emotions and gave him peace and sleep? _____

4. What does it mean to offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord? _____

5. What motivated him to make that decision? _____

6. What emotions was David feeling when he wrote Psalm 55, what did he do with them, and what did he tell us to do when we are experiencing those emotions? _____

7. When you meet yourself emotionally and experientially in these psalms, in what ways do they show you a prescription for those emotions? _____

The Blessedness of Forgiveness

Chapter 10

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #55



Objective: To understand that God knows us completely and offers His guidance and forgiveness in every problem we have.



Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

—Psalm 139:23-24

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

—Hebrews 4:16

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:9

In Psalms 32 and 51, among others, David speaks of emotions we can all relate to: the feelings associated with guilt. Guilt can be healthy for us up to a point, as it reminds us that we have a standard of righteousness and are accountable to God. But when guilt weighs on us for too long, we grow spiritually dry and can even feel physically sick. Psalms of confession and forgiveness show us the blessings of God's grace and restoration.



David's prayer in Psalm 139 describes the God to whom we pray. God knows and understands everything about us, so He is the perfect counselor in times of difficulty. His presence is always with us, He formed us in our mother's womb, He ordained all of our days, He thinks about us with precious and limitless thoughts, and He protects us. When we understand that this is the God to whom we pray, we can pray with confidence and complete honesty.

1. **True** or false? If someone feels guilty, he or she has at least some sense of integrity.
2. True or **false**? There is no such thing as guilt; it is an illusion of the mind.
3. **True** or false? When we confess our sin, we can experience God's forgiveness.
4. **True** or false? God can reveal Himself not only through nature and the Bible, but also through others.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. Which of the following can be symptoms of guilt? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. **Misery**
 - b. Contentment
 - c. **Frustration**
 - d. **Weakness**
 - e. Spiritual fruitfulness
 - f. **Spiritual drought**
 - g. Freedom
 - h. **Depression**

(Leader: Read Psalm 19)

6. According to Psalm 19, how does God first reveal Himself to us?
 - a. Through the Bible
 - b. Through preachers
 - c. **Through nature**
 - d. Through meditation
7. What does nature show us about God?
 - a. **His glory and His infinite wisdom and power**
 - b. His teaching about salvation
 - c. His laws are limited
 - d. Nothing. God cannot be seen in nature.
8. According to Psalm 19, what can the Scriptures do? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Enlighten the eyes
 - b. Bring joy to our heart
 - c. Make the simple become wise
 - d. Convert the soul
 - e. **All of the above**

9. How is God's revelation described in the Bible?
- a. Adequate, simple, and sometimes helpful
 - b. Beautiful, perfect, and powerful**
 - c. Frightening, obscure, and difficult
 - d. Angry, harsh, and defiant
10. How do we solve our problems of envy and doubt?
- a. By getting more education
 - b. By praying to God and worshiping Him**
 - c. By asking for counsel from others
 - d. By ignoring them
11. Why did David ask God to search his heart?
- a. To see how good David's heart was
 - b. To reveal long-forgotten secrets
 - c. To make David feel better
 - d. To show him the sinful motives and thoughts in order to deal with them**

(Leader read Psalm 139)

12. What does Psalm 139 tell us about God? (*choose all that apply*)
- a. He knows every detail about us.**
 - b. We cannot escape from His presence.**
 - c. He is not interested in our lives.
 - d. God knew the details of our lives before we were born.**
 - e. God formed us Himself.**
 - f. God does not know the future.
 - g. God protects us.**
 - h. God knows all of our thoughts.**



Have you ever felt that your life was a random event? What does God's Word say about that? How does it comfort you to know that He is always with you and has always known every detail of your life?



Ask God to search your heart and mind and to reveal whatever should not be in you. Then confess them to Him and ask Him to help you deal with wrong motives and thoughts. Thank Him for His promise to forgive and cleanse you.



Going Deeper

1. What did God reveal to David about himself in Psalm 51 when David asked God to show him the truth about himself and how he could have sinned so terribly? _____

2. What does David do about the revelation God gave him of why he had sinned? (Consider verse 10) _____

3. In Psalm 32, what do we learn about how David's year of un-confessed sin made him feel, and how does he describe the blessedness of his forgiveness once he confessed his sin? _____

4. How should these two psalms impact un-confessed sin in your life, and how do these two psalms give you a prescription for your confession? _____

5. According to Psalm 19, what are three ways that God reveals truth to this world, and what are the functions and purposes of the Word of God? _____

6. Give a profile of the God to Whom David addresses his prayer at the end of the Psalm 139.

7. In this same psalm, relate verse 16 to the issue of abortion. _____

The Coming and Going of Worship

Chapter 11

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #56



Objective: To learn the appropriate way to enter God's presence and worship Him.



Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

—Psalm 100

In Old Testament times, there was a specific protocol to follow when a person had an appointment with the king. Entering the king's presence was not a quick and simple process. David described worship as entering God's presence with a specific protocol to follow. The only appropriate way to enter into God's presence is with thanksgiving and praise, and one of the best ways to express those attitudes is through music.

When we come into the presence of God, we can come to know by experience things that we have only known intellectually. We experience how good He is, we learn of His desire to know all people in all nations, and we learn to joyfully serve Him. The pattern of worship leads us to greater depth in our relationship with Him and results in greater growth and fruitfulness for Him.



1. **True** or false? Many of the psalms can be used as worship songs.
2. True or **false**? We can only worship God in a group of other believers in church.
3. True or **false**? Music is entertaining, but it has nothing to do with our worship of God.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. How should we enter God's presence?
 - a. With our best clothes on
 - b. With very specific rituals
 - c. With thanksgiving, praise, and singing**
 - d. With grief over what we have lost
5. What do we know after being in God's presence?
 - a. The Lord is God.
 - b. The Lord is good.
 - c. God wants everyone on earth to worship and serve Him.
 - d. All of the above**
 - e. None of the above
6. How long does God's mercy endure?
 - a. Until His patience runs out
 - b. Until we have sinned seven times
 - c. About twenty years
 - d. Forever**
7. How does God rescue people?
 - a. Only physically
 - b. Only emotionally
 - c. Only spiritually
 - d. In every way that we can be lost**
8. What kind of person does God heal and redeem?
 - a. The blind, bound, and broken**
 - b. Only the self-sufficient
 - c. Only the godly
 - d. Only those who are worthy
9. What is God's favorite tool for bringing revival to His people?
 - a. Exposing His people to good teaching
 - b. Allowing His people to experience great needs**
 - c. Giving His people everything they want
 - d. Punishing His people for every mistake

10. What is the end result of all of God's saving work?

- a. **We praise and worship Him.**
- b. We get what we want.
- c. We never have any more problems.
- d. We keep it a secret and never mention it again.



How many ways has God saved you? Have you been healed physically? Delivered from some type of bondage? Had your spiritual eyes enlightened? What has He done that you should praise Him for? Determine to start each day praising and thanking Him.



Thank God for His redemption of every area of your life. Spend some time praising and worshiping Him (describing to Him how good He is) for all He has done.



Going Deeper

1. How can you personally apply the protocol that David gives metaphorically in Psalm 100, of entering into the presence of God? _____

2. In addition to the 'how-to' of worship, how does this psalm define worship? _____

3. What is supposed to happen to us when we worship? _____

4. What are the things we know when we enter into God's presence? _____

5. When we "bless His Name," what are the characteristics of His Name mentioned in this psalm? _____

6. In what way does this psalm emphasize the importance of thanksgiving? _____

7. How does the way this psalm begins and ends show us that the world is on God's heart and should be on our heart as we worship? _____

Taste and See

Chapter 12

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #57



Objective: To understand God's remedy for when we think all is hopeless.



I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

—Psalm 34:1-8

Hopelessness is a huge problem in our world, but God's desire is for the hope He has planted within us to lead us to faith in Him and a personal relationship with Him. People lose their hope when they no longer believe anything good will happen to them. But those who trust in God will be blessed. God invites us to "taste and see" that He is good—to follow Him in obedience and trust His Word in order to experience His blessings. When we do, we discover that God Himself is the good we had hoped to experience in this life.

David wrote Psalm 34, a psalm about God's goodness and His power to deliver, when he was with his "mighty men." These men were fugitives and failures when David first met them, but they grew strong in hope and faith as they experienced God's faithfulness to provide, protect, and deliver them. They are proof that God delights to do extraordinary things through ordinary people.



1. **True** or false? Many of the psalms are a combination of preaching, prayer, and praise.
2. True or **false**? All the men who went to the wilderness to join David were happy and successful.
3. **True** or false? Hope is the conviction that something good will happen.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. Why does God put hope in our heart?
 - a. So we can live with the illusion that life is good
 - b. To keep us chasing after our desires
 - c. To bring us to faith in Him**
 - d. So people around us will like us
5. What happens to those who trust in God?
 - a. They will not be condemned.**
 - b. They will eventually be disappointed.
 - c. They will never know if they were right.
 - d. They will be very popular.
6. How does Psalm 34 tell us to deal with our failure?
 - a. Make sure it never happens again.
 - b. Taste and see that the Lord is good.**
 - c. Accept the fact that we will never succeed.
 - d. Practice until we get it right.
7. Who was David talking about when he wrote that God would not allow His Holy One to see decay?
 - a. Himself
 - b. Moses
 - c. Every believer
 - d. Jesus**
8. What will happen when Jesus comes again? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. The elements will melt with intense heat.**
 - b. Wars will cease.**
 - c. No one will recognize Him.
 - d. He will be exalted in Israel only.
 - e. He will be exalted among the nations.**
9. What hope will we have on “the day of the Lord”?
 - a. No one can ever know for certain if they will be saved.
 - b. We will know we have lived as well as we could.
 - c. God will be our refuge.**
 - d. We will be judged along with all the earth.

10. How can we experience the divine presence of God?

- a. **By being still**
- b. By looking into our own soul
- c. By studying the teachings of many religious leaders
- d. By completing a pilgrimage

11. What is God busy doing at this time in history?

- a. Punishing people for their sins
- b. Making a list of all the prayers He hears
- c. **Building His church**
- d. Trying to solve all the world's problems



Have you ever been still long enough to experience the divine presence of God? If so, what was it like? If not, what changes in your life can you make to spend more time being still with Him?



Thank God for being your refuge. Ask Him to let you experience His divine presence each day. Praise Him for how He will be exalted among all nations. Ask Him to use you to bring His hope to others who are living in despair.



Going Deeper

1. How did the messages that David preached, as recorded in Psalm 34, turn fugitives and failures into the mighty men of David? (Consider 1 Samuel 22:2) _____

2. In what way does this add great meaning to the exhortation of David to these 400 men, "Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together!" (Psalm 34:3) _____

3. In what way does this battle cry of the mighty men of David demonstrate the reality that God delights to do extraordinary things through very ordinary people? _____

4. How does verse 12 of this psalm add meaning to the exhortation of David in verse eight? _____

5. As Psalm 46 prophesies the destiny of this earth, how can God be our refuge and our strength and our very present help? _____

6. What are three things God wants us to know when we are still in the midst of this great calamity? _____

7. How does the teaching of this psalm fit in with the teachings of the Old and New Testaments regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? _____

The Wisdom of Solomon

Chapter 13

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #58



Objective: To learn practical wisdom from the book of Proverbs and understand how to apply it to our lives.



Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

—Proverbs 3:5-7

Be very careful, then how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

—Ephesians 5:15-17

The book of Proverbs is the most practical book in the Bible. Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs, and nearly one thousand of them are in this book. He was considered to be the wisest man in the world. He wrote these practical insights for every area of our lives. He also compiled the writings of other wise people of his day.

Much of Solomon’s wisdom was learned from his failures. He wanted to teach young men not to do as he did. For that reason, the book of Proverbs is in some ways a summary of Solomon’s own life experiences. His purpose was for the wise to become wise leaders, the simple-minded to become wise, and for people to discern how to live right. God inspired him to write and compile this book because He wants us to enjoy the consequences of doing what is right and good.

1. True or **false**? The book of Proverbs is good poetry, but not very practical.
2. **True** or false? Most of the proverbs were either written or compiled by Solomon.
3. True or **false**? Wisdom and knowledge are the same thing.
4. True or **false**? It is not possible to learn wisdom from failures.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. What qualified Solomon to write proverbs of wisdom? (choose all that apply)
 - a. He demonstrated perfect wisdom throughout his life.
 - b. He was inspired by God’s Spirit to write them.**
 - c. He had learned from experience, even his failures.**
 - d. He loved wisdom and knowledge and feared God.**
 - e. He had studied all the ancient philosophers from other cultures.



6. Why did Solomon write so many proverbs?
 - a. **He wanted people to know how to live.**
 - b. He needed to prove his value as king.
 - c. He wanted people to be more loyal to him than to the high priest.
 - d. God sent an angel to dictate the proverbs to him.
7. What is the wisest way to live?
 - a. Seek the most pleasure.
 - b. Transcend the material world.
 - c. **Do what is right.**
 - d. Become a solitary person, living alone and away from temptations of the world.
8. What is the best way for a man to avoid the temptation of adultery?
 - a. To marry many wives
 - b. To live in isolation or among men
 - c. To rely completely on self-discipline
 - d. **To have a fulfilling relationship with his wife**
9. What lesson can we learn from ants?
 - a. How to get the proper amount of rest
 - b. **How to be diligent workers**
 - c. How to eat well
 - d. How to live as individuals
10. What does Solomon say about accusing others?
 - a. It is good to point out others' faults.
 - b. **The wicked accuse, but the godly defend.**
 - c. Only accuse someone when there were other witnesses.
 - d. The godly make sure their accusations are justified.

11. What attitude toward the future does the book of Proverbs recommend?
- a. Never have a plan and let the Holy Spirit guide wherever He will.
 - b. Always have a plan and never depart from it.
 - c. Make good plans, but let the Holy Spirit guide you.**
 - d. Do whatever fits your personality best.
12. What does Proverbs say about disciplining your children?
- a. Discipline should be avoided because it makes children feel bad.
 - b. Discipline should be as severe as possible.
 - c. Discipline demonstrates love.**
 - d. Discipline should be learned as an adult.
13. What is the relationship between wisdom and speech?
- a. Wise people talk constantly.
 - b. Fools do not speak because they do not know what to say.
 - c. Wise people do not permit fools to speak.
 - d. Wise people do not talk a lot and use their words carefully.**



In what areas of your life do you most need to learn God's wisdom? How would your life change if you knew God's ways in those areas?

If any man lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

—James 1:5-8



God promises to share His wisdom with those who ask for it and are willing to follow it. Thank Him for that promise and ask Him to give you the wisdom you need.



Going Deeper

1. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? _____

2. According to Solomon, what is the beginning of wisdom? _____

3. What are we instructed to do when we know that we lack wisdom? (Consider James 1:5) _____

4. Make a chart, with vertical columns, that categorizes the subjects addressed by the proverbs, and then study this book topically. _____

5. To appreciate the wisdom of these proverbs, write five proverbs yourself and share them with your friends. _____

6. To whom are the proverbs primarily addressed? _____

7. Since there are 31 chapters in this book, consider using this book as a calendar and reading the chapter every day that corresponds to the day of the month. What changes would you expect to experience in the ways that you experience events? _____

Solomon's Final Message

Chapter 14

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #59



Objective: To learn from Solomon's experience that without God all of life is meaningless.



Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

—Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Ecclesiastes speaks to the hearts of the people of God when they are searching for answers to the perplexing dilemmas of life. This book is a sermon Solomon preached at the end of his life to young men. He urges the younger generation to learn from his experience as he searched for the meaning and purpose of life.

Solomon explained that he had searched for meaning in wealth, wisdom, and pleasure. Though he became extremely rich, was the wisest man who ever lived, and had participated in all the pleasures the world had to offer, none of these things had satisfied him. It was all empty. The only worthwhile purpose he found in life was to fear God and keep His commandments. He told young people to remember God in their youth and live their lives well, because everyone will face Him and eternal judgment in the end.



1. **True** or false? “Ecclesiastes” means “the preacher.”
2. True or **false**? Solomon said that riches were the key to happiness.
3. **True** or false? Ecclesiastes was written during a time when Solomon was very discouraged.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. What is the book of Ecclesiastes?
 - a. A poem
 - b. A song
 - c. A sermon**
 - d. A story
5. Which of the following gave Solomon true satisfaction?
 - a. Wisdom
 - b. Pleasure
 - c. Wealth
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above**
6. What did Solomon urge people to do instead of trying to find their purpose in wealth, wisdom, and pleasure?
 - a. Live in isolation from others.
 - b. Fear God and obey His commands.**
 - c. Live a balanced life.
 - d. Seek inner peace through meditation.
7. What conclusion did Solomon make about injustice in the world?
 - a. Everyone will reap his rewards in future lifetimes.
 - b. God will judge all people and make things right in the end.**
 - c. Life is unfair, and there is nothing we can do about it.
 - d. Injustice is only an illusion.
8. What attitudes and themes can we find in the book of Ecclesiastes? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Doubt**
 - b. Faith**
 - c. Wisdom**
 - d. Despair**
 - e. Futility**
 - f. Hope**
 - g. Cynicism**
 - h. Instruction**

9. In what ways are husband and wife united in marriage?
- a. Mentally
 - b. Spiritually
 - c. Physically
 - d. All of the above**
10. When are people most likely to think about eternity?
- a. In childhood
 - b. At marriage
 - c. At a funeral**
 - d. At a party
11. What is important to remember when you work with young people?
- a. The fruit comes later.**
 - b. They will not remember what they are taught.
 - c. They learn best when they are punished severely.
 - d. If they are rebellious as a youth, they will always be rebellious.
12. At the end of Ecclesiastes, what does Solomon urge us to do in our youth?
- a. Have fun while we can.
 - b. Save for the future.
 - c. Remember God.**
 - d. Be loyal to the beliefs of our parents and grandparents.



How do you relate to God when you are discouraged or when you have doubts? Are you more likely to grow closer to Him or grow apart from Him? Why?



Honestly talk with God about your feelings. Thank Him that He gives meaning to life, and ask Him to help you live with an eternal purpose and with joy and not in the foolish pursuit of pleasure.



Going Deeper

1. Why did Solomon decide that riches were not the purpose and meaning of life? _____

2. Why did Solomon decide that knowledge and wisdom were not the meaning and purpose of life? _____

3. Why did he decide that pleasure was not the purpose and meaning of life? _____

4. Why would some scholars think that this book was written by two different authors? _____

5. Why does Solomon tell us in chapter seven that it is better to go to a funeral than to a party? _____

6. Why did Solomon preach this sermon to young men at the end of his life? _____

7. Precisely what did Solomon mean by his conclusion that the solution to the whole matter is to fear God and keep His commandments? _____

Jesus Loves Me

Chapter 15

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #60



Objective: To understand why the Song of Solomon is included in the Bible and what it shows us about God's love for His Church and for us.



I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

—Isaiah 61:10

This is how God showed His love among us; He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love; not that we loved God, but He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

—1 John 4:9-11

The Song of Solomon (also known as the Song of Songs) is the last of the poetry books. It is a love song that records the romance of two lovers. Many people wonder why a book about romance and physical intimacy is included in the Bible, but the Song contains important truths. One is that God considers the sexual relationship in marriage to be a very good part of His creation. God created woman to complete man and joined them together in an intimate relationship. God created mankind with the need for intimacy. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Contrary to the beliefs of some, sex within marriage is not unspiritual or unholy. God's Word teaches that it is a pure act designed by God to celebrate love, the joy of oneness, produce children, experience pleasure when protected in committed marriage.

Another important truth in the Song can be found when it is read as an illustration of our relationship with Christ, which is often described in Scripture as a marriage relationship. The two lovers in the Song of Solomon represent the love between God and Israel and the love between Christ and His Church. Not only is this allegory an important picture of God's relationship with His people as a whole, it is also an important illustration of the relationship Jesus has with each one of us individually. It teaches us much about an intimate relationship with the risen, living Christ. This love song speaks the language of the heart about the most important emotion: love.

1. **True** or false? Poetry is the language of the heart.

2. True or **false**? Like the book of Job and some of the psalms, the Song of Solomon is about pain and suffering.



3. True or **false**? The Song of Solomon should not be in the Bible, because God would never inspire a book about intimate sexual love.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. Why is the Song of Solomon in the Bible? *(choose all that apply)*
- a. To teach us the sanctity of intimate love in marriage**
 - b. To show us a picture of God's love for His people**
 - c. To teach us the proper way to love
 - d. To illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church**
5. What is the best way to help young people remain pure?
- a. Teach them that sex is dirty.
 - b. Teach them that sex is good and beautiful in the context of marriage.**
 - c. Never talk about sex in their presence.
 - d. Forbid them from talking to members of the opposite sex.
6. In the Song, which person interrupts the communion between the bride and bridegroom?
- a. Only the bride**
 - b. Only the bridegroom
 - c. Both
 - d. Neither
7. How interested is Jesus in having an intimate and personal relationship with us?
- a. Not very interested, but He will allow it
 - b. Somewhat interested
 - c. Interested with some people
 - d. Extremely interested with everyone who will come to Him**

8. What does God want us to pursue above all?

- a. His gifts
- b. Love for His people
- c. Joy
- d. Jesus**

9. Song of Solomon, Jesus, and the apostle Paul teach us that God's love for us is: (*choose all that apply*)

- a. Pure**
- b. Unconditional**
- c. Undeniable**
- d. Incomparable**
- e. Indestructible**
- f. Eternal**
- g. Irresistible**
- h. Sacrificial**

10. How are we to love each other?

- a. The best we can.
- b. Like they love us.
- c. As our parents taught us
- d. As God loves us.**



How intimate is your relationship with Jesus? Would you like for it to be more intimate? Is there someone you have not been showing God's love to? How can you let them see God's love through your life?

*Love is patient,
Love is kind,
It does not envy,
It does not boast,
It is not proud,
It is not rude,
It is not self-seeking,
It is not easily angered,
It keeps no record of wrongs,
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth.
Love always protects, always trust, always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails.*

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8



Thank God for His deep, passionate love for you. Ask Him to draw you closer and help you grow each day in your relationship with Him. Ask God to show His love to others through you so they could come to know God's love personally too.



Going Deeper

1. Give at least two reasons why Song of Solomon is included in the Bible. _____

2. Why is it so very important to teach our children that an intimate sexual relationship in the context of marriage is a beautiful, holy and sacred relationship in the sight of God? _____

3. What are the negative consequences of teaching children that sex is something dirty? _____

4. How can we accomplish our goal of seeing our children as virgins when they marry, without giving them the impression that sex is dirty? _____

5. Explain how this book is an allegory of the love relationship between the risen, living Christ and His Church in general and you and me in particular. _____

6. Who is the suitor or the one initiating this relationship – the bride or the Bridegroom? _____

7. How do you personally apply the fact that this relationship is never broken by the Bridegroom but only by the bride? _____
