

## Solomon: A Retrospective

(The 6 points below summarize the final message on Solomon.)

**1. He was given a clear and solemn charge; but he failed to fulfill it. See 1 Kings 2:1-4.**

Are you fulfilling the charges that have been spoken over your life?

**2. He was handed a kingdom he didn't have to fight for; but he destroyed it. See 1 Kings 2:10,12; 5:4 and 8:56.**

What are you doing with the privileges you have been given? Are you being a good steward of the things that God has entrusted to you?

**3. He was given a woman to love; but he never learned to love well. See 1 Kings 3:1; 11:1 and Song of Solomon 6:8.**

Are you learning to love well? To be faithful to one person? To honor God's plan for marriage?

**4. He was given unsurpassed wisdom from God; but he failed to live by it. See 1 Kings 3:7-9; 12-14.**

What are you doing with the knowledge that you have already received?

**5. He built the temple of God; but then he desecrated it. See 1 Kings 6:1, 11-13; 11:1-6; 9-11.**

Is there any sense in which you are desecrating the holy things that God has placed under your care? Is your 'self-love' causing you to ruin the work of God in your life?

**6. He spent much of his life searching for purpose; but he never found his purpose. See Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 and compare with Acts 13:36.**

Are you still striving to *find* the purpose of life? Are you searching in all the wrong places, as Solomon did? Or, are you *living out* God's unique purpose for your life as David did?

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 1 – Job’s Calamity**  
**Job 1-3**

**Introduction**

The book of Job holds a very unique place in the Bible, for it is the only book entirely devoted to the issue of suffering. Job, the central character in the story, was a man who lived back in the time of Abraham (Genesis 12) or even earlier. References to Job are found in extra-biblical texts dated as early as 2,000 B.C. He was a very wealthy and powerful man in the land of Uz, to the far northeast of Palestine. Archaeologists have discovered the ruins of over 300 ancient cities in the area of Uz, which indicates that it was a thriving civilization in the days of Job. The man Job was ranked along with Noah and Daniel as the greatest of men of God in the entire Old Testament (Ezekiel 14:14-20). His endurance in suffering became an example for New Testament believers who were going through severe trials (James 5:11).

The purposes of the book of Job are: 1) to show us what God is like; 2) to give us insight into the problem of pain and suffering in our world; 3) to show us the kind of faith that God wants us to exercise in the midst of severe trials; 4) to remind us that God is the sovereign ruler over everything and 5) to teach us that faith in God often requires us to sit in the mystery of His plan without requiring answers from Him.

**Job’s Character: 1:1-5**

The story opens with a description of Job’s character. This is an important prelude, for it establishes at the outset that Job was not a wicked man deserving divine punishment (as his friends will wrongly assert); rather, he was *the most upright man on earth*.

***“This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil” (1:1).***

The “favor of God” was, in that day (as today) measured by the tangible earthly blessings a person enjoyed. By this measure, Job was rich in every way.

***“He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East” (1:2,3).***

Job’s spiritual integrity was evident in the way he interceded for his sons and daughters after their regular days of feasting. He offered sacrifices for them “just in case” they had sinned.

***“His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ This was Job’s regular custom” (1:4,5).***

Job provides a great example of a parent interceding for his children. You may not know all of the details of what your children are up to – whether they are walking with God or acting in ways that are disobedient to God. Job’s example tells us that you don’t really need to know all the details in order to stand in the gap for your children. Pray that they will walk with God. Pray that if they have sinned, God will have mercy upon them and forgive them, even while bringing His loving discipline into their lives. This may be the greatest thing you will ever do for your children . . . simply to bring them before God in prayer regularly. In fact, you can do this every time you think of them. Just whisper a Job-prayer: “God, shower your mercy upon my children, for your name’s sake.”

Some very hard things were about to fall upon a very good man. This is the point of the prelude to Job’s story. The question will be: Why is Job suffering? Job’s friends will try to argue that bad things happen to bad people. Thus, Job *must be* hiding some sin. But this prelude sets us up to know that such an explanation will not suffice in Job’s case. Clearly, this particularly righteous man’s suffering was not a punishment for sinful behavior. In fact, Job was chosen to suffer for precisely the opposite reason – because he was *so godly!*

### **Job’s Calamity – Part One: 1:6-22**

The reader is next transported into heaven to see/hear things that Job was unaware of (throughout the entire book). Angelic beings

(good and bad) were appearing before the presence of God to report upon their activities. The fallen angel, Satan, was among those who appeared to give an account of their earthly activities. Thus ensued a dialogue between God and Satan concerning the man Job and his faith in God.

***The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.” Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (1:7,8).***

It was God, not Satan, who called attention to Job. *Everything* that will happen to Job will be the direct result of God’s *intended plan*. Nothing will happen to Job apart from God’s sovereign authority.

What does the “sovereignty” of God mean? It means that He is truly the KING over every created being, and the RULER over every event that occurs in heaven and on earth. It means that nothing, absolutely nothing happens apart from divine authority. It does NOT mean that God is the author or instigator of evil. It DOES mean that evil cannot run ‘out of control.’ Even evil must run only along the lines of God’s permissive will. Not even Satan, the most powerful force of evil, can make a move without God’s permission. The “sovereign” God is the uncontested King of the universe. He will harness everything, even all “evil” to accomplish His sovereign purposes in our lives and our world.

Satan made a bold accusation against both God and Job, asserting that Job only feared God because God had been good to him. In short, Satan was accusing God of *buying Job’s worship*.

***“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face” (1:9-11).***

Satan’s challenge was simple: If God were to withdraw His favor from Job, then Job’s worship would turn to cursing. In response to this challenge, God gave Satan permission to destroy everything Job had, while not laying a finger on Job himself.

***The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in***

***your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord (1:12).***

Thus, we as readers are given the primary answer to the reason behind Job’s suffering. His life was the chosen battleground for a dispute between God and Satan. God will prove to Satan that His work in Job’s heart is *real, abiding and deeper* than the long list of benefits that Job enjoys. God will show Satan that Job really does have a *love relationship* with Him, a relationship that evokes a *trust* that transcends material blessings.

Note: This is ONE of the many answers that the Bible will give to the question of human suffering: *God will sometimes use suffering in order to showcase Himself through the lives of His children.* The manner in which we suffer becomes a testimony to men and to angels of the glory of God and the sheer beauty of His love relationship with humans. There are, of course, other reasons that the Bible gives for suffering. Even in the book of Job we will later see that Job’s suffering took on a ‘refining’ role, as it revealed some deeper issues in his heart that needed to be brought to the surface and healed. Thus, in the long run his suffering served to purify his faith in God even further (see 1 Peter 1:6,7).

Picking up the story again: In a single day, multiple tragedies fell upon Job. 1) The Sabaeans attacked, stealing his livestock and killing his servants. 2) Fire fell from the sky destroying his sheep and killing the shepherds. 3) The Chaldeans attacked, stealing all of Job’s camels and killing his servants. 4) A windstorm hit where Job’s children were feasting, killing them all at once. Thus, in a single day, through both human attacks and natural disasters, Job lost his fortune, his family and his workforce.

(Note the various means that Satan can use to inflict harm. Not every human attack or natural disaster is the work of Satan; but it is instructive to note that *at times* the evil one is behind such ‘movements of destruction.’ See Mark 4:38-40 where Jesus rebuked a storm that threatened to sink their boat. The Greek language indicates that a personal, demonic power was behind this storm. The wider context of the story makes it clear that this was a Satanic attack against Jesus, His mission and His disciples. For further study on the biblical material concerning Satan, see **Addendum #2** at the end of this section.)

Job’s response at the end of that day was simply amazing:

***At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “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.” In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing (1:20-22).***

Job acknowledged one very important fact about life: Everything we ever have is a GIFT from God in the first place. He is the One that has the authority at any time to GIVE or to TAKE AWAY these earthly, temporary gifts. This is why Job said: *“Naked I came in and naked I will go out.”* Anything that is added to our “nakedness” must be considered a temporary “loan” from God.

When you own something and it is stolen, you feel violated. On the other hand, when you borrow something and the owner comes to ask for it back, you freely release what was borrowed. What a life-changing perspective it is to see everything (health, wealth, family, even life itself) as a pure LOAN from God to us during our brief time here on earth. God can require back from us, at any moment, ANY of the things He has loaned to us. This explains why, in the parable of the rich fool, Jesus used these words to describe the unexpected death of the rich man: *“You fool. This very night your life will be DEMANDED FROM YOU”* (Luke 12:20). The rich fool did not realize that all of his possessions, including life itself, were a loan from God that could be demanded back at any moment. Do you realize that everything you “possess” and enjoy is actually on loan to you from God? Do you further realize, as Job did, that God has every right to take back what He has loaned to you, at any moment He so chooses? Here’s the rule of life according to Job: Anything beyond nakedness is a loan! Hold it with an open hand. Also see James 4:13-15.

### **Job’s Calamity – Part Two: 2:1-13**

After an undisclosed amount of time, another discussion took place in heaven between God and Satan. This time, Satan insisted that Job would curse God IF the suffering hit directly upon Job’s body.

***“Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.” The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life” (2:4-6).***

Again we note that it was God who gave Satan the authority to inflict suffering upon Job, and determined the limits of the suffering. Satan departed from God's presence and inflicted Job with a disease so severe that his entire body was filled with boils and scabs from head to toe. In immense pain, Job sat at the city dump scraping his wounds and lamenting his suffering.

***“Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes” (2:8).***

“Many Bible expositors identify his loathsome disease as elephantiasis, a severe form of leprosy. Some of the horrible aspects of Job's affliction were: a) insufferable itching of the skin, b) skin cracked and covered with boils, first hard and encrusted and then festering with worms or maggots, c) foul breath, d) blackened and chapped appearance of the body, e) pain of the limbs, f) extreme emaciation of the body, and g) anguished frame, made restless by nightly dreams, gaspings and tortures.” Irving L. Jensen, Study Guide on Job.

Job's wife was also suffering. His many losses were also her losses – losing 10 precious children she bore and raised brought her untold grief. She lost her ability to trust God at this point, and she encouraged Job to give up both his faith *and* his life.

***His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!” He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all this, Job did not sin in what he said (2:9-10).***

It is sad to think that in all of his suffering, Job did not have a single helper- comforter who encouraged him in his faith and sat with him in his pain. His wife tempted him to do the very thing Satan said Job would do: Curse God! His friends turned out to be critical and mean-spirited. At the end of the day, Job was left to process his pain alone. This is NOT the way it is supposed to work! The apostle Paul writes: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). Who needs you at this very moment to come alongside of them to “weep” with them in their pain? If you are suffering, who can you reach out to?

At this point, Job's three friends arrived. They will take center stage in the remainder of the story as they seek, with Job, to determine the cause of his suffering. Remember . . . *none of them* were aware of the things going on in heaven between God and Satan. They will all be grasping for answers *while the only true answer remained hidden from them.*

These friends came with the good intentions of “sympathizing with and comforting” Job (2:11). When they saw him, they sat for seven days and nights in total silence. This was a good first step.

***“No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was” (2:13).***

### **Job’s Lament: 3:1-26**

Job finally broke the weeklong silent vigil with his first speech – a lament decrying the day of his birth.

***After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. He said: “May the day of my birth perish, and the night that said, ‘A boy is conceived!’ That day – may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine on it” (3:1-3).***

Job was suffering so greatly that he wondered why he was ever given the gift of life in the first place.

***“Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest . . . (3:11-13).***

The pressure of pain can be immense, causing us to lose sight of past “good” things. We MUST recognize this when we are sitting with a suffering person. Thus, one of the most foolish things we can say to a person in deep suffering would be: “Don’t forget to count all your blessings.” Or, “Remember, you’ve had plenty of good days too.” Job was the most upright and most blessed man on earth in his day. Yet, in the midst of his intense suffering, not even he could remember “the good old days.” When a person is in the midst of deep suffering, THAT is their only vantage point. Enter into THAT situation with them, rather than trying to ‘transport’ them into some happier memory or ‘correct perspective.’ Grief and loss tend to obscure our view of “good theology!”

At the end of his first lament, Job poses the ultimate question of the entire book: Why is life given to *anyone* who will ultimately suffer greatly? Really this question can be framed more broadly: Why does a good and all-powerful God let people suffer at all?

***“Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? Why is life given to a***

***man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in (3:20-23)?***

It is this passage and this question that makes the book of Job one of the earliest “theodicies” (the attempt to explain the existence of evil in light of a God who is all-powerful and all-loving). The entire remainder of the book will be a dialogue between various characters (Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu and God) as they seek to answer this fundamental question: WHY does God allow such things to happen? The great irony (and lesson) in the case of Job is that *an answer will never be found*. Instead, the question of Job’s suffering will be replaced by a different question: If we truly believe that God is GOD, then why must we demand that He justify what He allows to happen to us?

**Addendum #1: William Cowper -  
“God Moves in a Mysterious Way”**

William Cowper’s life was full of pain and suffering. At five, his mother died. In school, he was bullied and mistreated. At eighteen, he fell in love, but his beloved’s father refused to allow them to marry. After completing law studies, he failed to succeed in the profession. At one point, he became so despondent that he attempted suicide. After time in a private asylum, he recovered his reason. Eventually, Cowper met John Newton, the former slave-trader who had become a pastor. Newton was very concerned for his friend, who suffered constant bouts of severe depression. Thus, in 1771, Newton suggested that he and Cowper co-author a book of hymns. “Amazing Grace” is one of the many hymns authored by Newton. Cowper wrote 68 of the hymns, including “Oh for a closer walk with God,” “God moves in a mysterious way,” and “There is a fountain filled with blood.”

*God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.  
Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs and works His sov’reign will.  
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.  
His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow’r.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.*

**Addendum #2: The biblical portrait of Satan**  
(Adapted from Unger's Bible Handbook, pp.520-21)

- He appeared in Eden as the deceiving serpent (Gen.3:1-14).
- He was Lucifer, son of the morning, before his fall (Isaiah 14:12).
- He was the anointed cherub that covers (Ezekiel 28:14).
- He moved David to do evil (1Chronicles 21:1).
- He accused and afflicted Job (Job 1:7-2:10).
- He opposed and accused Israel before God (Zechariah 3:1-9).
- He is the tempter (Matthew 4:3).
- He is the prince of the demons (Matthew 12:24).
- He instigates false doctrine (1Timothy 4:1-6).
- He twists the Word of God (Matthew 4:4).
- He works in demon possession (Matthew 12:22-29).
- He is Satan, the adversary (Zechariah 3:1).
- He is the devil, the slanderer (Luke 4:13).
- He moved Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2,27).
- He moved Ananias to lie to the apostles (Acts 5:3).
- He blinds people spiritually (2Corinthians 4:4).
- He seeks to harm believers (1Peter 5:8).
- He heads a celestial hierarchy of evil (Ephesians 6:11-12).
- He holds power over the unsaved (Ephesians 2:2; John 8:44).
- He performs diabolic miracles (2Thessalonians 2:9).
- He is the father of lies (John 8:44).
- He is a murderer (John 8:44).
- He is the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30).
- He is a fallen angel (Matthew 25:41).
- He sows tares and snatches away the Word (Matthew 13:19).
- He will be bound during the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3).
- He is the evil one (Matthew 13:38).
- He is routed by Spirit-directed prayer (Ephesians 6:10-20).
- He is overcome by faith (1Peter 5:8,9).
- He hinders God's will in believers (1Thessalonians 2:18).
- He is the deceiver (Revelation 12:9).
- He is the dragon (Revelation 12:9; 20:2).
- He viewed Simon Peter as a target (Luke 22:31).
- He will end up in hell (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 2 – Job’s Suffering: WHY?**  
**Job Chs. 3-37**

**Introduction**

The major part of the book of Job records the back and forth debate Job has with his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, concerning the reason behind his suffering. None of them were aware of the conversations between God and Satan, in heaven, that led to the testing of Job. They were trying to answer the WHY question with incomplete information. Their interchange runs through three full cycles, with a young man named Elihu appearing at the end to weigh in with his point of view. The interchange between the three friends heats up as it progresses from discussion to debate to dispute.

The commentary on this lengthy section of Job will take the form of a paraphrase of each of the three cycles followed by a brief summary of the major themes in each one.

**The Discussion Cycle: chs.3-14**

**Job curses the day of his birth: ch.3**

*Obliterate the day I was born! May those who curse days curse THAT day! May God above even forget that day. Had I died at birth I could be resting in peace, asleep forever, feeling no pain. Why do You give life to people, and then drown them in pain? I always feared something terrible would happen to me. So now, I don't have any peace or rest. Only turmoil.*

**Eliphaz rebukes Job: chs.4-5**

*Job my friend, listen to me. You used to give other people advice when they were in trouble. But now when trouble strikes you, you get discouraged. Here's what you need to consider: Do GOOD people ever suffer like you're suffering? No! I've observed that those who plant trouble harvest trouble. I've seen that fools may get away with sin for the moment, but then comes sudden disaster. Don't despise the discipline of the Almighty when you sin. Listen to my counsel, Job, and apply it to yourself.*

### **Job responds to Eliphaz: chs.6-7**

*Eliphaz, what kind of a friend are you? If my misery could be weighed on a scale it would outweigh the sand on the seashore. And now you pile on by accusing me without reason. Look at me! Would I lie to your face? I have done nothing to deserve all of this. A hurting man needs his close friends; but all I get is judgment and rejection from you.*

*I wish that God would answer my prayer and crush me so I could die without denying His words. God, leave me alone for my few remaining days. Why make me Your target? Why don't You just take away my guilt? For soon I will lie down in the dust and die. When You look for me, I will be gone.*

### **Bildad rebukes Job: ch.8**

*Job, how can you talk such nonsense? Does God pervert justice? Does He ever get things backward? It's obvious that your children sinned against Him – otherwise, why would God have punished them? Look: This is what happens to people who forget God – all their hopes come to nothing. They hang their life from one thin thread, they hitch their fate to a spider web. One jiggle and the thread breaks, one jab and the web collapses. God never rejects a good person, and there is no way He'll help a bad one. It's time for you to get down on your knees before God and repent. It's not too late. He'll set everything right again . . . IF you repent.*

### **Job responds to Bildad: chs.9-10**

*How can mere mortals prove their innocence before God? Even IF we wished to dispute with Him, we could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. He performs wonders that can't be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. Who am I to argue with Him? He is not a mere mortal like me, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to mediate between us, who could put his hand on God and put his hand on me. Then I would speak up without fear of Him.*

*God, does it please You to oppress me, while You smile on the plans of the wicked? Your hands shaped me and made me. Will You now turn and destroy me? Remember that You molded me like clay. Will You now turn me to dust again? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return.*

## **Zophar rebukes Job: ch.11**

*Shall we let this mocker silence us? You say to God, “My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in God’s sight.” I wish that God would weigh in here; that He would open His lips against you. Just be sure of this: He knows a deceiver when He sees one. No evil escapes His notice. You’re wasting time, Job. If you would just stretch out your hands to Him and put away the sin that you’re hiding then He will forgive you. You will lift up your face and stand firm and without fear. Life will be brighter than noonday. Stop denying the obvious truth. The wicked never escape God’s judgment!*

## **Job responds to Zophar: chs.12-14**

*So, you’re the three wise men and I’m a big joke? You’re telling me that, “God has done this to me.” WHO doesn’t already know THAT? The birds of the air and the fish of the sea could have told me that. Of course – God is in charge of everything that happens. In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. But your mistake is that you believe God has done this to me because I’m wicked. You smear me with lies. Show me my sin; then I’ll shut up and die. You are worthless physicians, all of you! Your wise words are proverbs of ashes. If only the three of you would say nothing; that would be your wisdom. Oh God – Life is short and full of trouble. How I wish you’d just hide me in the grave!*

**Summary of the discussion cycle:** The three friends have only one formula to offer Job. Bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people. Thus, Job must be guilty of sin and he is not being honest about it. They encourage Job to repent immediately.

Job maintains his innocence, becoming discouraged and even defensive as they attack him. Job does acknowledge that *God has brought this calamity upon him*. What he does not acknowledge is that *his calamity is a punishment for his sin*. For Job, there is some strange and mysterious reason behind his suffering. For his friends, there is nothing mysterious at all. Sinners suffer – plain and simple. (We should note that IF Job had know the reason behind his suffering, then it would not have been a true test. He would have simply waited out the suffering knowing “God was using him as a weapon to defeat Satan” (W. Wiersbe). God’s *complete* silence was a necessary part of the test.)

Takeaways from the discussion cycle:

1. To “sympathize” means to “feel together with.” When you come alongside of a suffering person, your goal should be to enter into their feelings as deeply as possible. You should NOT give unsolicited advice, nor should you seek to provide simple answers to deeply complex problems. Put it this way: You do NOT want to be like Job’s three “friends!”
2. Our equations (or formulas) never do justice to God’s mysterious ways. One important step of maturity in our walk with God is when we make more room in our hearts for divine mystery and less room for tidy, logical explanations. Job’s friends had everything reduced to nice, neat boxes (wrong boxes!). Job, on the other hand, knew that there was something unexplainable about God’s movements in his life. “He has shrouded my paths in darkness” (Job 19:8). It is O.K. to walk through darkness with a Father you truly trust.
3. When trials and suffering hit, we often say, “Why this waste?” Job was leaning in this direction when he lamented the day of his birth. In effect he was saying: What a waste my life has been! When Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with precious, expensive perfume, the disciples complained: “Why this waste?” Yet, if God has called us to suffer, and we respond with a heart of faith and trust, then there is NO waste at all in suffering. “Nothing that is offered to Christ in faith and love is ever wasted.” (W. Wiersbe)
4. How do we keep our hope in God when a trial drags on and on, while no “answer” seems to be forthcoming from God? It all comes down to the object of our faith. We must trust the character of God when we cannot discern the reasoning of God. “Though He slay me, yet I will keep my hope in Him” (Job 13:15).

## The Debate Cycle: chs.15-21

### Eliphaz’s 2<sup>nd</sup> rebuke: ch.15

*Job, you’re full of empty talk. Don’t you fear God? And you act like you know it all! But we’ve got more gray hair than your father! Why do you turn against God and say all these evil things? You only want to justify yourself!*

*No man living is righteous. Can’t you see this? God doesn’t even trust His angels. How much less mortals, who are vile and corrupt, who drink up evil like water! I’ve told you once and I’ll tell you again: Wicked men suffer. When all seems well, robbers attack him. His riches fly away. He can’t escape the darkness. He is cut down in the prime of life. The breath of God’s mouth blows the wicked man away!*

### **Job responds to Eliphaz: chs.16-17**

*You are miserable comforters, all of you! I'm tired of your worthless speeches. O God, you have ground me down and devastated my family! You've reduce me to skin and bones! God hates me and tears me apart! All was well with me, but He shattered me; He seized me by the neck and crushed me. He set me up as His target. Now His arrows pierce me without mercy. Yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure. You must defend my innocence, O God, since no one else will stand up for me! My spirit is broken, my days are over, the grave awaits me.*

### **Bildad's 2nd rebuke: ch.18**

*So you're tired of our speeches? Well, we're tired of yours' too. Why do you treat us like dumb animals? You're the one who can't accept the obvious: The lamp of a wicked man is snuffed out. The evil man loses strength. His own schemes bring him down. His feet get caught in the net. Terrors startle him on every side. Calamity is hungry for him. Disaster strikes him from every side. Disease eats away his skin. Fire destroys his home; his reputation evaporates into thin air; his descendants are cut off. They will say: "This was the home of a wicked person; the place of one who rejected God."*

### **Job responds to Bildad: ch.19**

*How long will you crush me with words? God has concealed my path in darkness. He has stripped me of honor; He tears me down on every side; He uproots my hope like a tree; He counts me among his enemies; He has alienated my family from me; my friends are completely estranged from me; my relatives have gone away; my closest friends have forgotten me; My servants look at me as if I'm a stranger. My breath is offensive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own family. Even the little boys mock me like some freaky monster. Have mercy on me, my friends, have mercy, for the hand of God has struck me. I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. 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!*

### **Zophar's 2<sup>nd</sup> rebuke: ch.20**

*I am greatly disturbed by you, Job. Don't you realize how it has*

*been since the day mankind was placed on the earth? The happiness of the godless lasts but a moment. The pride of the godless person reaches God's ears in heaven. Then he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?' He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of a viper will kill him. For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute; he has seized houses he did not build. In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him. When he has filled his belly, God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows on him. The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him. A flood will carry off his house. Such is the fate God allots to the wicked man.*

### **Job responds to Zophar: ch.21**

*Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, you may resume mocking me. You say that bad things happen to bad people. Take an honest look around you? Why do the wicked prosper, growing old and powerful? Why do the godless see their children grow up and thrive? Their homes are safe and free from fear. Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows do not miscarry. Their children go through life singing and dancing like it's one big party. They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. They never utter a single prayer to God . . . but their life is not snuffed out. If you don't believe me, then ask those who travel the world. The wicked don't always "get what they deserve." They are carried to the grave in peace and guards watch over their tombs while lilies grow over their heads! How can you console me with your nonsense? All your answers are lies.*

**Summary of the debate cycle:** The tone has become mean-spirited. The three friends are angry that Job will not admit that he has sinned. They accuse him of proud self-righteousness. They start describing in vivid pictures the specific ways that God will punish the wicked man. They are trying to scare Job into a confession, warning that things will get even worse if he does not repent. They also try to use the argument that "all men are sinners" (a fact that is true); but this does nothing to explain Job's predicament. IF *all* men are sinners (and they are), then why has Job been singled out from among *all* sinful men for such drastic calamity?

As for Job, he is deeply wounded by the harsh accusations of his

friends. But he is even more deeply wounded by his God, who seems now to hate him and attack him without mercy. He wishes God would come to his defense against the false accusations of his friends. Instead, God keeps the fiery arrows coming at Job. He knows deep in his heart that there IS a reason for his suffering; but believes that God has concealed the answer in darkness. He graphically details his many afflictions, yet maintains hope that someday he will see God and understand the reason behind it all: *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. 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 does throw one logical wrench into his friends' argument: The wicked do *not* always suffer. In fact, they often prosper and seem to go through life unpunished, while the more innocent and humble people seem to suffer the most. The friends 'formula' was: Good things happen to good people – bad things happen to bad people. Job counters with this observation: Good things happen to bad people – bad things happen to good people.

*Takeaways from the debate cycle:*

- 1. If you are suffering, don't conclude that God is punishing you. In fact, God poured out ALL "punishment" against sin on His own Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. God will bring constructive "discipline" into our lives, and this may involve suffering. But discipline, by its very nature, is to help us learn and grow in our relationship with God. "He does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10).*
- 2. Job raised a good point when he asked: Why do GOOD things happen to BAD people? The fact is that in this lifetime, "God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). God is in fact a merciful Father Who showers many of His earthly blessings on all of His created beings – even humans who disregard Him. Thus, it is unwise to try to understand God's ways by comparing your life to that of another. The writer of Psalm 73 almost lost his faith completely when he tried to do so!*

**The Dispute Cycle: chs.22-31**

**Eliphaz' 3<sup>rd</sup> rebuke: ch.22**

*Oh. So let me get this straight. God is doing all of this to you because you're SO GOOD? No! It's because you are so wicked!*

*Are not your sins endless? Here's what you've done: You demanded security from your relatives for no reason; you stripped people of their clothing, leaving them naked. You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry. And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. That is why sudden peril terrifies you.*

*This is the last time I'll say it: "Submit to God and be at peace with Him; in this way prosperity will come to you. IF you return to the Almighty, THEN you will be restored. IF you remove wickedness far from your tent, THEN you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God.*

### **Job responds to Eliphaz: chs.23-24**

*If only I knew where to find Him; if only I could go to His house! I would state my case and find out exactly what He's thinking. I head East looking for Him – I find no one; then West, but not a trace; I go North, but He's hidden His tracks; then South, but not even a glimpse. But He knows where I am and what I've done. My feet have closely followed His steps. I have treasured His words more than my daily bread. Still, He carries out His plans against me, and many such plans He still has in store. He controls my destiny. That is why I am terrified before Him. I don't know what He's going to do next! Why doesn't God take appointments so we can ask Him our questions? Life seems so unfair. The wicked get away with murder, while the humble get ripped off. You're free to try to prove me a liar, but you won't be able to do it.*

### **Bildad's 3<sup>rd</sup> rebuke: ch.25**

*Dominion and awe belong to God; He establishes order in the heights of heaven. How then can a mortal be righteous or pure before God? The moon is not flawless to Him. The stars are not pure in His eyes. How much less a sinful, mortal, who is but a MAGGOT in comparison – a human being, who is only a WORM!*

### **Job's final speech: chs.26-31**

*Thank you all for your help! What great advice you have offered to your friend the fool! Where did you get such wisdom? Whose spirit gave you these words?*

*God spreads out the northern skies over empty space; He suspends the earth over nothing. He wraps up the waters in His clouds. He*

*sets the boundary between light and darkness. And these are but the outer fringe of His works. Who can comprehend His great power? Who can fathom His great wisdom?*

*Yet, the Almighty God has denied me justice! He has ruined my life! As long as I draw breath, I refuse to confess to any charge that's false. I'm holding fast to my integrity and not loosening my grip – and, believe me, I'll never regret it.*

*How I long for the days when God watched over me, when He was the light of my life. Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me; when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil. But now, young men mock me in song; they spit in my face. God throws me into the mud, and I am reduced to dust and ashes. I cry out, but God does not answer me. (Toward God) You have turned on me ruthlessly; with Your almighty hand You have attacked me. You have snatched me up and driven me before the windstorm. I know You will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living.*

**Summary of the dispute cycle:** Job's friends are running out of words. Bildad's final rant is only a few sentences, while Zophar fails to say a single word this time around. They have run out of arguments and can only replay old lines – though with more anger and nasty attacks aimed at Job. Eliphaz tires to help Job recall his sin by listing the specific sins he has likely committed. Bildad compares Job to a maggot trying to look good before the Almighty! Zophar stands by in silence, probably shaking his head in disbelief at Job's stubborn refusal to admit his sin.

Job now lets his three 'friends' drift into the background. He addresses God directly through much of this section, longing for an audience with God. He cannot understand why God seems to have pulled away from him during this trial. He prays and prays; but God is silent. Meanwhile, the intensity of his suffering increases day after day. He acknowledges the power of Almighty God as displayed in the created order. He simply cannot comprehend *any* good reason why God does not use His great power to bring an end to his suffering. He has come to the place where he is actually questioning the justice of God. *How can God justly allow this level of pain into the life of one that loves Him?* He wishes he could turn back the hand of time and return to life as it used to be.

Takeaways from the dispute cycle:

1. It is important to recognize when you are allowing negative voices to influence you. Job's three friends practically exhausted all they had to say (Job was a sinner). They have contributed nothing to his spiritual progress. They became mean spirited; engaging in unjustified attacks accusing Job of even specific sins.
2. Job's frustration with God's justice and care for him was fueled by his friends' incessant attacks. Job could have stayed stronger in his ability to keep trusting and believing the best about God if his three friends had sought to encourage and support him. Toxic criticism is lethal to the soul. We (and Job) should choose to excuse ourselves when negative voices repeatedly accuse us.
3. Job ignored his friends (finally) and took up his main complaint with God. He trusted God's heart and love for Him. He was "honest" with God. Scripture says that God knows every word even before it comes from your mouth (Psalm 139:4). So don't stuff it. Declare it. The majority of Psalms are "laments" where people are pouring out their emotions in brutal honest toward God – even if the theology in their laments is not what they know to be true about God.

**Elihu's Speech: chs.32-37**

*I'm the youngest, so I've been silent; but now I must speak. You all need to pay attention to me. I'm angry at you 3 because you could not refute Job. I am angry at you, Job, because you keep justifying yourself and questioning God's justice.*

*You three say God has judged Job because he has sinned. Not so fast. God also uses pain to keep a person from sin and from pride. If a man is heading toward destruction, God might send pain to steer him away from the pit. He might even send an angel of mercy to intervene and spare the man. Pain is not always for punishment. Sometimes it is for our good.*

*Job, you say that God has denied you justice, because you have not sinned. Will you condemn the just and mighty God so that you can be proved right? You also say that God doesn't listen and isn't concerned. He doesn't care about wickedness or judge sinners. Job, you're talking like a fool. How dare you try to haul God into court!*

*Let ME show you the truth. Everyone listen to ME! God is mighty in both power and understanding. He rules the universe! Certainly He knows how to judge the wicked and watch over the innocent.*

*Job, God is trying to lead you away from danger through your suffering, to a place of blessing. But you are only obsessed with whether the godless will be judged fairly. Be on guard Job. God has sent you suffering to keep you from a life of evil!*

*No one can teach God anything! He is greater than we can understand. Who can understand all His acts in nature? Mighty God! Far beyond our reach! Unsurpassable in power and justice! It's unthinkable that He'd treat anyone unfairly. So bow to Him in deep reverence, one and all! If you're wise, you'll most certainly worship Him."*

**Summary of Elihu's Speech:** Elihu was out to get everyone! He went after Job's three friends for their complete failure to constructively lead Job to a better place of understanding his trials. At the same time, he rebuked Job for 1) asserting his own innocence and 2) questioning the justice of God.

Elihu was not trying to prove that Job was a sinner, as the three friends were. He was asserting that Job's view of God was wrong. Elihu's main contribution to the debate was that God sends suffering to keep us from sinning and to refine our character; not necessarily to punish us for sin. Pain is preventative, not just punitive. God allowed Job to suffer to keep him from pride and ultimately from the pit of destruction.

This helps us to understand Job's gradual drift in the narrative. While he started off as a man who would humbly accept adversity from the hand of God, as his suffering progressed he began to argue with God over the justice of it all, and to demand a hearing with God so he could defend his own character and hear a legitimate answer from God. *"There was a sediment of pride that began to cloud the purity of his life when it was stirred up by suffering."* (Piper) This also explains Job's withdrawal of his arguments at the end of the story: *"I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes"* (42:6). He realized that his prolonged suffering (and his unhelpful friends) had revealed in him a level of pride that even he did not know existed. P.T. Forsyth wisely said: *"It is a greater thing to pray for pain's conversion than its removal."*

We conclude, then, that there were multiple layers to God's work with Job and his friends. Job's suffering achieved the following:

- It showcased Job's faith, proving to Satan that Job would not curse God; but would remain loyal to God.

- It refined Job's faith, bringing to light aspects of Job's character that still needed refinement.
- It prevented Job from sin and destruction.
- It corrected the very formulaic and immature faith of Job's friends, calling them to a deeper understanding of God's ways.
- It allowed the young man Elihu to exercise his voice/wisdom and to express how his faith in God was forming and maturing.

*Takeaways from Elihu's speech:*

*1. It is good for us to remember that God's wisdom is great, and His ways are so beyond our understanding. He is always 'working several angles at once' when He allows suffering to enter our lives. Never limit God to just one answer when it comes to your trials. He is likely advancing His plan in several different ways all at the same time.*

*2. It is always wise to ask: How is this trial bringing to the surface things in my character that need to be revealed and refined? Are there blind spots that I was not even aware of in my own heart and mind? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the deeper things that God may be getting at through this trial. "So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world" (1Peter 1:6,7).*

Elihu's speech served another purpose: It prepared the way for God's speech to Job. His use of rapid-fire rhetorical questions prepared Job for the questions God would fire at him. His focus on how Job had misunderstood and questioned the character of God set Job up for the same line of argument from God. His use of nature to describe the power and wisdom of God was very similar to what God Himself said to Job. So Elihu's speech was a fitting transition to the final great speech coming from God Himself.

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 3 – God Speaks**  
**Job Chs. 38-42**

**Introduction**

Job's three friends provided only wrong answers to the question of his suffering. Job himself longed for a satisfying answer and began questioning the wisdom and justice of God. The young man Elihu rebuked all three men and pointed them back to a God who never errs in His perfectly wise and just ways. Finally, God spoke to Job in some audible way, out of the midst of a terrifying storm. God did not answer Job's question; rather, He challenged Job's questioning spirit. "The answer to Job's problems was not an *explanation about God*, such as the three friends and Elihu had given, but a *revelation of God*" (Warren Wiersbe). God did not offer a formula to explain suffering; rather, He presented *Himself* as the Person to be trusted *in* suffering. God asked Job 77 rhetorical questions, most related to God's wisdom and power in the created order. The point of these questions was to help Job see that he was in *no position to question God* or demand an explanation for God's ways with him. Warren Wiersbe helps us understand God's speech in three major sections: Can you explain My creation? (38:1-38) Can you oversee My creation? (38:39-39:30) Can you subdue My creation? (40:6-41:34)

**Can you explain My creation? 38:1-38**

***Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me" (38:1-3).***

God first asked Job where he was when God exercised such wisdom and power to create the entire universe. The effect of these questions was to ask: Why are you 'advising' Me now, if you did not need to 'advise' Me then?

***"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you***

***know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? (38:4-7)***

Various aspects of God's created order are highlighted: the seas, clouds, sunrise, ocean depths, stars, constellations, snow, hail, lightning, thunderstorms, and more. The Master Architect asked Job if he knows *how* all these were made.

***“Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years (38:21)!”***

***“Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth” (38:33)?***

God was making the case: I exercised perfect wisdom and skill in creating everything. Surely you can trust that this same wisdom and skill is at work in managing what is currently happening in your life.

*When you consider hiring someone to build something for you, that person will first show you samples of their work on behalf of other clients. In this way, you get a feel for what they will be able to build for you. You are being given a 'reference point' from which you can trust the builder for your own project. Similarly, God was showing Job some samples of His work, giving Job a reference point from which he might strengthen his own trust in God, in the matters currently engulfing him. Are YOU able to survey God's works in other spheres (creation, the lives of others you know, the lives of biblical characters) and find a reference point that strengthens your own faith (trust) in God, in matters pertaining to your life? Have YOU considered the samples of God's works that He is constantly displaying for us all to see?*

### **Can you oversee My creation? 38:39-39:30**

Next, the Lord brings before Job a list of animals that need constant care and provision. The question is: Job, are you able to oversee the ongoing needs of such a vast and diverse animal kingdom? The following is a condensed summary of God's speech in which He lists a tiny fraction of the vast 'family' He must oversee every single moment of every single day:

***“Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions? Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food? Do you know***

*when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? Who let the wild donkey go free? Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Will it stay by your manger at night? The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though they cannot compare with the wings and feathers of the stork. Do you give the horse its strength or clothe its neck with a flowing mane? Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread its wings toward the south? Does the eagle soar at your command and build its nest on high?*

It is one thing to create something (a family, a business, a home), but it is another thing to maintain and develop what you have created. Think about something that you daily oversee and care for. What would happen IF you stopped caring and stopped overseeing? Do you ever marvel at how God keeps the entire universe running? How HE sustains all things moment by moment? I sometimes sit and look at the mini-universe in my backyard. Every day it just keeps working! The hawks keep soaring. The crows keep crowing. The trees keep growing. The pine squirrels keep digging holes in my house. The rain comes, then the sun . . . and things spring to life after a long, cold winter. The Canadian geese return. And recently a giant flock of wild turkeys paraded like soldiers across the yard! GOD manages ALL of this. Hmmm . . . I guess this means He can manage my affairs also. I guess it means that He knows what I need, when I need it. That was precisely Jesus' point in the Sermon on the Mount when He told His followers to abandon anxiety: "See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you—you of little faith? (Matthew 6:28-30).

### **Can you subdue My creation? 40:6-41:34**

In the final section of God's speech, He focuses on just 2 creatures: Behemoth and Leviathan. Scholars are generally agreed that these are the Hippopotamus and the Alligator. God invites Job to try and tame either of these mighty specimens.

Can Job capture the hippo and put a ring through its nose, leading it along like some tame house pet?

***"Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you, and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength it has in its loins, what power in the muscles of its belly! Its tail sways like a cedar; the***

*sinews of its thighs are close-knit. Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like rods of iron. It ranks first among the works of God. Can anyone capture it by the eyes, or trap it and pierce its nose?"*

Can Job fish for the alligator, bring it home and reduce it to the level of a pet bird?

*Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook? Will it keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? Will it make an agreement with you for you to take it as your slave for life? Can you make a pet of it like a bird or put it on a leash for the young women in your house?*

In either case, Job would not survive long trying to bring these mighty beasts under his control. How, then, can Job argue with God Almighty who made these mighty beasts?

*In what ways do you wrestle with God, seeking to 'bring Him under your control?' Look around creation. What aspects of creation are too big for you to control? (I would never want to tackle Mt. Everest, or swim with sharks, or meet a bear in the woods. I once got intimidated by a mad duck that attacked me for messing with her family that was swimming in a pool I was attempting to clean for a friend! I STILL have a healthy 'fear' of ducks!) What aspects of creation intimidate you? Is it possible for you to transfer your 'fear' of God's created order to God Himself Who made all these things? Can you see the folly of 'wrestling with God' over His ways when you can't even wrestle with a bear, or a shark . . . or a duck?!? If you can let the bear strike fear into you, can't you let God strike into you some healthy reverence toward Himself and His ways in your life?*

### **Job repents of his arguments: 42:1-6**

Job had challenged God to give an explanation as to why He had 'unfairly' caused his misery. From God's vantage point that really wasn't the important issue. God never gave Job an answer as to the reason for his immense and prolonged suffering. God just gave Job a revelation of His own character (wisdom, power, skill) as evidenced in the created order. This was enough to silence Job's arguments with God, causing him to admit that he had no clue.

*Then Job replied to the LORD: "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely, I spoke*

*of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (42:1-7).*

Job realized that he had only a very limited view of God: ‘*my ears had only heard of you.*’ But through his suffering, personal experience and God’s questions, Job gained insight into God’s character that he never could have known otherwise: ‘*now my eyes have seen you.*’

In the end, God did not answer Job’s question. He answered Job’s questioning. And the answer was this: IF you TRULY BELIEVE that I AM GOD, then WHY are you ASKING ME WHY?

In other words, questioning God calls into question the very nature of God (His wisdom, skill, power, justice, goodness, etc.). When we question the character of God we unwittingly question the very idea of “God.”

### **Epilogue: Job’s restoration: 42:7-17**

Not all suffering ends on a positive note; but Job’s did. First, he was honored by God in that he was made the intercessor for his three friends. They had to offer sacrifices for their sins and Job was their “mediator.” Their sacrifices were accepted because of Job’s prayers. Second, his family and fortunes were restored. In fact, he was blessed with double the possessions he had before his suffering. He also was granted beautiful children to enjoy, in place of those he lost at the beginning. Finally, he was granted a long and happy life.

*“After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so Job died, an old man and full of years” (42:16).*

The story never indicates that Job was told *the reason behind his suffering*. It likely remained a mystery to him for the rest of his life.

### **Key takeaways from the story of Job**

**1. Mystery.** Life is a mystery, and the ways of God are most often mysterious. Nothing is 100% predictable. Jesus promised that while we live in this world we *will have trials* (John 16:33). We

must learn to abandon formulas and equations that attempt to neatly explain everything, living instead by faith in the mystery of God.

**2. Faith.** Pain and suffering take on new meaning when we walk in it with steadfast faith. If we have placed our faith in Christ and accepted Him as our Savior, He dwells within us. God, our suffering Savior and Shepherd, will lead us through the maze of pain, loss, fear and change. We do not walk alone. His Spirit will empower us from within to suffer according to His will. No one can snatch us out of His hand (John 10:28,29). While we may not understand His ways, we can *trust His character* in the midst of the suffering. This is the essence of faith: trusting God's heart when we cannot understand His methods.

**3. Sympathy.** Unlike Job's friends, we can be sympathetic comforters who sit in the pain and "*weep with those who weep*" (Romans 12:15). We don't need to give easy answers but instead sit in the mystery of what God is revealing about Himself to your friend (and you). Above all, if we ourselves have suffered, we will be able to offer special comfort (2Corinthians 1:3-4).

**4. Maturity.** Ultimately, suffering is one of the tools God uses to refine and mature us, while revealing more of Himself to us and to those around us. Through suffering we can come to know and experience the boundless love of God, IF we choose to rest in His goodness and trust His love. He makes NO mistakes. He is sovereign, almighty and all-wise in all of His ways.

### **Addendum #1: Our Suffering God**

Whatever questions we may have about the justice of God in allowing suffering in our world, we know this: Our God enters into all of our suffering, rather than remaining detached from it. Throughout the entire Old Testament, God suffered rejection, abandonment and unfaithfulness at the hands of human beings whom He sought relationship with. Ultimately, God came into our broken world in the person of Jesus, embracing suffering head-on. Job never could have foreseen that God was a Trinitarian God in three persons. He did not know that God the Son would become a mediator and redeemer, "putting His hand on God and man" as Job longed for. He did not know that God the Son would become one of us to enter our broken world and experience our suffering, and ultimately the worst suffering of scourging and crucifixion. This

was one case of suffering where God *did* answer the WHY question: Jesus suffered to bring us forgiveness of sins and to take us back to the Holy, Almighty God; to set us free from sin and death. ***“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1Peter 3:18).*** Thus, when we suffer, we can always gaze at the cross and say: *God suffered too. He KNOWS what this is like.*

### **Addendum #2: How the N.T. answers Job’s longings.**

Job lived way back prior to the time of Abraham (Genesis 12). There were so many aspects of God’s plan of salvation that had not yet been revealed. It is instructive to see the many ways that Job’s questions and longings were eventually answered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Compare the following verses from Job with the accompanying New Testament verses:

***“If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together” (Job 9:33).***

*“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people” (1Timothy 2:5,6).*

***“If someone dies, will they live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come” (Job 14:14).***

*Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die” (John 11:25).*

***“Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high” (Job 16:19).***

*“For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence” (Hebrews 9:24).*

***“I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth” (Job 19:25).***

*“Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:28).*

***“If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling” (Job 23:3).***

*“You know the way to the place where I am going . . . I am the way*

*and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” (John 14:4-6;8-9).*

***“Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense – let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing” (Job 31:35).***

*“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them? For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:34-36).*

***“I am unworthy – how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth” (Job 40:4).***

*“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24,25).*

### **Addendum #3: Job as a type of Christ**

There are numerous ‘types’ (prefigures) of Christ in the Old Testament. Job is an important and often overlooked one. Following are ways that Job prefigured Christ:

Job was righteous before God.

*- Jesus was the sinless Son of God.*

Job was a servant to his people.

*- Jesus came to serve, not to be served.*

Job was tempted 2 times by the devil.

*- Jesus was tempted 3 times by the devil.*

Job was falsely accused of being a sinner.

*- Jesus was falsely accused of being a sinner.*

Job lost everything.

*- Jesus gave up everything, leaving heaven’s glory.*

Job was disfigured with boils and barely recognizable.

*- Jesus’ appearance was marred more than any man.*

Job suffered greatly.

*- Jesus suffered for the sins of the world.*

Job’s closest companion (wife) urged him to give up.

*- Jesus companion (Peter) urged him to avoid the cross.*

Job was mocked and despised.

- *Jesus was mocked and despised.*

Job was rejected by his friends and family.

- *Jesus was rejected by all.*

Job sat on an ash heap outside the city.

- *Jesus suffered on a hill outside the city.*

Job was declared to be the mediator for his friends.

- *Jesus was declared to be the mediator for all mankind.*

Job received back his riches along with much more.

- *Jesus received back his heavenly glory and "riches."*

Job was given many new children.

- *Jesus has been given many spiritual children.*

Note: One of the big differences between Job and Christ was that Job complained about his suffering and tried to justify himself. Christ, on the other hand, remained silent when He was accused. He chose the path of suffering "*without opening His mouth*" (1Peter 2:21-24). He kept entrusting Himself to His heavenly Father in the midst of His suffering. Peter wrote the followers of Christ throughout the Roman Empire and exhorted them to suffer well, knowing that in eternity they would be rejoicing to the same degree and share in a greater joy (1Peter 4:12,13).

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 4 – A Song of Hope**  
**Psalm 118 and Palm Sunday**

**Introduction**

The book of Psalms was Israel's hymnbook, containing both personal and corporate songs that were used in the worship life of the Jewish people. There are various kinds of Psalms: Laments, Thanksgivings, Confessions, Praises, Songs of Trust/Hope, Cries for Deliverance and Royal songs. These varied songs were composed by different authors over many centuries, with King David being the chief contributor: David (73 Psalms); Anonymous (50); Asaph, David's choir director (12); Sons of Korah, a Levite family of worship leaders (11); Jeduthun (3); Solomon (2); Moses, Ethan, Heman, the Ezrahite (1 each). The Psalms demonstrate how central God was to the life of the people of Israel. The Psalms are the cries of the human soul reaching out to God amid the ups and downs of life in this broken world. This may well be the most "real" part of the Bible, as *feelings* about life and God often override proper *thoughts* about God. We can use these Psalms to help us express what *we are feeling* in the various seasons of life. Additionally, many Psalms contain allusions to, or prophecies of the Messiah, Jesus. These are often referred to as "Messianic Psalms." For this reason, the Psalms are quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. (See the end of this section for more on the Messianic Psalms.)

**Psalm 118 among the Hallel Songs: Psalms 113-118**

**Psalms 113-118** form a miniature subgrouping of songs that were used at the 3 major Jewish feasts: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. They are called the "Hallel" songs because of the repeated call to "praise" (hallel) God. This grouping of songs was especially important at the annual *Passover meal*, with Psalms 113-114 being sung before the meal and 115-118 after the meal. When we read that Jesus and His disciples "sang a hymn" after the Last Supper (Matt.26:30), this likely refers to the singing of Psalms

115-118. This grouping of Psalms is often called “the Egyptian Hallel” because they are based on the recollection of God’s deliverance of Israel out of Egypt in the time of Moses (Exodus 1-15). As Jewish worshippers sang the Hallel at Passover, they were not only recalling a past deliverance, but crying out in hope for a future deliverance. Thus, the Hallel is really an extended song of hope that God, because of His unique love for Israel, would bring about a future exodus of Israel from under the hand of foreign oppressors. In Jesus’ day, that foreign oppressor was the Romans.

### **Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem: Psalm 118:22-29**

The last portion of Psalm 118 has taken on special significance for Christians because this portion of the Hallel was on the lips of the multitudes that went out to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of His life.

*“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalm 118:22-29).*

The account from the gospel of Matthew reads as follows (with the portion in caps reflecting the words of Psalm 118):

*A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted **“HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN!”** When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” (Matthew 21:8-11).*

The word “hosanna” means “save us now.” Thus, the crowds were hailing Jesus as their hoped-for deliverer Who, they supposed, was coming to Jerusalem to bring about a new “exodus.” They hoped

that He would deliver them from the heavy yoke of Roman oppression. Jesus would be their new Moses Who would defeat the Romans and usher in a new age of peace, joy and prosperity for God's chosen people.

With this background in mind, let us take a closer look at this key passage from Psalm 118:22-29. There are messianic undertones here that are much deeper than the people realized on the day of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

### **- The Rejected Stone**

***“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad” (Psalm 118:22-24).***

Originally, the ‘rejected stone’ was the nation of Israel, as it had been continuously tossed aside as a worthless, powerless nation among the more powerful nations of the world. Many centuries had passed from the time of Moses (1440 BC), during which Israel had suffered severe oppression at the hands of successive foreign powers (Egyptians, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, etc.). Tiny little Israel might have seemed like nothing more than a worthless stone tossed aside by those constructing the kingdoms of the world. Yet, the people knew that they *were* God's *chosen people*. Thus, their hope was that God (the ultimate builder) would take the “rejected stone” (Israel) and make it once again the center of His kingdom project in this world.

Jesus Himself was the first to reinterpret the ‘rejected stone’ passage. He used it during Holy Week in a discussion with the Jewish leaders who were at that moment *rejecting Him* from being their Messiah and Savior.

***Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Matthew 21:42)?***

In the book of Acts, the apostles Peter and John used this same passage to confront the Jewish leaders over their rejection of Jesus:

***Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:11,12; see also 1Peter 2:7,8).***

Jesus Himself became the stone rejected by the builders (the leaders of Israel). Yet, because of His sacrificial death He was chosen by God to be the prized cornerstone of the new “building” God was building – the body of Christ, or, the Church.

### **- The Hosanna Cry**

***“LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us” (118:25-27).***

At the time of Jesus’ triumphal entry, the people were hoping for some sort of political/national revolution. Jesus had performed so many miracles over His 3 years of public ministry. Surely, they thought, He was now coming to Jerusalem to miraculously throw off the yoke of Roman oppression and to reestablish Israel as an independent, sovereign state.

Jesus had indeed come to Jerusalem to perform a mighty work of ‘rescue’ and ‘deliverance;’ yet not from the oppression of Rome. He was coming to save people from the oppression of sin and death, through His cross and the empty tomb. He had come to bring the ‘kingdom of God’ into the hearts of redeemed people. This had been prophesied at the time of His birth when He was given the name “Jesus.”

***“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).***

This helps us to understand why Jesus stopped and WEPT during His “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem. We read this in Luke’s account:

***As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you” (Luke 19:41-44).***

Jesus wept because the people were blinded to their real need, and to God's plan to meet their need. They wanted a political solution; but they needed a spiritual Savior. They wanted freedom from Rome; but they needed freedom from the power of sin. They wanted Jesus to crush Caesar; but they needed Him to crush Satan. They wanted life to change; but they needed new life within, bringing change from the inside-out. They wanted Jesus to sit on a throne; but they needed the Lamb of God to die on a cross.

Jesus wept because they were blind to their own needs, and blind to God's plan to meet their needs. He also wept because He looked ahead and saw God's judgment coming upon the Jewish nation. In 70 AD the very Romans they hoped to be freed from would come and destroy their city. Why? ***"They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you" (Luke 19:44).*** Because the vast majority of Jews, including the rulers, did *not* welcome Jesus as their God-sent Messiah and Savior.

#### **- The Palm Branches**

***"With boughs in hand\*, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (118:27-29).***

\*There is debate as to the correct translation here. The New American Standard Bible makes no mention of "boughs," reading instead: *"Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar."*

As Jesus came into town, the people waved palm branches and spread them on the ground as a 'carpet' for Him to ride on. The use of palm branches was originally associated with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. As per God's command in Leviticus 23:33-36, the people were to make leafy booths and live in them for one week, to commemorate their long sojourn in the wilderness after they came out of Egypt. Later in Israel's history, palm branches were widely used by the people of Israel to honor great leaders and heroes when they came to town. This is the meaning of the palm branches on "Palm Sunday." The people were "rolling out the red carpet" for their new leader/hero Jesus who, they hoped, would lead them to a great victory over the Roman oppressors.

## - The Festival Sacrifice

***“With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar” (118:27).***

At the major Jewish feasts it was typical for the High Priest to lead a sacred processional up to the main altar at the Temple. There, he would offer the required sacrifice for the sins of the nation. Jesus did things differently. When He entered Jerusalem, He went to the Temple and cleansed it from the moneychangers. During the week of Passover, He had repeated confrontations with the Jewish leaders who saw Him as a threat and a false teacher. By the end of the week, they would conspire to turn Him over to Pilate, the Roman governor, for crucifixion. By that same Friday, when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, Jesus Himself would be hanging on a Roman cross, dying for the sins of the world. Thus, Jesus DID lead a festival procession up to the “altar;” but not in the way that the multitudes expected. He Himself became the festival sacrifice, dying for the sins of the world on God’s appointed altar – a Roman cross.

### **Key lessons from Psalm 118 and Palm Sunday**

#### **1. Our real problem is within**

People today are not much different from the crowds that sang Hosanna (save us now) on the day of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. We want life to be better and we think the solutions are external structural changes. So, we look to government leaders, to economists, to military leaders, to doctors, to educators or business leaders to make structural changes, set things right and bring back happier days. In effect, we are doing the same thing that the crowds did: looking for salvation in all the wrong (external) places.

The problem is that our problem is *not* external; it is internal. Jesus put it like this:

***“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside***

***you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Matthew 23:25-28).***

The real problem is the sinful human heart. Until the heart is changed, no amount of external change will bring about the kind of peace and contentment we all really desire. We will always be striving in vain (and continually disappointed) as we try to put bandages on an internal cancer. We need new hearts!

## **2. Hope is found in Jesus**

There is only one solution to our heart problem: a new heart! The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Savior gives us the opportunity to have a new heart. Through His death He offers us forgiveness of sins. Our debt can be cancelled and we can be reconciled to a right relationship with God. Through His resurrection, He has defeated death. Thus, we can live forever in the presence of God. But there is another thing His resurrection provides: Because He lives, He can live inside of us, through the Person of the Holy Spirit. He can apply His resurrection life and power right where we need it most: to our hearts. He can give us new hearts and change us from the inside-out.

***“But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you” (Romans 8:10-11).***

## **3. The rejected stone**

Jesus IS the cornerstone of God’s building. He IS the key to our salvation, and the key to God’s kingdom work in this world. Yet, He will always be the rejected stone as people continue to mock Him, marginalize Him and reject Him.

***“He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God” (John 1:10-13).***

Jesus knocks at the door of our hearts, seeking entrance (Rev.3:20) but He never forces His way in. He waits to be invited in. Have

you invited Jesus to be your Savior and Lord? On this Palm Sunday we should remember: The real “triumphal entry” is when the door is opened and Jesus enters a human heart to sit as King on that throne.

### **Messianic Psalms**

For a good short article with a list of 70 references to Jesus in the Psalms, see: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Psalms-Jesus-Christ.html>

Perhaps the most significant Messianic Psalms are 2,22 and 110. These Psalms contain major prophecies and/or allusions to Christ.

**Psalm 2** shows the exaltation of the Son as the one chosen by the Father to rule the nations. All the rulers of the world are exhorted to worship the Son before it is too late. It is futile to resist His kingship, for this will only lead to God’s judgment. This Psalm is quoted in: Acts 4:25, 13:33; Hebrews 1:5, 5:5.

**Psalm 22** is a Psalm of lament in which David was describing his own suffering. Yet, his description of his suffering and torment became a prophetic picture of the suffering and torment of Jesus as He died on the cross for our sins. Most significant is the fact that Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 as He was dying on the cross: “*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*” This Psalm is quoted in: Matthew 27:46; 27:39; 27:43; 27:35; John 20:25; 19:24; Hebrews 2:12; 5:7.

**Psalm 110** is the song of the exalted King. While it was a song of David, it has obvious references beyond David to the Lord. Jesus used this Psalm to confound the Jewish leaders concerning His own status as “Lord” (see Matthew 22:44 and 26:64). It is also quoted in: Acts 2:34,35; Hebrews 1:13; 5:5,6; 7:17,21.

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 5 – Songs of Lament**  
**Psalm 13**

**Introduction**

It surprises many to learn that the largest category of Psalms are the Laments (also called Songs of Protest) in which the writers are giving voice to their anxieties, fears, sorrows and uncertainties. There are more than 65 Lament Psalms (close to ½ of the entire book of Psalms), some being personal laments and others being corporate laments. The Laments show people wrestling with God in a world that doesn't always make sense. *If God is good*, then why is my life so filled with pain? *If God is all-powerful*, then why doesn't He move to remedy my situation? *If God is in control*, then why can't He maneuver the job market in my favor? *If God is all-knowing*, then why does it feel like He's forgotten about me? There is even an entire book of the Bible devoted to the expression of sorrow – *Lamentations* (written by Jeremiah the prophet). *“There is no attempt in Scripture to whitewash the anguish of God's people when they undergo suffering. They argue with God, they complain to God, they weep before God. Theirs is not a faith that leads to dry-eyed stoicism, but to a faith so robust it wrestles with God.”* (D.A. Carson)

Even Jesus used the Lament Psalms when He was dying on the cross for our sins. His first and last words were quotations from the Psalms: *“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but You do not answer”* (Psalm 22:1,2). Then, at the end: *“Free me from the trap that is set for me, for You are my refuge. Into Your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth”* (Psalm 31:4,5).

It may seem as if the Lament Psalms express a lack of faith in God; but as Walter Brueggemann pointed out, the opposite is true. The Laments show people turning *toward God* in their pain, not running *away from God*:

*“The use of these ‘psalms of darkness’ may be judged by the world to be acts of unfaith and failure, but for the trusting community, their use is an act of bold faith, albeit a transformed faith. It is an act of bold faith on the one hand, because it insists that the world must be experienced as it really is and not in some pretended way. On the other hand, it is bold because it insists that all such experiences of disorder are a proper subject for discourse with God. There is nothing out of bounds, nothing precluded or inappropriate. Everything properly belongs in this conversation of the heart. To withhold parts of life from that conversation is in fact to withhold part of life from the sovereignty of God. Thus these psalms make the important connection: everything must be brought to speech, and everything brought to speech must be addressed to God, who is the final reference for all of life.”*

**Individual Laments:** Psalms 3-5, 7, 9-10, 13-14, 17, 22, 25-28, 31, 36, 39-43, 52-57, 61, 64, 70-71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141-142.

**Community Laments:** Psalms 12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79-80, 83, 85, 89-90, 94, 123, 126, 129.

### **PSALM 13 – How Long?**

Psalm 13 is a classic little Lament Psalm. It’s only 6 verses, but it contains three key elements of the typical lament. First, read through the entire Psalm and feel David’s emotions.

***How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?***

***How long will You hide Your face from me?***

***How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and every day have sorrow in my heart?***

***How long will my enemy triumph over me?***

***Look on me and answer, O Lord my God.***

***Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;***

***my enemy will say, ‘I have overcome him,’***

***and my foes will rejoice when I fall.***

***But I trust in Your unfailing love;***

***my heart rejoices in Your salvation.***

***I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me.***

#### **1. EXPRESSION of DESPAIR (feelings)**

The first step in true lament is to stop stuffing your true feelings and tell God exactly what’s on your mind and heart. Unplug it and

let Him hear the sour notes. Bringing our issues *to God* is a step of faith, even if our tone is one of sorrow.

***How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide Your face from me?  
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and every day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me (13:1,2)?***

It's not hard to pick out the key words in this first part. "How long" (4x). You can feel his pain, his agony, his frustration with God. "Despair" is an old word that means, literally "loss of hope." And that's where David is at here at the beginning of this lament. He is on the verge of losing hope.

He feels abandoned by God. He feels forgotten. Out of sight, out of mind. He feels like God has turned His face away from him. He feels rejected. He's tried to be a faithful servant of God, and now he feels like God has left him alone to wrestle with bad thoughts and deep sorrows. Meanwhile his enemies are having a field day watching all of this, and it seems as if God could care less. That's how he feels, how he *really* feels. We might say, "That's not theologically correct." Exactly! But it's "emotionally correct" and sometimes our emotions and our theology are at odds.

The important point is that *HE EXPRESSES THIS DESPAIR OPENLY TO GOD*. He doesn't bury it; he doesn't candy-coat it; he doesn't ignore it. He tells God exactly what he's thinking and feeling. That's where healthy lament starts. This process is sometimes called "hurling at God."

This reminds us of what Job felt and said to God. He didn't *curse* God. But he was frustrated with God. He was confused and bewildered about his suffering. So he hurled all of those emotions toward God. That's being honest ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL. Job did that. David did that. We also need to learn to do that.

*One thing you learn from the Psalms of Lament is that it's O.K. to be brutally honest with God about your feelings. You don't have to worry about being theologically correct when you're telling God how you feel inside. Say what you feel. Play Him your sour notes. Sing your blues to Him. He's waiting to hear that from you. The opposite of hurling is stuffing. And that's what a lot of us do with our pain. Instead of wrestling with God, we stuff it and just get bitter. The Lament Psalms give us permission to say it, not stuff it.*

Here's an important thing about expressing our pain to God through lament: This is NOT "turning away from God." In fact, it's just the opposite. This is "turning toward God" in your pain. This is wrestling *with* God, not walking away *from* God.

But hurling at God is not where lament ends.

## 2. PRAYER for RESCUE (facts)

Healthy lament moves from the expression of negative emotions to real, specific needs. The writers of these Psalms are direct in telling God what they hoped He would do for them. In Psalm 13, David's statement of his need is brief, yet to the point.

*Look on me and answer, O Lord my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;  
my enemy will say, 'I have overcome him,'  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall (Psalm 13:3,4).*

David asked to 1) be noticed, 2) uplifted and 3) vindicated. He reminds God that he is in a life or death situation. If God does not give him victory soon, he will be overcome by his foes. Of course, David knows that God is sovereign and will do as He purposes; but he still knows that he can pray, as a child of God, and let His Father know his needs.

*Do you talk to God like this? Directly? Specifically? intentionally? These Psalms teach us to ask God for what we need. Tell Him directly. He can handle direct requests. If He wants to say "No," He'll say "No." If He wants to say "Yes," He'll say "Yes." And if He wants to say "Yes, I'll answer your prayer, but in a different way than you're expecting," then He'll do that. Let Him handle filling the orders. You just make known your needs. "Pray at all times, keeping alert in your prayers with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). "Cast all of your cares upon Him, for He cares for you" (1Peter 5:7). "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).*

## 3. STATEMENT of TRUST (faith)

You will find in all the Psalms of Lament a statement of trust, or confidence in God (the exception being Ps.88). It might not be

fancy, or long, but it's there . . . an expression of trust in the midst of trouble, based on what the person *knows to be true of God*.

***But I trust in Your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in Your salvation.***

***I will sing to the LORD,  
for He has been good to me (Psalm 13:5,6).***

*But I trust . . . my heart rejoices . . . I will sing.* Why these expressions of hope amidst such a dark situation? Nothing has changed. The enemies are still there. Notice the *object* of his trust. I trust *in Your unfailing love*. My heart rejoices *in Your salvation*. I will sing *to the Lord*. *The Lord has been good to me*. The object of his trust is the *character of God*. And this is critical in learning how to process your way through the valleys of life.

David has NOT come to a positive outlook on his troubles. He has turned his heart Godward in the midst of his agony. He has begun to gaze at the *character of God and he utters a cry of faith*. He is leaning into *what he knows to be true about God*.

When it comes to the lamentable situations in life, we must face the ultimate question: What do we believe to be true about God? If I am facing a fearful situation, can I cling to a Father Who is strong enough to overcome my enemies? If I am feeling lonely or abandoned, can I turn my heart toward a God Who will never leave me or forsake me? If I am feeling betrayed or falsely accused, can I rest my case with a all-seeing God Who knows the truth? If I am feeling worthless, can I turn to a Father Who calls me His "masterpiece." This is why it is so important to develop a deeper and deeper understanding of the character of God. We can do this by 1) reading the descriptions of His character in the Bible; 2) learning from His dealings with people in biblical times; 3) learning from the way He works with people in our own day; and 4) remembering His ways with us in the previous stages of our journey. The more we truly KNOW (experientially, not just intellectually) our God, the more natural it will be for us to turn TO Him in times of lament. Note: IF you notice in yourself a pattern of having difficulty trusting a specific aspect of God's character, you would do well ask the deeper question: What lie has been planted deep in my heart that makes it so difficult for me to trust God in this particular area?

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 6 – Songs of Confession**  
**Psalm 32**

**Introduction**

The book of Psalms is ancient Israel's song book – 150 songs composed for both private and corporate worship. These are heart-cries, not theological treatises. The Psalms are the most emotional parts of the Bible. These are real human beings wrestling with God over real issues in life. They teach us how to be honest with God, no matter what we're going through. There are laments when you are sad and feel like singing the blues. There are songs of thanksgiving when you feel like giving thanks. There are songs of trust when you are worried and need to bolster your faith in God. There are songs of praise when you are in awe of God. There are songs for every season of life . . . even for when you've failed, when you've made a mess of things - the **songs of confession**. We're all going to need these quite often, because we all mess up a lot. Songs of confession help us get back on track with God when we've gotten off track. There are 8 songs of confession in the book of Psalms: 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

In order to understand the importance of the confessional Psalms, we first need to understand the implications of our sin problem. The apostle Paul gave us a good definition of sin in this verse:

***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).***

Sin is falling short of God's standard. The very 1<sup>st</sup> 'standard' God set for humanity was to *trust His love and follow His commands that showed that we loved Him in return.* Rather, we chose to follow our own senses, reasoning, and choices which broke our relationship with our God. Now, human instinct runs in the opposite direction of God's commands: It's lying and covering up when He says to be truthful. It's jealousy, coveting and overspending when He says to be content. It's bitterness, hatred,

abuse, and betrayal when He says to love one another. It's anger, rage and ultimately murder when He says we should be patient. It's letting people down and breaking our promises when He says to be faithful. Sin is falling short of God's standard in any area of life. It's having 'idols' in our hearts when God says to worship Him alone as our 1<sup>st</sup> love, in gratitude for how deeply He loves us. The Greek word for sin literally means "to miss the mark." It's like you're shooting arrows but you always miss the target.

Sin separates us from God. God is, by His very nature, holy and perfect. Sin is contrary to His essence. Thus, He cannot overlook or ignore the human sin problem.

***“Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).***

Sin *always* causes disruption in our relationship with God. It causes distance to form between us and God. Yet, because God is a God of LOVE, He always moves to make a way for our sin to be dealt with. He always provides a bridge back to Himself, a bridge that overcomes the sin problem.

God's first solution for our sin problem was to RECONCILE us to Himself. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so that we can now be reconciled to God. *Reconciliation is the restoration of relationship after a period of estrangement (separation).* When we accept the death of Jesus for our sins, we are at that moment reconciled to God; brought back into relationship with Him. From that moment forward, we are forgiven. We are children of God once and for all. That relationship with God is secure.

But there's still a problem. Although we've been brought back into relationship with God that does not make us perfect. We are forgiven; but not perfect. We are children of God; but we still mess up and keep doing things that fall short of the glory of God.

As children of God, this ongoing sin breaks our fellowship with God. Fellowship is different than relationship. Again, our relationship with God begins the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. That relationship is secure. There's nothing we can do to lose that relationship. It's like a child of mine; once they are born into my family, they are my son, my daughter. They can't get

out that relationship by messing up. Whatever they do, they are my son, my daughter. Our relationship with God is secure and eternal. From the moment of the new birth, we are in God's family, forever.

But our fellowship with God does change when we sin. My children can break fellowship with me by doing something wrong. My children and I can experience a loss of fellowship; a loss of intimacy; a loss of closeness. That's what happens in our fellowship with God when we sin after we have become His children. He doesn't cast us off as His children. He remains faithful to the relationship. But sin breaks our fellowship with God, and when our fellowship with God is broken, we can't really go anywhere. We get stuck spiritually. For a Christian, sin breaks our fellowship with God, and we need to know how to be honest with God about our sin *so that our fellowship with Him can be restored*.

God's second solution for our sin problem is CONFESSION. Confession is admitting to God that we have sinned. It's as simple as that. The Greek word used in the New Testament literally means "to agree with." When we confess our sins we are agreeing with God that we have done wrong. We are coming clean. We are telling Him that we agree with His Spirit inside of us, who is convicting us about some sin. God has told us that confession brings restoration of fellowship with Him. This is why confession is so important for our spiritual lives. Even as children of God, we will remain distant from God IF we don't use this privilege called confession. But if we learn to confess our sins, as we become aware of them, we can maintain close fellowship with God.

This brings us to the very important Psalms of Confession. These are in the Bible to teach us how to confess our sins to God. These are the Psalms we go to when we need some guidance in how to confess our sins to God. That's why God put them in here. I encourage you to take some time to read through all 8 of the confessional Psalms (6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). This will give you a good feel for what true confession looks like.

**Psalm 32** is unique among the confessional Psalms. It wasn't written during the time of David's sin; rather, it was written after

the fact as a kind of instructional Psalm in the art of confession. It contains six lessons to help us understand what is at stake with this spiritual practice of confession.

### **Six Lessons in the Art of Confession – Psalm 32**

#### **Lesson #1: Confession requires that we stop deceiving ourselves about our sin.**

*“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (32:1,2).*

“Blessed” (fortunate, happy) is the person that experiences the freedom that comes through confession! But what hinders us from experiencing this blessing? That last line is important: *“in whose spirit is no deceit.”* If there is deceit in your spirit that means you are lying to yourself. You are trying to convince yourself that you don’t have a problem; that your sin is no big deal. This is the single greatest obstacle to confession: self-deception. We minimize, rationalize or deny our sin (failures). As long as there is deception in your spirit, you will never come clean with God about your sin. The truly blessed man or woman is the one who has given up the art of self-deception and become ‘honest to God’ about specific sin issues.

*Are you harboring any hint of self-deception about the significance of a sin issue in your life? Are you minimizing, rationalizing or denying the issue? Take some quiet moments and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything He might want to point out to you. Write down what you become aware of. Be specific.*

#### **Lesson #2: It’s self-inflicted punishment to keep silent about sin.**

*“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer” (32:3).*

Keeping silent about sin is one way we try to minimize our pain. In fact, this is a sure way to maximize our pain. David speaks here about the effect of his guilt day and night. He felt the weight of God’s convicting hand upon him. Suppressing guilt is a terrible strategy. Dr. Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he *“could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that*

*their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day.” Guilt is a debilitating disease that eats away at us from within. The sad thing is that so many people live under the weight of guilt when there is a remedy. God is ready to lift that burden, IF we confess our sin to Him.*

*Not every impression of sadness or heaviness is due to unconfessed sin; but there are times when these ‘depressing’ feelings are rooted in hidden guilt and shame. When you are experiencing the kind of heaviness of spirit that David described in Psalm 32, it is wise to stop and ask the Lord: “Have I sinned in some way such that you are trying to get my attention?” Negative emotions can be like the red light on the dashboard indicating to us that something is wrong. Don’t ignore those negative emotions. Seek discernment as to what they are trying to tell you. They might be calling you to confess your sins and receive forgiveness and healing from God!*

### **Lesson #3: Honest confession to the Lord brings immediate cleansing to our souls.**

***“Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ - and You forgave the guilt of my sin” (32:5).***

I confessed . . . YOU forgave. It’s that simple. There’s no penance in there. There’s no doing enough good to make up for the bad. We often struggle to believe it’s that simple. But it is. Why do we complicate what God has made so simple? Why do try to make expensive what God has made free? We confess . . . HE forgives. It’s that simple, so don’t try to make it more complicated.

*Do you believe that confession brings immediate cleansing from the Lord? Or are you convinced that there ‘must be’ more to it than that? If you struggle to believe confession works this simply, you should ask yourself – Why? What is causing you to believe that it must be more complicated, more involved, more costly. It is unlikely that you will ever learn the spiritual practice of confession, and use it consistently, as long as you remain convinced that it is more complicated than what Psalm 32 is presenting.*

**Lesson #4: Confession brings forgiveness and assistance from God.**

***“Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance” (Psalm 32:6).***

There’s a side benefit that comes out of confession: God moves to rescue you from the mess you’ve made in the first place! You may have made a mess with other people (as David did); but God goes to work to help you remedy the mess. You may have made a mess with your finances; but God will go to work to help you rebuild. You may have made a mess of your marriage; but after you confess, you not only get God’s forgiveness, you get God’s assistance in putting things right again. David felt like someone was picking him up and lifting him out of the flood waters. That someone was the God he had confessed to. Someone was now his “hiding place.” That someone was God who was sheltering him.

**Lesson #5: Confession turns the life navigation system back on.**

***“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you” (32:8,9).***

God now speaks and tells how He responds to the one making confession. *“I will teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you and watch over you.”* Because fellowship with God is been restored through confession, the guidance of God becomes operative again in our lives. It’s as if God moves in and retakes the steering wheel, showing us the ways in which we should walk. As long as sin goes unconfessed, we are like stubborn mules making our own decisions with *no understanding*.

*Unconfessed sin leads us into the ‘self-directed life’ instead of the ‘God-directed life.’ If we remain long in this condition, we can get very far off track from where God desires for us to be in life. Have you been living the self-directed life for a long period of time? Do you desire for God to take control of your life and begin leading you again? Maybe it’s time to confess any unconfessed sin to Him and invite Him to sit in the driver’s seat once again. As He has promised in Psalm 32, He WILL guide you and direct you in a very personal way, “with His eye upon you.”*

**Lesson #6: Confession brings the gladness of God back into your life.**

***“Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart” (Psalm 32:10,11)!***

Psalm 32 could rightly be titled: The Blessedness of Being Forgiven. It begins and ends with a declaration of how good it feels to experience healing in our relationship with God. That healing comes as a result of God’s unfailing love towards us. And His unfailing love is accessed through confession.

**A final thought on “keeping short accounts” with God:**

Confession needs to become a regular part of our ongoing conversation with God. Whenever we become aware of sin in our lives, we should quickly go to God and confess it. This is called “keeping short accounts” with God. By means of regular, ongoing confession, we do not let sin build up in our lives. The New Testament writers all echo the simplicity and beauty of the spiritual practice of confession. I like the way the apostle John put it:

***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).***

Notice how good and gracious God is in that verse. If we confess (the sins that we are aware of), He will forgive us of our sins AND cleanse us “from ALL unrighteousness” (even the sins that we are not aware of). Whenever you take time to honestly confess before the Lord, He wipes clean the slate of your lives. This is how we, as the children of God, walk ‘broken but blessed.’ We are forgiven sinners who are constantly accessing the amazing grace of our loving Father. Make confession a daily part of your conversation with God. You’ll be amazed at how much more smoothly life runs when God is in control!

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 7 – Songs of Trust**  
**Psalm 62**

**Introduction**

Trusting God is one of the greatest challenges of life, especially when difficulties or temptations come to us. The root of Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden was *their failure to trust* the love of God for them. They took control of their own lives because they stopped trusting that God was on their side. Today, when tests come to us, we tend to have two reactions. First, we may feel *fear*. The fear may be a mild anxiety or it may be a total panic attack. But fear at some level is one natural reaction to anything that threatens us. Secondly, we may feel like *taking control* to deal with the threat. If we can’t trust someone else to help us (like God), then we move to help ourselves.

The Psalms of Trust (5, 11, 16, 23, 46, 57, 61, 62, 63, 71, 91, 121, 125, 131) were written at times when the various authors felt the need to bolster their faith in God, in the face of some trial. These Psalms express different levels of confidence in God. Some lean more on the side of tentative confidence with elements of fear (eg. 5, 57) while others lean more on the side of unwavering confidence in God (eg. 46, 91). Remember – the Psalms are not theological treatises. They are the writings of real people wrestling with God over real issues in life. The Psalms of Trust show us how to process our faith (trust) in God during the seasons of life where our trials *seem to be* greater than our God. (Eg. Recall how David doubted God’s protection when being chased by King Saul; but Jonathan assured him that he *was* God’s anointed king - compare 1 Samuel 16:12 with 1 Samuel 23:16).

**The “Only” Psalm – 62**

Psalm 62 was written by David at some point in his life when he was threatened by enemies. It is a song that expresses confident trust in God *even while the enemies persist in their attacks*. David was confident that God would be His shield and defender.

A unique literary feature occurs in this Psalm. The Hebrew word AK - usually translated “only” or “alone” - occurs as the first word in six different lines (in the original Hebrew text). This was David’s way of helping readers (or hearers) to remember the message of this Psalm: ONLY God can be trusted to rescue us from life’s trials and temptations.

The following translation (NASB) including the Hebrew AKs will help you see the literary structure (and repeated message) of this Psalm.

***ONLY (AK) my soul waits in silence for God; from Him is my salvation (v.1).***

***ONLY (AK) He is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken (v.2).***

***How long will you assail a man, that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence (v.3)?***

***ONLY (AK) they have counseled to thrust him down from his high position; they delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse (v.4).***

***ONLY (AK) my soul, wait in silence for God; for my hope is from Him (v.5).***

***ONLY (AK) He is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken (v.6).***

***On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God (v.7).***

***Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us (v.8).***

***ONLY (AK) vanity are men of low degree and men of rank are a lie; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than breath. Do not trust in oppression and do not vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them (vv.9,10).***

***Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God; and lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work (vv.11,12).***

David's overall message is clear: God ONLY (or God alone) is worthy of our ultimate trust in the challenging seasons of life. The Psalm can be divided up into 5 sections, each having a slightly different theme related to trust.

### **1. Declaration: God is my ONLY source of trust (62:1,2).**

David begins with a confident declaration of trust in God. He pictures his soul (his inner being) waiting in silence for God, even while his life is full of noisy turmoil.

***ONLY (AK) my soul waits in silence for God; from Him is my salvation.***

***ONLY (AK) He is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.***

David found himself up against many things in life that could, potentially, unsettle his soul. As king of Israel, he faced military, economic, political and personal challenges. He was not always able to trust God fully, and there were times when he caved in to fear and self-protective strategies. Yet, at the deepest level, David knew the true antidote to a worry-filled life. He knew where his soul could truly rest – ONLY one place. ONLY God was the secure refuge for David, amidst the storms of life.

*How do we quiet our soul and refocus our perspective on God so that we can regain perspective and confidence to move forward?*

*1. Get quiet! Turn off the noise. Go someplace where you can be alone and hear the still small voice of God. 2. Focus on who God is. If you are unfamiliar with biblical passages that focus on the attributes of God, you can do a Google search for "attributes of God." (Check out "Thirty Days of Praying the Names and Attributes of God" by the Navigators.) 3. Ask: How can I entrust myself or my situation into God's hands based on who He is? (Notice how David describes God as a "rock" and then he pictures himself taking refuge in that rock of safety.) 4. Pray that God would help you move your trust to ONLY Him. (God may use other people to help you; but your ultimate trust is ONLY in God.)*

### **2. Reality: Life is often ONLY challenges (62:3,4).**

The Psalms do not gloss over reality. Here we see David using the Hebrew AK (only) with a very different focus. In his case, his enemies are bent ONLY on his destruction.

*How long will you assail a man, that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?*

***ONLY (AK) they have counseled to thrust him down from his high position; they delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse.***

David describes himself as very vulnerable to powerful forces that threaten to topple him. They had ONLY (AK) one intention – to defeat David. They’d use lies and deceit, anything to take David down. So the first three AKs in this Psalm show the great dichotomy in life. On the one side there is TRUST (the first two AKs). On the other side there is TROUBLE (the third AK). The reality of life is that we are always somewhere on the continuum between trusting God and fearing trouble.

*David wasn't afraid to admit that he was vulnerable. Jesus said: "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). It is self-deception to think that we are NOT vulnerable and that we can handle life without God's help. Admit you ARE vulnerable and describe your challenge specifically to God (as David did). The apostle Paul said: "I will most gladly boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2Corinthians 12:9). It's a strength to admit our need for God's help.*

### **3. Admonition: Find rest ONLY in God (62:5-8).**

David now turns back to the theme of trusting God. Yet, a slight change in the vocabulary yields an important lesson. He is now admonishing himself (and us) to *remain* in the place of trust.

***ONLY (AK) my soul, wait in silence for God; for my hope is from Him.***

***ONLY (AK) He is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken.***

***On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.***

***Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.***

When you compare the opening line (v.1) to these lines you will see the slight change in grammar with the word “wait.”

***ONLY (AK) my soul waits in silence for God (v.1).***

***ONLY (AK) my soul, wait in silence for God (v.5).***

Whereas he initially described his soul as waiting in silence, he is now commanding his soul to continue waiting in silence (rest). David was a realist not only about life's ongoing challenges, but also about the soul's tendency to waver. Our soul trusts; and then our soul freaks out, and begins to doubt as we look at our problems. Then we need to come back to the place of trust. David preaches a mini-sermon to himself here, to stay in the place of trust. You've heard of "note to self?" Well, this is David's "note to self." *Stay in the place of trust O my soul!*

After reminding himself, David then admonishes all people who are reading this Psalm to come to the place of trust. ***Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him; God is a refuge for us (v.8).***

*Like David, we must remind ourselves over and over of who our God is. Notice how David repeats the attributes of God (rock, salvation and stronghold) and then adds some superlatives (rock of strength and refuge) so that his soul can stay in the place of rest. Our hearts NEED constant reminders of the character of our God. And don't be afraid to say it like it is! Pour it all out before God, whether your trouble is due to your own wrong choices or because of other people's choices. Use verses like 62:5-7 to regain perspective on who God is in the midst of your challenges.*

#### **4. Warning: Men, schemes, riches – are ONLY air (62:9,10).**

David includes a strong warning about placing our trust (confidence) in the wrong sources. Again, he employs the Hebrew word AK (ONLY) to make his point.

***ONLY (AK) vanity are men of low degree and men of rank are a lie; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than breath. Do not trust in oppression and do not vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.***

We so often place too much of our trust in people to "save us" in our time of need. At times, David tried that strategy, relying heavily on a key advisor or military ally. (See Psalm 55:12-14; 16-17; 20-21.) Here in Psalm 62, David describes certain "trusted" friends as ONLY vanity (useless, empty). He says that you can

weigh them all on a scale and they will be “lighter than air” (ie., weightless, powerless). He goes on to warn about other self-made strategies that we might trust in, such as oppression, robbery, or hoarding riches. IF riches increase (and they may), “do not set your heart upon them.” (Hebrews 13:5 sounds a similar theme with regard to riches: “Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, because God has said: ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5,6). We should have our primary trust in the Lord, then we can entrust our decisions and future into the hands of our trustworthy God. He will guide us when we ask Him for wisdom, as David did throughout his life (1Samuel 23:2,4; 30:8; 2Samuel 2:1; 5:19,23; 12:16). After we have placed our ultimate trust in God, He will guide us as we use our own wisdom and relationships to make decisions.

### **5. Character: Power, Love and Justice are found in God (62:11,12).**

David concludes by speaking of the character of God. Ultimately, trust is only as good as the object you place your trust in.

***Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God; and lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work.***

David knew that his God is STRONG – He can handle my problems. God is LOVING – He cares about my issues. God is perfectly JUST – He knows how to settle the scores between people. This is the final line *and* the bottom line with this issue of trust. We must get to know the character of God . . . otherwise we will always have difficulty trusting Him. The more you know God’s character, the easier it will be to rest your issues with Him.

*How do we grow in our ability to trust God? Time in God’s Word, and time with God’s people is so critical. Study His ways described in the Bible, and see His ways being played out with people today. Our intimacy with God grows over a lifetime as we first gain ‘head-knowledge’ about God, and then life experiences press these truths down deep into convictions within our hearts. As an exercise, you might want to read through all of the Psalms of Trust over the next couple of weeks to see how these writers processed their lives through the lens of trust in Almighty God.*

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 8 – Songs of Praise & Thanks**  
**Psalms 100 & 139**

**Introduction**

Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise occupy a major part of the book of Psalms. This is because gratitude toward God honors Him. After revealing that He does not delight in animal sacrifices and burnt offerings, God declares: “*Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High ... He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me*” (Psalm 50:14,23). Both on a personal and a corporate level, we are to be marked by the attitude of gratitude.

There is overlap between the various Psalms of Thanks and Praise. A general classification is as follows:

Psalms of Corporate Thanks: 65, 67, 75, 100, 105, 107, 124, 136

Psalms of Personal Thanks: 21, 30, 34, 40, 66, 92, 108, 116, 138

Psalms of Praise: 18, 32, 41, 95, 96, 98, 103, 104, 106, 111, 112, 113, 117, 118, 145-150

**A Corporate call to Praise: Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 is the classic short call to praise. It may have been used at the 3 major annual festivals in Israel, as the people gathered to worship God. As in ancient times, it is still often used in worship services as the introductory call to enter God’s house with shouts of thanksgiving and praise.

***Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.***

***Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.***

**How** are we to give thanks and praise? With joyful singing and glad serving. **Why** are we called to do so? Because God has made us, cared for us, been good to us, and bestowed us with His lovingkindness and faithfulness. Quite simply, we worship God because He IS the LORD Who is worthy of our thanksgiving and praise. Through thanksgiving and praise, we acknowledge that it is our privilege to be the sheep of HIS pasture, and that we would not want to do life without Him.

Worship is to “declare worth” to God. His worth is priceless and praise is declaring to Him that He is worth my highest affection. Eg. I praise You for Your greatness (Psalm 145:3). I praise You that You are good and You are compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (Psalm 145:8). Praise focuses on *who God is*, not on *what He has done for us*. Praise is telling God all the things that you love about Him. When we praise God, we bless Him by telling Him how much we love Him; but at the same time, our own faith is strengthened as we remember who God is and that He is intimately involved with every aspect of our lives. “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17,27; Luke 18:27).

Note: Giving “thanks” differs from “praise” in that thanksgiving focuses on what God has done and is doing for us. It is focusing on God’s care for our personal lives and the lives of those we love.

*Personal praise is so important for my own trust in and growing love for God. When I get together with other believers in corporate praise, I can join with them in celebrating God and telling Him what I love about Him. Praises put to music are simply declarations in song. It is all about focusing on God and His character, rather than what He has done for me. We honor God when we come together in corporate worship, with our hearts prepared to sing praise to Him.*

### **A Personal Reflection in Awe of God: Psalm 139**

The 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm reads like a personal song/poem David composed concerning the wonder of his relationship with God. He mentions giving “thanks” only once (v.14); but the entire tone of the Psalm is that of gratitude for all that God was to David. It may have been written during a time of struggle against some enemies, for he reflects upon God’s justice in dealing with “the wicked” toward the end of the Psalm. There were many things about God that

captured David's heart. He focused on five specific aspects of God's ways of relating with him that he was thankful for.

## **1. God knows everything about me: (vv.1-6).**

God is omniscient, meaning that He has perfect knowledge of everything. David first expresses his wonder over the fact that God personally and intimately knows everything about him.

***O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.***

God not only knew every thought, word and action of David; He also "enclosed him behind and before," meaning that He was carefully watching over David and protecting him. The very thought of God's personal intimacy with him was overwhelming to David.

*It is clear that David had thought about the ways he had felt God's very personal touch on his life. This is so important to learn. God is a personal God. He does know each of us intimately. But do I take the time to think about and voice to Him how I have experienced Him personally? Eg. Has God recently shown you a personal "touch" that you knew was just for you? Thank Him for your experience of Him.*

## **2. God goes everywhere with me: (vv.7-12).**

God is also omnipresent, meaning that He is completely present everywhere at all times. David was comforted by the knowledge that God went with him *everywhere* in life, even into the darkest valleys and most terrifying places.

***Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around***

***me will be night,” even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.***

Previously David referred to the “hand of God” being upon him for protection (v.5). Here David again refers to the “hand of God” leading him at every step of his journey (v.10). There was no place on earth that David could go where he could escape the personal presence of God.

*Often when I am in a hard chapter, it is difficult to see how God is there with me. I can feel very alone. Yet, knowing the truth that He IS THERE can help me to cling to Him in spite of my feelings of aloneness. “I will never leave you, no, I will never forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Sometimes it is not until later that I can see how God really was there with me. Psalm 139 declares the reality that there is absolutely NO place in the universe where God is not present. Are you feeling alone or abandoned? Spend time focusing on these verses. You can be comforted knowing the truth that He IS with you wherever you go.*

### **3. God skillfully formed me for a purpose: (vv.13-16).**

David further marveled that God *knew* him even *before* he was born. God fearfully and wonderfully knit him together while he was still in his mother’s womb, all for specific purposes that were pre-numbered and pre-ordained just for him.

***For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.***

Life did not begin on the day when David was born. It began when God skillfully formed David and numbered his days “*when as yet there was not one of them*” (i.e., before he had lived even his first day). The personal care of God for each one of us begins at the moment we are conceived!

Each of us was created with God complete involvement. Give thanks to God that all of the characteristics you were born with ARE part of His handiwork in you. Do you find yourself saying, "I wish I was more like ..." Or, "I wish I hadn't been born with ..." Choose to turn those regrets into opportunities to thank God for the way that He created you. Thank Him specifically for those things about yourself that you often complain about. You ARE fearfully and wonderfully made!

#### **4. God is immanently involved with me: (vv.17-19).**

God is both transcendent (over all) and immanent (in and through all). When we say that God is immanent, it means that He is personally and intimately involved in every aspect of our lives. He is "with us," not distant from us. He is mindful of us and engaged with us at every point. David was deeply moved at how *thoughtful* God was toward him.

***How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.***

There are trillions upon trillions of grains of sand on the beach. Imagine that God actually has that many thoughts towards you. When you realize that, it is so precious to be so special. Perhaps you feel like no one else is thinking about you, or understands you. God does! As you realize this, thank Him that He is constantly thinking about you. You are incredibly valued by Him!

#### **5. God also knows His enemies (and David's): (vv.20-22).**

David had no lack of personal enemies. Yet, it was more important to David that these people hated his God. It grieved David's heart to see and hear people taking God's name in vain. As evidence of his love for God, David expressed his own hatred of those who mocked and disdained his precious God. Above all, it comforted David to know that his God was *fully aware* of every one of his enemies, and *completely just* in His dealings with every human being.

***O that You would slay the wicked, O God; depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed. For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; they have become my enemies.***

When the ultimate “Son of David,” Jesus Christ was on earth, He set a higher standard in terms of our attitude (and prayers for) our enemies. He spoke of loving those who hate us (Matthew 5:43-48). Why? Because that is actually how God loves. He doesn’t “hate” those who hate Him. He loves humanity and continues to reach out to us, in spite of our mockery and disrespect of Him. Thank God that even though you often think and act in ways that don’t reveal God’s character to others, in His mercy He still loves you and others who disregard or despise Him.

**A closing prayer for God’s intimate searching: (vv.23,24).**

David concludes as he began – with a word about how God “searches” out his inmost being. Whereas in the opening lines David said that God *had searched him and known him*, he closes by *inviting God to search him even more deeply*. He specifically asks God to search out those “hurtful ways” that remained buried in his heart (lit. “ways of pain”) and to bring healing to those areas of his life.

***Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.***

God’s Spirit wants to reveal to you things that are hidden so deep in your heart that you cannot see them (but God does see them). If God did reveal to you some flaw or hurtful way in you (some way that you self-protect, or some wound from the past), would you welcome this revelation? David invited God to search him and reveal the hidden hurts. This takes time of being alone and open to God’s Spirit. There is nothing to fear. His goal is to bring healing to the deepest parts of your heart.

**A final thought: Gratitude or Grumbling?**

Praising God and giving thanks displays an attitude of gratitude. The opposite of gratitude is grumbling. It is important to constantly choose to praise and thank God, both on your own and with others. If you don’t, you will inevitably gravitate toward complaining, blaming, bitterness, frustration and fear. Praise and thanksgiving is the proper response to your gracious, merciful God. But it is also good for you! You will have a heart that is full of trust, comfort, awe, courage, peace, reverence and respect. What parent doesn’t smile when a child says that he/she is thankful and grateful for who the parent is, and for what the parent does? An attitude of gratitude delights your Father *and* lifts up your soul!