

Job Devotionals

DEVOTIONALS ON JOB

F B Meyer, Our Daily Bread, Woodrow Kroll, Theodore Epp

Job 1:5

Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and renounced God in their hearts. (r. v.).

Times of festivity are always full of temptation. The loins are relaxed, the girdle of the soul is loosed. Amid the general hilarity and the passing of the merry joke, words are said and thoughts permitted which are not always consistent with the character of God and His glorious kingdom and service. Job was not wrong, therefore, in supposing that his children might have contracted some defiling stain.

It is necessary for some of us to move in society, and to attend festive gatherings. As the Lord went to the wedding feast, and accepted Simon's invitation, so must we. The sphere of our life lies necessarily in the world. But when we are entering scenes of recreation and pleasure we should be more than ever careful to put on our armor, and by previous meditation and prayer prepare ourselves for the inevitable temptation; and when it is all over, and the lights are down, we should quietly review our behavior under the light that streams from the Word of God. If we then are made aware of frivolous or uncharitable words, of jealousy because others have outshone us, or of pride at the splendor of our dress and the brilliance of our talk, we must confess it, and obtain forgiveness and restoration.

What a beautiful example is furnished by Job to Christian parents! When your girls are going among strangers, and your boys into the great ways of the world, and you are unable to impose your will upon them, as in the days of childhood, you can yet pray for them, casting over them the shield of intercession, with strong cryings and tears. They are beyond your reach; but by faith you can move the arm of God on their behalf.

Job 1:1 – Woodrow Kroll

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

Someone once suggested that when many Christians flee from evil, they leave a forwarding address. They may not want to be immersed in sin, but they do want to stay in touch.

Job, on the other hand, was blameless and upright. How could he maintain such a spotless reputation? Because he did more than fear God; he also shunned evil. The word translated "shunned" can mean "to rebel" or "to revolt." You could say that Job found sin revolting. It was certainly not because he couldn't afford all the pleasures that lead to sin; Job was one of the wealthiest men of his time (Job 1:3). Nor did he live in some backwater village. The land of Uz was highly populated and had several kings or "sheiks" (Jer. 25:20). But Job had an attitude toward sin that left it no chance to get a toehold in his life. This man didn't simply avoid sin; he ran from it. And he gave no opportunity for it to contact him later.

It's not enough for Christians to avoid the sins they find attractive but stay in the vicinity where they can be found. Under those circumstances, you can be sure that you and your sin ultimately will get back together again. The only wise solution for those who want to live blameless and upright lives is to separate themselves far enough from enticing sin that no contact can take place.

If you've put a sin behind you, put everything associated with that sin behind you as well. If it's pornography, don't simply store your magazines out in the garage. Destroy them. If it's alcohol, don't leave a bottle in the house. Pour it down the drain. If it's gossip, cut your "grapevine." Don't attend those functions that degenerate into gossip sessions. You can do more than just refuse to participate; you can put some space between you and your temptation.

Flee sin and burn the bridges behind you.

Job 1:5 A Family Man

Woodrow Kroll

So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed

God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

A Family Man

In her book *Formations*, Kay Shurden observes that a family is more than a collection of human beings related by blood. It is more than the sum of its parts. A family is a living, shaping, powerful unit that teaches us our most important lessons. It teaches us who we are, how to act, whom we relate to and what is important in life.

Job was a busy man. He was a man of great wealth and responsibility. But his first priority, after his personal relationship with God, was his family. He rose "early in the morning" and brought his children before the Lord. He demonstrated his love for his family not only by providing for their physical well-being but also by interceding for them at God's throne of grace. Job modeled for his family the importance of a spiritual life and how to maintain that relationship with the Lord. And he did it on a regular basis.

Our lives are filled with stress and strain. The pressure to provide for the physical needs of our family is great. Yet to fulfill our complete responsibility to our loved ones, it is absolutely essential that we model an outstanding spiritual life as well. Without a role model to point the way, our children are at risk to falter in their personal walk with the Lord.

Are you providing more than a roof over your family's head and clothes on their back? These are vital, of course, but if you take your family responsibilities seriously, your spiritual responsibilities also will be important to you. Daily pray for each member of your family. Pay specific attention to their spiritual needs. Be a spiritual giant in their life. Provide for their spirit as diligently as you provide for their body.

Filling the soul is no less important than filling the stomach.

Job 1:1-5 QUALITIES THAT PLEASE GOD

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

In brief but pointed phrases Job is described in the first verse in the book: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1).

First of all, he is said to be "perfect." This word does not refer to sinless perfection but to the fact that Job wholeheartedly wanted to please God.

Second, Job is described as an upright man. He had a good relationship with other human beings, which was due to his having a right relationship with God. He was a man of unusual piety.

Third, Job was a man who feared God. In the Old Testament context this refers to a man who had a reverential trust of God coupled with a hatred for evil. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). With that trust in God grows a sensitivity to sin and a hatred of it.

Fourth, Job was a man who eschewed evil, which means that he turned away from it. He abstained from evil and shunned it. His manner of life corresponded to his relationship with God.

Through trust in Jesus Christ, we have been cleansed from sin. Its guilt has been removed, and we are counted righteous in God's eyes.

We are born again, but does our conduct before other people indicate what our relationship is before God? Job's conduct did.

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:13).

Job 1:6-12 Satan's Logic

READ: Job 1:6-12

Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" --Job 1:9

What happens if you rewrite the story of *The Three Little Pigs* from the wolf's point of view? Teacher and author Jon Scieszka thought children would be fascinated by such a revision. He was right. His book *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* quickly went through several printings and made the list of bestselling children's books.

In the story, the wolf claims he wasn't intent on having pork for dinner but was tricked by three selfish pigs. He was just out to borrow a cup of sugar for his grandma's birthday cake. He was sneezing, not huffing and puffing, when the straw house just happened to

collapse.

We can see through the wolf's twisted reasoning in this children's tale because we know the story so well. But are we as able to see through Satan's logic? His conversation with God about Job illustrates the problem. He charged that Job had selfish motives for serving God. Satan's strategy is often similar in our lives. He tries to convince us that evil motives are good and that good motives are evil.

Lord, we admit that we are often intrigued with Satan's subtle reasoning, especially when it feeds our own selfish desires. Help us to see through Satan's twisted logic and agree with Your point of view. — Mart De Haan

Lord, teach us from Your holy Word

All error to discern,

And by Your Spirit's light help us

From Satan's snares to turn. —Bosch

Beware! Satan makes a lie sound like the truth.

Job 1:6-11 A GLIMPSE THAT STRENGTHENS

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

In the first two chapters of the Book of Job, God gives us a look behind the scenes so that we can see events on earth from the standpoint of heaven.

There is no doubt that if Job could have seen into the councils of heaven before and during his trial, he would have answered his friends quite differently. But God did not allow him to know about this heavenly scene presented to us.

Nor did God explain it to him at the close of his experiences. He may have learned about it after he went to heaven but not before.

God's eternal purpose for Job would have been thwarted if Job had been given the explanation for his trial. If he had known all that went on behind the scenes in heaven, there would have been no place for faith.

Without faith, Hebrews 11:6 tells us, it is impossible to please God. Job could never have been purified, as gold is purified by fire, if he had not gone through the situation in which he had to trust God implicitly.

God has permitted us to see these things to help strengthen our faith when we face baffling afflictions. His purpose is that we might place implicit faith in Him and in His counsel and His goals for us, believing that the hard experiences in life are permitted for a good purpose.

This is the teaching of Romans 8:28,29: "All things work together for good" for the believer.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Job 1:1-22 O God, Why?

Job 1:1-22

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. --Proverbs 3:5

Several years ago, the growing season had been unusually good in eastern Michigan. Farmers were elated at the thought of their potential profits. Then, just before harvest, the rains came--and stayed.

Potatoes rotted in the ground; beans molded in their pods. The entire harvest season remained wet. Anticipation of a record yield quickly faded. One discouraged farmer was quoted as saying, "You ask yourself, 'Why? What have we done wrong?'"

People have always asked why when faced with reversal and hardship. Their question is significant because it reflects the fact that nothing happens by chance. God is in control. Neither Satan nor man can go any further than is allowed by the Almighty.

The story of Job, however, makes it clear that we should not become too preoccupied with the question why. God's reasons are often kept to Himself. He may hold them high above our understanding and far beyond our natural field of vision in order to develop our faith. Our response to trouble should be like that of Job at the beginning and at the end of his problems (Job 2:10; 42:1-6).

Obediently trust God in your circumstances--even when you can't understand what He's doing. - Mart De Haan

When through life's darkened maze I go

And troubles overwhelm my soul,

O grant me, Lord, Your grace to know

That You are surely in control. --DJD

When God conceals His purposes, He consoles with His promises

Job 1:1-12 JUST ASKING A QUESTION?

"Do not speak evil of one another." - James 4:11

Slanderers slaughter reputations. Sometimes they attack with the bold strokes of a butcher. At

other times they do their evil work with the finesse of a surgeon.

Satan is an expert in subtle slander. Knowing the power of a well-placed question to destroy a reputation, he simply asked, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (Job 1:9).

Satan's question is shrewd because it evades the dangers of an outright lie. An accusation flirts with the embarrassment of being proven wrong. But no one can call you a liar or a slanderer if you merely ask a question.

A question also avoids punishment. It's difficult for someone to attack you if you have simply asked a question. It's unlikely that you can be sued or pulled into court. Yet, Satan's query savaged a good man's motives by implying that all of the good Job did was a coverup for selfishness.

When we are inclined to ask a malicious question, let's stop and remind ourselves that we will be playing the devil's game. Our tongues were not given to us to rip people apart; they were given to us to build people up. We ought to speak well of others not only to their face but also behind their back. -- H W Robinson

The tongue can be a blessing

Or the tongue can be a curse;

Say, friend, how are you using yours:

For better or for worse?

Our words have the power to build up or to tear down

Job 1:9–10 Deuteronomy 33:27 Psalms 139:5 1 Chronicles 1:9-10

Woodrow Kroll

God's Hedge

Some years ago a group of educators decided to remove the chain-link fence from around their school's playground. They believed the fence promoted feelings of confinement and restraint. But then a curious thing happened. They noticed that as soon as the fence was removed, the children huddled in the center of the playground to play. Unknown to the "experts," the children had actually gained a sense of security from the presence of the fence.

It was this same kind of security that Satan recognized in the life of Job. Figuratively speaking, God had placed a hedge or fence around Job and all he possessed to protect him from evil. Job was hemmed in on all sides by this hedge, but it was not a matter of constraint; it was a matter of security. He could live confidently, knowing that nothing could reach him without first going through God's hedge of protection.

Every believer today can have that same assurance. The Bible provides a first line of defense. The commandments and exhortations that some people view as divine restrictions are really God's protection plans. Their purpose is to prevent us from engaging in behavior that will hurt us. In addition, even the omnipotent hands of God are encircling our lives. No disaster or calamity can touch us without the permissive will of our Heavenly Father. Only those things that God knows ultimately will prove to be for our good are allowed to penetrate this divine hedge.

So, do not chafe against the restrictions God puts into your life. They are hedges for your security. Rejoice that God has His arms underneath you (Deut. 33:27) and His hands behind, before and over you (Ps. 139:5). You are totally encompassed by His hedge of protection. Inside God's hedge you are safe!

God's hedges are built for protection, not imprisonment.

Job 1:1-9

August 21 - THE CLUE TO LIFE'S MAZE

Our Daily Walk

"There was a man whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil... Satan said, Doth Job fear God for naught?"-- Job 1:1-9.

THIS MARVELLOUS poem, one of the profoundest studies in the Bible, deals with the great problem of evil. At some time or other in our lives, we come back to study it, as a clue to life's maze, the expression of our heart's out-cry, and the solution of life's mystery in the Will and Love of God.

From first to last, the supreme questions in this wonderful piece of literature are: "Can God make man love Him for Himself alone and apart from His gifts?" and "Why is Evil permitted, and what part does it play in the nurture of the soul of man?" These questions are always with us. In fact, the Book of Job may be said to be a compendium of the existence and history of our race.

The first chapter teems with helpful lessons. The anxiety of parents for their children should expend itself in ceaseless intercession on their behalf. The great Adversary of souls is always on the watch, considering our conduct so as to accuse us before God, not only for overt sins, but for unworthy motives. We cannot forget our Lord's words to Peter: "Satan asked to have you, but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31, R.V.). Christ never underestimated the power of Satan, the "prince of this world," but He is our great Intercessor (Hebrews 4:14; 15; 16; Hebrews 7:25).

In circumstances of prosperity and happiness, we must never forget that it is God who plants a hedge about us, blesses our work and increases our substance. It is good to realize that whatever be the malignity of our foes, there is always the Divine restraint, and we are not tempted beyond what we are able to bear. It is not enough to endure our griefs sullenly or stoically. It should be our aim not only to hold fast to our integrity, but to trust God. There is a clue to the mystery of human life, which comes to the man who differentiates between the Real and the Unreal; the Seen and the Unseen.

PRAYER - My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. AMEN.

Job 1:8 Why Good People Suffer

READ: Job 1:6-22

The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job?. --Job 1:8

My Sunday school class has been studying one book of the Bible each week. Beginning with Genesis, we are looking at the theme, structure, and uniqueness of each book. Little did I realize that two women in my class were eager to get to the book of Job. They are nurses who daily confront the problem of human suffering, and they are often asked hard questions about God's role in it.

All too often the explanation for suffering is similar to that expressed by Job's three friends who came to sit with him. One after another, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar told Job that he deserved the suffering because of his sin. The young observer Elihu came along and told Job the same thing.

The real reason Job was suffering was that Satan, the leader of the fallen angels, was trying to get him to turn from God. Because Satan cannot dethrone the Lord, he opposes Him by attacking His followers (see note 1 Peter 5:8). He strikes at God by tempting us to sin.

One reason for suffering, therefore, is that it's part of a larger, cosmic struggle. During hard times, we face the choice to trust God or to turn from Him. If we endure suffering with our trust in the Lord unshaken, we will thwart Satan's efforts and glorify our God. — David C. Egner

How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe,

I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe;

How often, when trials like sea billows roll,

Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul. —Cushing

When your world is shaking, run to the Rock.

Job 1:11–12 Lion on a Leash

Woodrow Kroll

"But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Lion on a Leash

Many cities and even small towns have leash laws. You can't simply let your pets run loose; they must be kept on a leash. The logic is obvious. With no constraints, dogs and cats not only do unsightly things on people's yards, but they damage shrubs and flowers, dig holes in unwanted places or make a nuisance of themselves in other ways.

God also has a leash law, and the primary target of that law is Satan. The Devil is a powerful enemy and can cause you a great deal of damage. The apostle Peter compared him to a lion (1 Pet. 5:8). Yet the life of Job demonstrates that the Devil can only go as far as God's leash allows him. With God's permission, Satan could afflict God's servant only to a certain extent and no further. Even though tragic events took place, God's hand was always on the leash preventing Satan from destroying Job.

Sometimes when we look at our difficult situations, we become fearful. Our imagination provides fertile soil for us to grow all kinds of potential problems and disasters. We fear the worst and are sure that we will be overwhelmed. Yet God never removes His hand from our enemy's leash. While we may experience difficult people and hard times, Satan cannot attack us beyond the limit that God allows.

Trust your Heavenly Father's wisdom. Nobody knows better than He does how far to play out the leash. While Satan may appear as a fearsome lion, he can do no more in your life than what God allows him. On that you can rely.

You can't trust the lion, but you can trust God's leash.

Job 1:12-22 VICTORIOUS FAITH DEFEATS SATAN BY THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

According to Job 1:12 the Lord gave Satan permission to afflict Job up to a certain point.

God told Satan that he could do what he wanted with all Job had, but he was not to touch Job himself. So Satan set out to prove that Job was not what God claimed him to be, but God's purpose was to show that Job was a man of God.

When the great calamities fell upon Job, it was not Satan's lightning nor Satan's whirlwind that brought destruction. The lightning and the wind belong to God.

Satan merely had permission from God to use them. Even Job saw this, for he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (v. 21).

The character of a person is generally revealed at a time of sudden crisis. When there is no time for reflection, our true nature is revealed. This is especially true when someone is under as much pressure as Job was.

Satan was defeated by Job's turning to the Lord. The Evil One failed in everything he tried to do against Job.

Instead of driving Job away from God, Satan had driven him closer to God. Here was a man who could be faced with all that Satan could cast at him and still stand firm in his faith.

Is this how we react when Satan brings trials and testings into our lives? Or do we cringe and ask why? Do we shake and tremble under the terrible trial?

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Job 1:12 The Standoff

He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. —1 John 4:4

1 John 4:1-6

When a local bookstore rearranged its shelves, I noticed an increase in the number of titles relating to sorcery and witchcraft. In fact, the religion section had become a virtual “standoff” between light and darkness. Christian titles flanked one side of the aisle, while roughly the same number of occult books lined the other side.

Sometimes we may think of God and Satan in the same way I thought of the books in that bookstore. We see them as opposing but equal forces with the same unlimited power. However, God is God and Satan is not. God is stronger than any force of darkness. He does what He pleases (Ps. 135:6), while Satan’s power is limited to what God allows. When Satan supposed that misfortune would make Job curse God, God told Satan, “Behold, all that [Job] has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person” (Job 1:12). Satan had to play by God’s rules.

Because God is in charge over everything, as Christ’s followers we don’t need to be paralyzed by fear of Satan’s power over our lives or the lives of the believers around us. He tempts us and tries to influence us, but the Bible assures us, “He who is in [us] is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

All hail the pow’r of Jesus’ name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all! —Perronet

The powers of evil around you are no match for the power of Jesus within you.

Job 1:13-22 Worst Possible Scenario!

When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. —Job 23:10

When I used to teach at a Bible college in a large city, I sometimes graded papers at a food court while waiting for a commuter train. One day, I accidentally bumped my large cup of coffee. Its entire contents emptied into my open briefcase.

In most cities, there is a quiet reserve on the part of commuters. However, the coffee splash was so dramatic that it could not be ignored. A man sitting nearby said aloud, “Worst possible scenario!”

That comment was obviously an overstatement. But each of us dreads the thought of something in particular: financial loss, the death of a child or spouse, cancer, or another loss or hardship.

The book of Job is a case study in worst possible scenarios. Yet Job wisely assessed God’s role in trying circumstances of loss and poor health: “He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). From this wise statement we can learn two valuable lessons: One is that what we dread most can be used to test our character and make us stronger. The other is that God will provide the strength and comfort to see us through.

Cling to God. He has promised to work on our behalf, even in the worst possible scenario.

God often sends me joy through pain,

Through bitter loss, divinest gain;

Yet through it all—dark days or bright—

I know my Father leads aright. —Conklin

The living God can take the fear out of living.

Job 1:8-22 Fragile Existence

We should not trust in ourselves but in God. —2 Corinthians 1:9

The geological features at Yellowstone National Park fascinate me. But when I walk among the geysers, I’m aware of how close I am to danger. I am walking atop one of the largest, most active volcanoes in the world.

When I read the book of Job, I feel as if I’m walking through Yellowstone on a day when the volcano erupts, exploding the earth’s fragile crust and bringing disaster.

Like tourists at Yellowstone, Job was enjoying life. He was unaware that only a hedge separated him from disaster (Job 1:9-10). When God removed that hedge and allowed Satan to test Job, his life exploded (vv.13-19).

Many believers live in circumstances where it seems as if God, for some reason, has removed His hedge of protection. Others, also for reasons unknown, live in relative calm, seemingly unaware of their fragile existence. Like Job's friends, they assume that nothing bad will happen unless they do something to deserve it.

As we learn from Job, however, God sometimes allows bad things to happen to good people. Although disaster can strike at any moment, nothing has the power to destroy those who trust Christ (2 Cor. 4:9). No disaster can separate us from God's love.

Though darker, rougher, grows the way

And cares press harder day by day,

With patience in His love I'll rest,

And whisper that He knoweth best. —Pentecost

God's love still stands when all else has fallen.

Job 1:9 Speck Inspectors

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? —Matthew 7:3

Why do some people seem to be experts at finding a speck in the eye of someone else? (Mt. 7:3). Is it because the fault stands out like Santa Claus at a Fourth of July picnic? No, they deliberately search for specks because they're looking for something to criticize.

The chief speck inspector is Satan. When the Lord called his attention to the good character of Job, the devil responded with a raised eyebrow. "Does Job fear God for nothing?" he smirked (Job 1:9). He insinuated that Job was good only because God made it pay to be good. Satan was so sharp-eyed he could see a speck that wasn't there.

Faultfinders are never reliable fact-finders. The enemies of our Lord even tried to find fault in the only One who ever lived a perfect life (Mt. 12:24; Lk. 7:34; Jn. 9:16). Because they looked for the worst, they were blind to the best.

Do we really understand the wickedness of faultfinding? It's a cruel habit that damages ourselves and those around us.

Jesus said we must first get the plank out of our own eye. That means we must recognize and confess our sins. As we learn to see people through eyes of love, we won't be so quick to point out specks in theirs.

Let me not judge my fellowmen,

But understand them, Lord, and when

The casting of the stones begins,

Remind me of my many sins. —Vandegrift

Inspect your own life before you look for specks in others.

Job 1:13-22 Character Amnesia

There was a man ... whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. — Job 1:1

It seems that young people in China are beginning to forget how to write the characters that comprise the beautiful calligraphy of their traditional language. Some are calling the phenomenon "character amnesia." Heavy usage of computers and smart phones often means that writing is neglected and some can no longer remember the characters they learned in childhood. One young man said, "People don't write anything by hand anymore except for [their] name and address."

Some people appear to have "character amnesia" of a different sort. When faced with a dilemma, they seem to "forget" the right thing to do and instead choose the easy way out.

God called Job "a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). God allowed Satan to take everything Job had—his children, his wealth, and his health. But despite his heart-wrenching circumstances, Job refused to curse God. "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong" (v.22). Satan had challenged God's assertion of Job's blameless character, but he was proven wrong.

Character amnesia? No. Character is who we are; it's not something we "forget." Those who have a loss of character make a choice.

It isn't the tranquil and placid seas

That bring out the sailor's skill;

It's the wind and waves that pound his ship

And toss it about at will. —Ritter

When wealth is gone, little is lost; when health is gone, something is lost; but when character is gone, all is lost!

Job 1:13-22 Drifting Away

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? —Job 2:10

Imagine relaxing on a rubber raft along the shore, eyes closed, soaking up the sun and listening to the gentle crash of waves. You don't have a care in the world—until you open your eyes! Suddenly the shore is alarmingly distant.

We tend to drift like that spiritually. It's subtle yet shocking when we suddenly realize how far we've drifted from God. The point of departure begins when Satan steals our affection for our loving Creator by putting a deceitful twist on our experiences and causing us to suspect God instead of trust Him.

Consider Job and his wife. Both had plenty of reasons to be mad at God. Their children were dead, their fortune lost, and Job's health destroyed. His wife told him, "Curse God and die!" But Job replied, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and ... not accept adversity?" (Job 2:9-10).

There are many attitudes that can set us adrift: believing that we need more than God to be happy; placing meaningful relationships above loyalty to God; thinking God should live up to our expectations; resisting His reproofs; turning a deaf ear when His Word is uncomfortable.

If you're beginning to drift, remember to stay close to the One who is the sole source of satisfaction.

Lord, help me to stay close to You

And trust You more each day,

So when the storms of life appear

I will not drift away. —Sper

To avoid drifting away from God, stay anchored to the Rock.

Job 1:13-22 Still In God's Hands

In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. —Job 1:22

During my first year of seminary, I listened as a new friend described her life. Abandoned by her husband, she was raising two small children alone. Earning just over minimum wage, she had little chance of escaping the poverty and dangers she described in her neighborhood.

As a father, I was moved by her concern for her children, and asked, "How do you handle all of this?" She seemed surprised by my question and replied, "We are doing all we can do, and I must leave them in God's hands." Her trust in God in the midst of trials reminded me of Job's trust (1:6-22).

A year later, she phoned and asked if I would come be with her at the funeral home. Her son had been killed in a drive-by shooting. I asked God for words to comfort her and for the wisdom not to try to explain the unexplainable.

Standing with her that day, however, I marveled as again and again she comforted others—her confidence in God unshaken by this terrible blow. Turning to me as we parted, her final words were a poignant reminder of the depth of her faith: "My boy is still in God's hands." Like Job, she "did not sin nor charge God with wrong"(v.22).

We too can develop an unshakable faith by daily walking with the Lord.

O the peace I find in Jesus,

Peace no power on earth can shake,

Peace that makes the Lord so precious,

Peace that none from me can take. —Beck

Nothing can shake those who are secure in God's hands.

Job 1:13-22 WHEN TRUST IS TESTED

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. - Job 1:21

In August 1992, Hurricane Andrew ravaged South Florida, destroying homes, businesses, and lives. The cost of that terrible disaster cannot be estimated only in terms of millions upon millions of dollars. What about the incalculable human suffering - physical, emotional, and spiritual? If people lost faith in God and prayer, they sustained the worst loss of all.

In the spring of 1993, some pastors who had churches in that area gathered to share their experiences and reactions. They all agreed that everyone who had encountered the terrifying power of that hurricane had come to realize how helpless and vulnerable we human beings really are. Proud as we

may be of our technological achievements, there are times when we are compelled to confess humbly, "We are not in charge." Some of the people whose trust was tested were able to say in the words of Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Is your trust in God so complete that no matter what takes place you will humbly rely on His wisdom, goodness, and mercy? Trusting in God will enable you to endure trials without despair. -V C Grounds

My times are in Thy hand;

Why should I doubt or fear?

My Father's hand will never cause

His child a needless tear. - Lloyd

God doesn't promise security from life's storms but security in life's storms.

Job 1:20 Rubble Reaction

Woodrow Kroll

A Sunday school teacher was giving an object lesson on reactions. She placed a glass on a small table and carefully filled it to the brim with water. Then she gave the table a slight shake and some of the water sloshed out. "Oh, my," she said, "I spilled some grape juice." A hand shot up. "But that's water," said a little boy. "That's right," she replied. "That's like our reactions. We might want to react a certain way to the things that shake our lives, but only what we've put in can come out."

Job's life was severely shaken. He first lost his wealth and his servants (Job 1:14–17). If that were not enough, he then lost his children (vv. 18–19). He later lost his health (2:7–8) and, finally, even his wife seemed to turn against him (v. 9). This series of blows caused two reactions to spill out of him. One was grief. He tore his robe and shaved his head. But the other was total submission to God. He fell to the ground and worshiped. It was obvious that what filled him most was love for and trust in the God of heaven.

Life is full of events that shake us. What spills out of us depends on what we've put in us. If you've been prone to harbor grudges and bitterness, you can guess what will gush out—anger and hatred. If you've sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the things of God, that also will be obvious by your reactions. No matter how you might wish otherwise, only those things that are in you can spill out.

If your life were reduced to a rubble heap and all that you hold dear were gone, how would you respond? Seek now to fill yourself with God's peace and love so you won't be ashamed at what comes spilling out of your life in hard times.

What we put in our lives will surely one day come out.

Job 1:21 You Can't Take It with You

Woodrow Kroll

And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;

blessed be the name of the Lord."

You Can't Take It with You

A few years ago, advice columnist Ann Landers printed a supposedly true story of a tightfisted husband who was married to a gracious woman. The wife put up with his tightwad behavior for more than 40 years. At age 60, "Ollie" was stricken with cancer. Toward the end, he made his wife promise, in front of witnesses, that she would place in his coffin all the money he had stashed away so he could buy his way into heaven. She agreed and assured him, as a woman of her word, she would do as he asked. The morning after his death she took the money (about \$26,000) and deposited it in the bank. She then wrote a check and put it in the casket four days later. She knew he couldn't take it with him.

Job, however, never entertained the foolish ideas of the tightfisted husband. He realized that he would leave this world as naked as he entered. He was wise enough to know that he would take nothing away from this world but himself.

What we make of ourselves in terms of character rather than possessions should be our concern as Christians. A godly nature steeped in an understanding of God's Word and God's ways is far more valuable than earthly wealth or honors. When we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, what we are will be of greater importance than what we had (2 Cor. 5:10).

Begin now to cultivate those things that will not be left behind when your body is placed in the ground. Set aside some time each day to spend in the Bible and prayer. Develop an attitude of compassion and generosity. Allow God's Spirit to create in you a clean heart and a steadfast spirit. These are riches you can take with you.

You have to leave the world naked, but not destitute.

Job 1:20 Wind And Worship

READ: Job 1:6-12

Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. --Job 1:20

Job's calamities were enormous. His oxen and donkeys were stolen. Fire consumed his sheep. Raiders took his camels. But that was just the beginning. A great wind destroyed the house where his sons and daughters were feasting, and they all perished. His loss seemed unbearable! But notice Job's response. He humbled himself and worshiped God (Job 1:20).

On April 2, 1977, the sky north of Olivet, Michigan, grew black and ominous. Just another severe thunderstorm, thought Norm Heddon. But when pressure began building in his ears, he instinctively rushed down the basement stairs-which took about 5 seconds. Then it happened-his house exploded into thousands of pieces from a killer tornado. Minutes later when Norm emerged, he couldn't believe his eyes. All his earthly goods had been swept away, but miraculously his family was unhurt. Bowing in prayer, they thanked God for His goodness. Heddon said, "He has a hand in everything that happens to us."

How can anyone worship while caught up in the fierce winds of adversity? The answer is clear: By anchoring our faith in the love and wisdom of God, we can say through our tears, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). - Dennis J. De Haan

Thinking It Over

Do you feel abandoned by God, as Job did? Tell Him how you feel. Then ask Him to help you believe the truth about His love for you.

When you are swept off your feet, land on your knees.

Job 1:21 Unfaltering Faith

READ: Job 2:1-10

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. --Job 1:21

Scottish author Sir Walter Scott faced financial disaster when his publisher went bankrupt in 1826. He was heavily invested in the firm, and it appeared that he would lose everything, including Abbotsford, his castle-like home. A Christian of unwavering faith, he wrote in his journal, "Things are so much worse than I apprehended that I shall neither save Abbotsford nor anything else. Naked we entered the world and naked we leave it. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

A life that doesn't undergo heartbreaking adversity is rare. Job was not overstating our common experience when he lamented, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1).

Many of us talk about loss and suffering and argue about why evil things happen to good people. But it's quite different to deal victoriously with the painful experiences that happen to us personally. What we really need in the teeth of affliction is not a plausible explanation but the ability to endure without emotional collapse or spiritual bitterness. We need the sustaining confidence that enables us to believe in God's love and wisdom (Job 1:21; 2:10).

Pray for an unfaltering faith that stands strong under life's greatest pressures. - Vernon C. Grounds

O for a faith that will not shrink

Though pressed by every foe,

That will not tremble on the brink

Of any earthly woe. -Bathurst

Great faith is often built during great trials.

Job 1 - 10 Reasons to Believe In A God Who Allows Suffering

Natural disasters. Terrorist acts. Injustice. Incurable disease. All these experiences point to suffering, and can cause people to question the love and goodness of a God who would let such things occur. In this publication, we seek to consider who God is, and why we can trust Him even when life hurts—and we don't know why.

Suffering Comes With The Freedom To Choose

Loving parents long to protect their children from unnecessary pain. But wise parents know the danger of over-protection. They know that the freedom to choose is at the heart of what it means to be human, and that a world without choice would be worse than a world without pain. Worse yet would be a world populated by people who could make wrong choices without feeling any pain. No one is more dangerous than the liar, thief, or killer who doesn't feel the harm he is doing to himself and to others (Genesis 2:15-17).

Pain Can Warn Us Of Danger

We hate pain, especially in those we love. Yet without discomfort, the sick wouldn't go to a doctor. Worn-out bodies would get no rest. Criminals wouldn't fear the law. Children would laugh at correction. Without pangs of conscience, the daily dissatisfaction of boredom, or the empty longing for significance, people who are made to find satisfaction in an eternal Father would settle for far less. The example of Solomon, lured by pleasure and taught by his pain, shows us that even the wisest among us tend to drift from good and from God until arrested by the resulting pain of their own shortsighted choices (Ecclesiastes 1:12; Psalms 78:34-35; Romans 3:10-18).

Suffering Reveals What Is In Our Hearts

Suffering often occurs at the hand of others. But it has a way of revealing what is in our own hearts. Capacities for love, mercy, anger, envy, and pride can lie dormant until awakened by circumstances. Strength and weakness of heart is found not when everything is going our way but when flames of suffering and temptation test the mettle of our character. As gold and silver are refined by fire, and as coal needs time and pressure to become a diamond, the human heart is revealed and developed by enduring the pressure and heat of time and circumstance. Strength of character is shown not when all is well with our world but in the presence of human pain and suffering (Job 42:1-17; Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-5; 1 Peter 1:6-8).

Suffering Takes Us To The Edge Of Eternity

If death is the end of everything, then a life filled with suffering isn't fair. But if the end of this life brings us to the threshold of eternity, then the most fortunate people in the universe are those who discover, through suffering, that this life is not all we have to live for. Those who find themselves and their eternal God through suffering have not wasted their pain. They have let their poverty, grief, and hunger drive them to the Lord of eternity. They are the ones who will discover to their own unending joy why Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:1-12; Romans 8:18-19).

Pain Loosens Our Grip On This Life

In time, our work and our opinions are sought less and less. Our bodies become increasingly worse for the wear. Gradually they succumb to inevitable obsolescence. Joints stiffen and ache. Eyes grow dim. Digestion slows. Sleep becomes difficult. Problems loom larger and larger while options narrow. Yet, if death is not the end but the threshold of a new day, then the curse of old age is also a blessing. Each new pain makes this world less inviting and the next life more appealing. In its own way, pain paves the way for a graceful departure (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14).

Suffering Gives Opportunity To Trust God

The most famous sufferer of all time was a man named Job. According to the Bible, Job lost his family to “a mighty wind,” his wealth to war and fire, and his health to painful boils. Through it all, God never told Job why it was happening. As Job endured the accusations of his friends, heaven remained silent. When God finally did speak, He did not reveal that His archenemy Satan had challenged Job’s motives for serving God. Neither did the Lord apologize for allowing Satan to test Job’s devotion to God. Instead, God talked about mountain goats giving birth, young lions on the hunt, and ravens in the nest. He cited the behavior of the ostrich, the strength of the ox, and the stride of the horse. He cited the wonders of the heavens, the marvels of the sea, and the cycle of the seasons. Job was left to conclude that if God had the power and wisdom to create this physical universe, there was reason to trust that same God in times of suffering (Job 1-42).

God Suffers With Us In Our Suffering

No one has suffered more than our Father in heaven. No one has paid more dearly for the allowance of sin into the world. No one has so continuously grieved over the pain of a race gone bad. No one has suffered like the One who paid for our sin in the crucified body of His own Son. No one has suffered more than the One who, when He stretched out His arms and died, showed us how much He loved us. It is this God who, in drawing us to Himself, asks us to trust Him when we are suffering and when our own loved ones cry out in our presence (1 Peter 2:21; 3:18; 4:1).

God’s Comfort Is Greater Than Our Suffering

The apostle Paul pleaded with the Lord to take away an unidentified source of suffering. But the Lord declined saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” “Therefore,” said Paul, “most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Paul learned that he would rather be with Christ in suffering than without Christ in good health and pleasant circumstances.

In Times Of Crisis, We Find One Another

No one would choose pain and suffering. But when there is no choice, there remains some consolation. Natural disasters and times of crisis have a way of bringing us together. Hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, riots, illnesses, and accidents all have a way of bringing us to our senses. Suddenly we remember our own mortality and that people are more important than things. We remember that we do need one another and that, above all, we need God. Each time we discover God’s comfort in our own suffering, our capacity to help others is increased. This is what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

God Can Turn Suffering Around For Our Good

This truth is best seen in the many examples of the Bible. Through Job’s suffering we see a man who not only came to a deeper understanding of God but who also became a source of encouragement for people in every generation to follow. Through the rejection, betrayal, enslavement, and wrongful imprisonment of a man named Joseph, we see someone who eventually was able to say to those who had hurt him, “You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). When everything in us screams at the heavens for allowing suffering, we have reason to look at the eternal outcome and joy of Jesus who in His own suffering on an executioner’s cross cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46)

You’re not alone if you find yourself honestly unconvinced about whether Christ rose from the dead. But keep in mind that Jesus promised God’s help to those who want to be right with God. He said, “If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own” (John 7:17 NIV).

If you do see the reasonableness of the resurrection, keep in mind that the Bible says Christ died to pay the price for our sins, and those who believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead will be saved (Romans 10:9-10). The salvation Christ offers is not a reward for effort, but a gift to all who in light of the evidence put their trust in Him.

Job 2:3

A perfect and an upright man.

Even God spoke of Job as perfect. Not that he was absolutely so, as judged by the perfect standard of eternity, but as judged by the standard of his own light and knowledge. He was living up to all the requirements of God and man, so far as he understood them. His whole being was open and obedient to the Divine impulses. So far as he knew there was no cause of controversy in heart or life. Probably he could have adopted the words of the Apostle, “I know nothing against myself.” He exercised himself to have always a

conscience void of offence toward God and man.

Satan suggested that his goodness was pure selfishness; that it paid him well to be as he was,, because God had hedged him around and blessed his substance. This malignant suggestion was at once dealt with by the Almighty Vindicator of the saints. It was as if God said, "I give thee permission to deprive him of all those favoring conditions, for the sake of which thou sayest he is bribed to goodness; and it shall be seen that his integrity is rooted deep down in the work of My grace upon his heart."

But the book goes on to show that God desired to teach Job that there were flaws and blemishes in his character which could only be seen by comparing it with the more perfect glory of His own Divine nature. His friends sought to prove him faulty, and failed; God revealed Himself, and he cried, "Behold, I am vile, and abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

How often God takes away our consolations, that we may only love Him for Himself; and reveals our sinfulness, that we may better appreciate the completeness of His salvation!

Job 2 Because

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? —Job 2:10

One day, my toddler exclaimed, "I love you, Mom!" I was curious about what makes a 3-year-old tick, so I asked him why he loved me. He answered, "Because you play cars with me." When I asked if there was any other reason, he said, "Nope. That's it." My toddler's response made me smile. But it also made me think about the way I relate to God. Do I love and trust Him just because of what He does for me? What about when the blessings disappear?

Job had to answer these questions when catastrophes claimed his children and demolished his entire estate. His wife advised him: "Curse God and die!" (2:9). Instead, Job asked, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (v.10). Yes, Job struggled after his tragedy—he became angry with his friends and questioned the Almighty. Still, he vowed, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (13:15).

Job's affection for his heavenly Father didn't depend on a tidy solution to his problems. Rather, he loved and trusted God because of all that He is. Job said, "God is wise in heart and mighty in strength" (9:4).

Our love for God must not be based solely on His blessings but because of who He is.

Shall we accept the good from God

But fuss when trials are in sight?

Not if our love is focused on

The One who always does what's right. —Sper

Focusing on the character of God helps us to take our eyes off our circumstances.

Job 2:1-10 QUESTIONING GOD'S LOVE

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Satan did not give up easily. He did not succeed the first time, but he would try again.

He had removed Job's possessions and his family, but now he was going to touch Job where he thought every person was vulnerable. Satan's proposition now was to add physical suffering to the problems of this man whom he thought was strained to the breaking point.

God had given His permission, so Satan brought a terrible disease on Job. Some think it was a form of black leprosy, said to be the worst kind of leprosy.

Even after all this, Satan was not through with Job. Another blow was still to come. Job's wife came to him and said, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die" (Job 2:9).

She must have thought that God, whom Job served, had forsaken him. Possibly she thought God could not be a God of love since He had let such suffering come upon a man who had served Him so well.

Isn't such an attitude familiar to us? Haven't we even thought these things ourselves?

"For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11, NASB).

Job 2:1-10 Learn To Teach

Have you considered My servant Job? —Job 1:8

After my father injured his eye so severely that it had to be surgically removed, doctors and nurses commented on how well he accepted the loss. His response was indeed exceptional. Throughout the ordeal I never heard him complain.

After the accident someone asked, "Why would God allow this to happen? What does your dad have to learn at his age?"

Not every tragedy is the result of our being enrolled in God's school of hard knocks against our will. There is always something we can learn from suffering. But in this case, my father was the teacher as well as the student.

Dad's response to pain and loss, combined with my mother's ongoing godly response to her own health problems, is teaching me the lesson that God's servant Job knew was true. At the height of his suffering, his wife urged him to "curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). But Job responded, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (v.10).

Job didn't understand the reason for his suffering, yet he affirmed his steadfast belief in a God who had the right to allow trouble in our lives as well as good. In times of suffering, it's important to consider what God would have us teach, as well as what He would have us learn.

Affliction has been for my profit,

That I to Thy statutes might hold;

Thy law to my soul is more precious

Than thousands of silver and gold. -Psalter

Difficulties tend to call out great qualities.

Job 2:7-10 Lost At Sea

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? -Job 2:10

In the fall of 1982, Deborah Kiley set out with three other young people to deliver the 58-foot yacht Trashman from Maine to Florida. Off the coast of North Carolina, they encountered gale winds and mountainous seas that sank their boat. Enduring 4 grueling days at sea without food or fresh water, the crew clung to life in a rubber dinghy in shark-infested waters.

In her book Albatross, Deborah recalls how one of the crew shouted curses at God for their dilemma. Despite her fatigue, Deborah silently recited The Lord's Prayer and asked God to teach her through this crisis. Later, the same young man drank seawater, became delirious, jumped overboard, and was eaten by sharks. Eventually, the survivors were rescued by a Russian freighter.

Each of us responds in different ways to a crisis. Centuries ago, Job was hit by one wave of bad news after another. At one point his wife told him to curse God and die. Job's response was profound:

"Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10)

The next time a crisis hits, recognize God's sovereignty and do as Deborah Kiley did—ask God to teach you something through it. - Dennis Fisher

O Lord, I would not ask You why

These trials come my way

But what there is for me to learn

Of Your great love, I pray. -D. De Haan

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;

Blessed be the name of the Lord. -Job

Job 2:10 An Age-Old Question

READ: Job 2:1-10

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? -Job 2:10|

When Jeremy was 17, he struggled with a question that theologians have wrestled with for centuries. For him the problem was not theoretical but practical. He was trying to understand why his mother had to have brain surgery. He asked, "Why do good people suffer, Mom?"

She told him, "Suffering is part of living in a sin-cursed world, and good people suffer like anybody else. That's why I'm glad we have Jesus. If I die, I'll go to a better place, and I'll long for the day when I can see you again." She then said that she could understand his frustration, but she told him not to put the blame on God.

If you and I are baffled by the suffering of good people, we can put the question squarely before God, argue with Him if we must, and struggle with our doubts. But let's not blame Him.

God didn't explain to Job what He was doing but said that He could be trusted to do what is right (Job 38-42). And He has assured us in His Word that Jesus suffered on our behalf, rose from the dead, and is now preparing a suffering-free place for us.

These may not be the answers we want, but they are the answers we need to help us live with that age-old and often unanswerable question of suffering. - Dennis J. De Haan

Why must I bear this pain? I cannot tell;

I only know my Lord does all things well.

And so I trust in God, my all in all,

For He will bring me through, whate'er befall. -Smith

God is not obligated to give us answers, but He promises us His grace.

Job 2 The Greatest Gift

They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him. —Job 2:13

We rightly disparage Job's three friends for their insensitive response to his suffering. Yet when they came, they sat in silence beside Job for 7 days before speaking. As it turned out, those were the most eloquent moments they spent with him.

Instinctively, I shrink back from people who are in pain. Who can know whether they want to talk about their predicament or not? Do they want to be consoled, or cheered up? What good can my presence possibly do?

Tony Campolo tells of going to a funeral. By mistake he ended up in the wrong parlor. It held the body of an elderly man, and his widow was the only mourner present. She seemed so lonely that Campolo decided to stay for the funeral. He even drove with her to the cemetery.

At the conclusion of the graveside service, Campolo finally confessed that he had not known her husband. "I thought as much," said the widow. "But it doesn't really matter. You'll never, ever, know what this means to me."

Most often those who suffer remember the quiet, unassuming person. Someone who was there when needed, who listened, who didn't keep glancing at a watch, who hugged, touched, and cried. In short, someone who was available and came on the sufferer's terms, not their own.

In our shattered times, anguish relents

Not at mere idle words spoken in vain,

But rather from the silent eloquence

Bestowed by those rare souls who share our pain. —Evans

Often, the best comfort is just being there.

Job 2:13 Mandy Just Listened

Job 2:11-13

They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him. --Job 2:13

Marty had gotten an unexpected "thank you" for service to the company—a terse note that concluded, "Your position has been terminated."

After Marty had spent months fruitlessly searching for a job, his frustration finally got to him. Angrily, he screamed at God, "Why did You do this to me? Don't You care?" He continued his tirade until he noticed his dog Mandy cowering by a chair. Composing himself, he said, "Come here, pup. You should be glad you're a dog. At least you can't get fired from being man's best friend." As he poured out his woes and talked to Mandy, his bitterness disappeared.

David Biebel, the author who told the story, wrote: "You might think the relief came from all the things he said to God, and certainly that was part of it. But Mandy played a big part too... [She] didn't argue or offer solutions or advice. She just listened, wagging her tail and licking her master's hand."

When Job's three friends saw his misery, they just sat with him, wept, and said nothing for 7 days. But then they abandoned the wisdom of their silence.

Sometimes we need to just "weep with those who weep" (Rom. [[12:15|bible.66.12.15]]). Our listening ear may be what they need, so they can hear what God is saying to them. - Dennis J. De Haan

When our friends encounter suffering,

We can help them if we're near;

Some may need a word of comfort,

Others just a listening ear. -Sper

Listening may be the most important thing you do today

Job 2:3-13 Be Present

They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great. —Job 2:13

After 20 children and 6 staff members were murdered in a Connecticut school, the entire nation was stunned that such a horrific thing could happen. Everyone focused on the tragedy and the questions surrounding it: What kind of person would do such a thing, and why? How can we prevent it from happening again? How can we help the survivors? Amid the chaos, an unlikely group moved in and made a difference.

From Chicago came dogs— specially trained golden retrievers that offered nothing except affection. Dogs don't speak; they simply offer their presence. Children traumatized by the violence opened up to them, expressing fears and emotions they had not spoken to any adult. Tim Hetzner of Lutheran Church Charities said, "The biggest part of their training is just learning to be quiet."

As we learn from the book of Job, people in grief do not always need words. Sometimes they need someone to sit silently with them, to listen when they need to speak, and to hug them when their sorrow turns to sobs.

God may not intervene to change circumstances and He may not explain suffering, but He comforts us through the presence of other believers (Col. 4:8).

He's with us in the valley,

Amid the darkest night

He tells us in our sorrow;

Faith will give way to sight. —D. DeHaan

Listening may be the most loving and Christlike thing you do today.

Job 2:3 One In A Million

Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth? —Job 2:3

In 1984 the newspapers told of the plight of a child in Mexico City. The 4-year-old boy had been orphaned and severely burned in a gas explosion that took the lives of 500 people. Millions saw the story and probably quickly forgot about it. But one woman in New York City was deeply moved and couldn't get the little boy off her mind.

This woman's concern led to efforts to find the boy, followed by 2 years of medical assistance, gifts, visits, and finally adoption proceedings. He had someone who loved him, someone who cared so much that she gave herself to him. I'd say she was one in a million!

That story brings to mind the patriarch Job. We usually think of him as a righteous man who suffered. But there was much more about him that made it possible for the Lord to say, "There is none like him on the earth." In Job 29-31 of Job, we get a more complete picture of the man. He proved his heart for God by reaching out to others. He was "one in a million" to orphans, widows, and other oppressed persons (Job 29:12-17; 31:16-22).

Father, please give us a heart that reaches out to others. May we stand out as men and women who extend Your compassion and love to people in need.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Ask God to show you someone you can help

and specific ways you can help that person.

Make it your goal this week to offer assistance.

Real love will help those who have nothing to give in return.

Job 2:11-13 Listening

Oh, that I had one to hear me! —Job 31:35

In her book *Listening to Others*, Joyce Huggett writes about the importance of learning to listen and respond effectively to those in difficult situations. As she relates some of her own experiences of listening to suffering people, she mentions that they often thank her for all she's done for them. "On many occasions," she writes, "I have not 'done' anything. I have 'just listened.' I quickly came to the conclusion that 'just listening' was indeed an effective way of helping others."

This was the help Job sought from his friends. While it is true that they sat with him for 7 days in silence, "for they saw that his grief was very great" (2:13), they didn't listen when Job started talking. Instead, they talked and talked but failed to comfort him (16:2). "Oh, that I had one to hear me!" Job cried (31:35).

Listening says, "What matters to you matters to me." Sometimes people do want advice. But often they just want to be listened to by someone who loves and cares about them.

Listening is hard work, and it takes time. It takes time to listen long enough to hear the other person's true heart, so that if we do speak, we speak with gentle wisdom.

Oh, Lord, give us a loving heart and a listening ear.

I cried, and from His holy hill

He bowed a listening ear;

I called my Father, and my God,

And He subdued my fear. —Watts

When I'm thinking about an answer while others are talking—I'm not listening.

Job 2:9 Don't Give Up and Don't Give In

Woodrow Kroll

Some of Andrew Jackson's boyhood friends just couldn't understand how he became a famous general and then the president of the United States. They knew of other men who had greater talent but who never made it as far as Andrew did. One of Jackson's friends said, "Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the road from Jackson, was not only smarter but he could throw Andy three times out of four in a wrestling match." Another friend responded, "How did there happen to be a fourth time? Didn't they usually say three times and out?" "Sure, they were supposed to," the man replied, "but not Andy. He would never admit he was beat. Jim finally would get tired, and on the fourth try, Andy would throw him and be the winner. He just wouldn't quit."

No one could argue that Job's life wasn't filled with severe trials. He not only suffered the physical affliction of painful boils from head

to foot but also lost his wealth and children. Then, to add insult to injury, his wife urged him to give up. In her estimation, life wasn't worth living. It was time to curse God and die. Though Job didn't understand why he was being afflicted, however, he did know he wasn't willing to quit.

People are always ready to encourage you to give up. "Life is too difficult," they say. "Life is not fair. It hurts too much." But such advice fails to take into account the omnipotent hand of God. Even though we may not understand why painful and discouraging events happen in our lives, we have the assurance that God has His reasons—good reasons.

Don't allow anyone to talk you into quitting. Even though your trials may throw you for a loss time after time, you can have the confidence that God is still in control. Don't quit. Trust Him and keep on going. A day is coming when you'll be glad you did.

When you give up on yourself, you give up on God.

Job 2:10 Keeping Your Balance

Woodrow Kroll

An old Arab proverb says, "All sun and no rain makes a desert." Even nature demonstrates the importance of dark clouds and wet days. Without them, life not only fails to grow but totally dries up and blows away. Nothing but sunshine would make for a barren and uninhabitable landscape.

Job realized this truth applied not only to nature but to human life as well. It would be foolish to think that God should send only those things that appear to be good without balancing them with those experiences that appear to be bad. To accept the one and refuse the other is to question God's wisdom. As painful as it was to go through the loss of his possessions, his health and, most of all, his children, Job was unwilling to fault God. He knew it was part of God's balance in life.

If given the option, most of us would probably choose sunshine over rain, ice cream over liver and joy over sadness. Fortunately, God doesn't always give us a choice when it comes to things that challenge our lives. Both sorrow and gladness often come from sources over which we have no control. We can resist the trials and plead for only the "good" things, but this would be foolish. Without the balance between positives and negatives, our spiritual lives would be like the desert. The alternative is to submit to God and accept what He sends our way as part of His ultimate plan for our good.

You may not find it natural, but give thanks for the painful events that have happened in your life. Recognize them for what they are—a gift from the hand of the God who loves you. Acknowledge the truth that you need the rain as well as the sun to make your life complete. God gives you what is best for you. Trust Him and rejoice.

Without the rain, it's hard to fully appreciate the sunshine.

Job 2:10 - Job's Principle

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? —Job 2:10

Read: Philippians 4:10-13

When my wife accepted a position as Director of Special Education in a school district many miles from our home, it resulted in a very long commute each day. It was tolerable in the short term, but neither of us could see her doing this indefinitely. So we decided to relocate to another city halfway between our two jobs.

The real estate agent was not optimistic about our home selling quickly. Market trends showed many homes for sale with few buyers. After much prayer and strenuous cleaning, we finally put our home up for sale. To our surprise, our house sold in less than 3 weeks!

Sometimes I feel guilty about receiving material blessings. With so many needs around the world, why should I expect divine intervention in selling a home? Then I remember Job's reply to his wife: "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10).

This verse is most often applied to accepting disappointment. But the principle also applies to being grateful for blessings. The apostle Paul had learned how to rejoice in plenty and in want (Phil. 4:10-13). God has an interest in teaching us contentment through both gains and losses. Thanking God in all circumstances recognizes His sovereignty and nurtures a response of faith.

We thank You, Lord, for blessings

You give us on our way;

May we for these be grateful,

And praise You every day. —Roworth

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. —Job

Job 2:11-3:5 NEEDED: TRUE FRIENDS

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Friends can be very valuable. The right kind of friends can help us over the difficult spots in life. But the quality of friendship expressed by these three men left much to be desired.

When they saw Job's plight, they were shocked. They hardly knew what to think. The man whom they had known as the greatest man in their part of the world was ill and sitting on an ash heap.

They were silent for seven days, having no comfort to give him. They said nothing, and apparently Job said nothing in all that time. But Satan kept up the pressure, and finally at the end of the seven days Job opened his mouth and cursed the day he was born.

In the wake of all these combined losses, now had come the crowning loss--he began to doubt that God really cared about him.

This was a most crucial moment in Job's experience. He cursed the day of his birth, but he did not curse God. He doubted God's care, but he did not lose faith that God existed.

This was when his friends should have helped him. This was when they should have encouraged him, but they did not.

Are we friends to those in need? Do we stand by fellow believers when they experience times of difficulty and stress? Or do we find someone in difficulty and add to their troubles?

"A friend loveth at all times" (Prov. 17:17).

Job 2:11, 13 The Power of Silence

Woodrow Kroll

So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

The Power of Silence

We are a chatty society. If we're not on the phone, we're sending e-mails. Should e-mail not be available, then we dispatch a fax. In fact, we're so addicted to verbal communication that many people can't leave home without a cell phone or pager in their pocket. Yet in times of sorrow, often silence says the most.

When Job's three friends arrived, they could tell that he was in deep grief. But rather than immediately offer their condolences, they sat with him on the ground for a whole week without saying a word. They restrained what must have been a strong urge to offer advice and suggestions and chose instead to express their sympathy by silently bearing his suffering with him.

In the presence of grief, words sometimes are a hindrance. Often we resort to speaking because we're uncomfortable with the silence rather than because we have something to say. Consequently, when trying to console a friend we often engage in empty clichés. People who have borne deep anguish, however, testify that it is the silent presence of those who care that brings the deepest comfort. It is not their words but their quietly sharing the load of sorrow that helps the bereaved bear up under suffering.

Don't be in a hurry to speak to those who are grieving. A hug or a squeeze on the arm may bring more comfort than a hundred words. Ask God's Spirit to make it clear to you when He has prepared your friend's heart to hear your words. Until then, let your comfort be expressed in silence and in prayer rather than words.

Less talk often means more comfort.

Job 2:13 The Wise Old Owl

He who restrains his lips is wise. —Proverbs 10:19

Years ago an anonymous writer penned a short poem about the merits of measuring our words.

A wise old owl sat in an oak;

The more he saw the less he spoke;

The less he spoke the more he heard;

Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?

There is a connection between wisdom and limiting what we say. Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise."

We are wise to be careful about what we say or how much we say in certain situations. It makes sense to guard our words when we are angry. James urged his fellow believers, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Restraining our words can also show reverence for God. Solomon said, "God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). When others are grieving, our silent presence may help more than abundant expressions of sympathy: "No one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2:13).

Although there is a time to be quiet and a time to speak (Eccl. 3:7), choosing to speak less allows us to hear more.

Dear Lord, please grant me wisdom to

know when to speak and when to listen.

I want to encourage others and to care

for them as You have cared for me.

Let your speech be better than silence; otherwise be silent.

Job 3:1

Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day.

That is the day of his birth. Probably there have been hours in the majority of lives in which men have wished that they had never been born. When they have stood beside the wreck of all earthly hope, or entered the garden of the grave, they have cried, "Why died I not from the birth!" The reason for this is, that the heart has been so occupied with the transient and earthly, that it has lost sight of the unseen and eternal; and in finding itself deprived of the former, it has thought that there was nothing left to live for.

One of the greatest tests of true religion is in bearing suffering. At such a time we are apt, if we are professing Christians, to exert a certain constraint over ourselves, and bear ourselves heroically. We have read of people in like circumstances who have not shed a tear or uttered a complaining word, because they have braced themselves to a Christian stoicism. "I am sure you cannot find fault with my behavior," said one such to me. And yet beneath the correct exterior there may be the pride and haughtiness of an altogether unsubdued self.

There is a more excellent way: to humble oneself under the mighty hand of God; to search the heart for any dross that needs to be burned out; to resign oneself to the will of the Father; to endeavor to learn the lesson in the black-lettered book; to seek to manifest the specific grace for which the trial calls; to be very tender and thoughtful for others; to live deeper down.

"Nearer, my God to Thee! — Nearer to Thee E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me, Still all my song shall be — Nearer, my God, to Thee! Nearer to Thee!"

Job 3:3 Beginning From The End

READ: Job 3:20-26 | 18.3.20-18.3.26

May the day perish on which I was born. -Job 3:3 | 18.3.3

At age 30 she was ready to give up. She wrote in her diary, "My God, what will become of me? I have no desire but to die." But the dark clouds of despair gave way to the light, and in time she discovered a new purpose for living. When she died at age 90, she had left her mark on history. Some believe that she and those who introduced antiseptics and chloroform to medicine did more than anyone to relieve human suffering in the 19th century. Her name was Florence Nightingale, founder of the nursing profession.

Job went so far as to wish he had never been born (3:1-3 | 18.3.1-18.3.3). But thank God, he didn't end his life. Just as Florence Nightingale came out of her depression and found ways to help others, so too Job lived through his grief, and his experience has become a source of endless comfort to suffering souls.

Maybe you're at the point of not wanting to go on. Being God's child intensifies your desperation, for you wonder how a believer could feel so alone and forsaken. Don't give up. Coming to the end of yourself emotionally could be the most painful experience you've ever encountered. But take courage. Cling to the Lord in faith and start all over. God can use this kind of "beginning from the end." - Mart De Haan

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish-

Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;

Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish:

Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. -Moore

In Christ, the hopeless find hope.

Job 3:3-5; 42:5-6 Perspective From The Clouds

I have heard of You ... but now my eye sees You. —Job 42:5

In 1927 the silent film *Wings*, a World War I film about two American aviators, won the first Academy Award for Best Picture. When it was being filmed, production stopped for several days. Frustrated producers asked the director why. He responded: "All we have is blue sky. The conflict in the air will not be as visible without clouds. Clouds bring perspective." He was right. Only by seeing aerial combat with clouds as a backdrop could the viewer see what was really going on.

We often wish for blue skies instead of storm clouds. But cloudy skies may reveal God's faithfulness. We gain perspective on how God has been faithful in our trials as we look back on the clouds.

At the beginning of his terrible suffering, Job lamented: "May the day perish on which I was born ... May a cloud settle on it" (Job 3:3-5). His experience of despair continued for a long time until God spoke. Then Job exclaimed, "I have heard of You ... but now my eye sees You" (42:5). Job had encountered the sovereign Creator, and that changed his perspective on God's purposes.

Do clouds of trouble fill your skies today? Sooner than you think, God may use these clouds to help you gain perspective on His faithfulness.

God, give us wings to rise above

The clouds of trial that block the sun,

To soar above gray skies and see

The love and goodness of Your Son. —Sper

Often the clouds of sorrow reveal the sunshine of His face. —Jasper

Job 3:9–12 In the Depths of Discouragement

Woodrow Kroll

Some time ago the Hayden Planetarium in New York City issued an invitation to all those interested in applying to join the crew on the first journey to another planet. Eighteen thousand people applied. They gave the applications to a panel of psychologists, who examined them thoroughly and came to this conclusion—in the vast majority of cases, those who applied did so because they were discouraged with their lives here and hoped they could find a new life somewhere else.

Job was mired even deeper in discouragement. He wasn't simply seeking a new life; he wished he had never been born. After losing his wealth, his health and his family, Job felt it would have been better had he never seen the light of his first day. Before we move too quickly to criticize Job, most of us have to admit we've never experienced in a matter of minutes the kind of devastating blows that this man did. Job went from the highest heights to the lowest depths with hardly time to take a breath.

Christians are not immune to disasters and the discouragement that sometimes accompanies them. But as Job was to discover later, we do have an answer—God. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). When your heart is filled with discouragement, Jesus can fill it with His peace.

If you are discouraged today, running away and starting a new life is not the answer. Instead, completely place your situation in Christ's hands. Turn over every troubling thought to His care. And let the peace of God, which surpasses understanding, give you new hope.

Let the God of peace fill you with the peace of God.

Job 3:25 Job's Birthday

The thing I greatly feared has come upon me. -Job 3:2518.3.25

Death, divorce, and disease could be called the three Ds of misery. They slice through life like a tsunami of sorrow, raising doubts and destroying dreams.

Recently, a friend and I agreed that the previous year was one that we both would just as soon forget. Each of us had suffered one of the three.

Our conversation brought Job to mind. In a short period of time, he lost his children, his health, his wealth, and his wife's respect. Job's distress was so great that he pleaded, "May the day perish on which I was born" (Job 3:318.3.3). Job wanted God to erase not just a year, but all memory of his existence! He had enjoyed years of success and respect. Now, he questioned the purpose of living (3:2018.3.20).

Job wanted to die and be forgotten, but instead God made sure his name and story would be remembered forever. Rather than give Job what he asked for, God gave future generations what they would need-an inside look at the spiritual battle between God and Satan. The result is a God-inspired document about suffering that has comforted countless people.

When what we fear actually happens, we know, thanks to Job, that God can use it for good. - Julie Ackerman Link

For Further Study

Why does God allow us to experience the "fires of life"?

Read Knowing God Through Job

Our highest good may come from our deepest suffering.

Job 4:1-4 Encouraging Words

Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees. --Job 4:4

In his autobiography, L. O. Dawson told about a minister who died. At his memorial service, the church was filled to overflowing. Various speakers praised the virtues of their deceased pastor and friend.

When it was Mr. Dawson's turn to address the congregation, he affirmed the truthfulness of the gracious words that had already been spoken. But then he told the audience that if as many of them had been in attendance at the regular services of the church as were there at the funeral service, their pastor would still be alive.

Dawson made this shocking observation to the grieving parishioners: "Empty pews broke your pastor's heart. He did not know of your love. He died for lack of the things you have today so beautifully said and done." The story in Dawson's book concluded with this convicting remark: "More preachers die from broken hearts than from swelled heads."

May it be said of us as it was of Job: "Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees" (Job 4:4).

Don't wait until somebody dies to express your love and respect. Do it today! And remember--pastors need encouragement too. - Richard De Haan

It was only a kindly word,

And a word that was lightly spoken,

Yet not in vain, for it stilled the pain

Of a heart that was nearly broken. --Anon.

Praise loudly--blame softly.

Job 4:4 Strength & Support

Job 4:1-11

Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees. -Job 4:4

The local newspaper reported that a mother is devastated because her 21-year-old son, who had always seemed like an upright young man, had been arrested for dealing drugs.

Also in our community, the parents and siblings of a 15-year-old are grieving because he was killed in a gun accident.

An aged friend is heartbroken because her only daughter, the person she depended on more than all others, died from cancer.

People who are hurting have a common need: the comfort that comes from trusting God. They need to be assured that tragedy and grief are not a mark of God's disfavor but that He weeps with them, He loves them, and He will never leave those who are His.

Eliphaz said to Job: "Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened feeble knees" (Job [[4:4|bible.18.4.4]]). Job earned this tribute despite his own deep suffering. And when we offer comfort to sorrowing and suffering people, we not only emulate Job—we emulate Jesus.

In the midst of a host of hurting people, each one of us can reach out to become a comforter like Job. Let's ask God to make our hearts tender enough to support and strengthen those who are hurting. - Herbert Vander Lugt

Reach out and give your love to the loveless,

Reach out and make a home for the homeless;

Reach out and shed God's light in the darkness-

Reach out and let the smile of God touch through you. -Brown

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God doesn't comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.

Job 4:5

But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest. (r. v.)

It is much easier to counsel others in their trouble than to bear it ourselves. Full often the soul, which has poured floods of consolation on others, feels sadly in need of a touch, a voice, a sympathizing companion, as the chill waters begin to rise toward the knees, and the shadow of the great eclipse falls around. The fact of our having consoled so many others seems at such a moment to leave us the more solitary and lonesome. People have been so wont to be helped by us that they hardly dare approach us; besides, they suppose that all the fund of comfort from which we have succored others must be now available for us. What can they say that we have not said a hundred times? and if we have said it, of course we must know all about it; but they do not know how wistful the heart is to hear it said to us with the accent of a sympathetic voice and the touch of a ministering hand.

Ah, it will come unto thee at last. The pain and sorrow of life will find thee out. The arrow will at last fix itself quivering in thy heart. How wilt thou do then? Thou wilt faint unless thy words have sprung from a living experience of the love and presence of Jesus. Thou must have a better hope than "the integrity of thy ways," as suggested by Eliphaz. But there awaits thee the personal fellowship of Jesus, a brother born for the hour of trial. He is the never-failing Friend, who sticketh closer than a brother. Put Him and His will and His choice between thee and thy sorrow, whatever it may be. Hide thee in His secret place, and under the shadow of His wings thou shalt enjoy sweet peace.

"Only heaven is better than a walk With Christ at midnight over moonlit seas."

Job 4:1-7 COUNSEL BASED ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Eliphaz was possibly the eldest of the group and supposedly the wisest also. However, superior age does not mean superior wisdom.

The philosophy of Eliphaz was based on what we will call general observations and spiritual illumination. He claimed to have some kind of vision, on which he laid a great deal of stress. Several times in Job 4 he stressed what he had seen and experienced.

Eliphaz used what is today called the psychological approach—he commended Job before he condemned him.

Eliphaz then leaned heavily on his observations, which were all related to his experience. No one, as far as he had seen, had ever perished if he was innocent.

Suffering, according to his experience, was always the result of God's judgment of sin. His conclusion was that Job was no exception to this rule and was being punished for some sin he had committed.

Some people have this idea today. They believe that if a person or a family is going through severe trials, such trials are deserved and are the result of sin.

If this were true, why did David suffer as he did before he became king? He had to run for his life, not because he had done wrong but because Saul was jealous of him.

And what about our Saviour Himself? He did not sin. In fact, He could not sin. And yet He suffered.

It is easy to see that the argument of Eliphaz was not correct.

"For I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute" (Luke 21:15, NASB).

Job 5:18

He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

Has this been your experience lately? Have you been made sore by the heavy scourge of pain, and wounded by the nails of the cross? Do not look at second causes. Men may have been the instruments, but God is the Agent. The cup has been presented by a Judas, but the Father permitted it; and it is therefore the cup that the Father hath given you to drink. Shall you not drink it? How much He must love you, to dare to inflict this awful discipline, which makes your love and trust, that He values so infinitely, tremble in the scale! "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

But do not look back on what you have suffered; look on and up! As surely as He has made sore, He will bind up; as soon as He has wounded, His hands will begin to make whole. Consider the reparative processes of nature. So soon as the unsightly ruin or chasm yawns, nature begins to weave her rich festoons, to cover it with moss and lichen; let the flesh be punctured or lacerated, the blood begins to pour out the protoplasmic matter to be woven into a new fabric. So when the heart seems bleeding its life away, God is at work binding up and healing. Think of those dear and tender hands, that fashioned the heavens, and touched the eyeballs of the blind, as laid upon you to make you whole. Trust Him; He loves infinitely, and will suffer none that trust in Him to be desolate.

We must be careful, however, that nothing on our part shall hinder the life of the Son of God from flowing through us, as the sap of the vine through every branch.

Job 5:6–7 Snafu

Woodrow Kroll

Perhaps you have heard someone talk about a snafu. You probably realized that this meant something had gone wrong, but you may not know how the word became a part of our English language. In reality, snafu is the first letter of each word in the phrase, "Situation normal, all fouled up." In other words, when something goes wrong, why be surprised? It's only normal for things to get fouled up. A snafu is something that can be expected. It's just a part of life.

Job's circumstances, of course, predate the word snafu but not the idea behind it. Job's friend Eliphaz recognized that "trouble" and "man" have a natural affinity for one another. As sparks from a fire are drawn upward by the rising heat, so trouble seems naturally drawn to man. It reflects another adage of our time: "If something can go wrong, it will." No matter when or where you live, snafus are going to find you.

Christians are sometimes dismayed when things go wrong in their lives. After all, when we trusted Jesus as our Savior, our troubles were supposed to be over, right? Yet the truth is much different. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). That's just a normal part of living. The apostle Peter even said, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (1 Pet. 4:12). Snafus are not strange or out of the ordinary, even for Christians.

Perhaps you are experiencing a snafu today. Something you planned is fouled up. Don't be surprised. Instead, turn to God. When your life goes contrary to your expectations, He is able to give you either the wisdom to deal with it or the grace to live with it. Trust Him.

When trouble draws close, draw close to God.

Job 5:7 Hitting the Rapids

"Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." Job 5:7

I'll never forget my first white-water rafting experience. The guide made me wear a dorky helmet and a life jacket that was anything but flattering. Thankfully, my sagging self-image was rescued by the thought that if I didn't put the stuff on, my life might be in jeopardy. Braced for the worst, I got in the raft, only to discover that life on the river was far more pleasant than I had imagined. The water moved smoothly through the meadows. The birds were in full song and the flowers on the banks added color to the already beautiful day. Not to worry!

But then I heard something around the bend. What was that noise? And what was that mist that rose from the water? As we turned the corner, my heart picked up speed as the approaching white water pounded the jagged rocks that we were about to navigate.

Life is a lot like river rafting—inevitably you hit the white water! No one is exempt. In the midst of his misery, Job declared that “man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). In fact, there are only three kinds of people: Those who are headed for the white water and don't know it yet, those who are in it, and those who have made it through. So the issue is not, will you hit the rapids? You will. The issue is, are you ready to navigate them successfully? And that is where you as a follower of Jesus have a distinct advantage.

First of all, you are not alone in the raft. The “I-will-never-leave-you-nor-forsake-you-Jesus” is at the back of the raft with His hands on the rudder. And, by the way, He has been through this white water before. Having been tested in every white water of life, He welcomes you to come to Him in complete confidence for grace and mercy in your time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Second, the trouble is intended to make you better, not bitter. To make you, not break you. Stop fighting the rapids—you can't beat them! Surrender to the intention of Christ to use the trouble to expose you to your weaknesses and to develop faith and character so that you will be increasingly capable and useful in the days ahead (James 1:2-4).

Third, if you don't know what to do or how to respond, don't trust your instincts. As fallen people, our first instincts are usually wrong. He promises to give you the wisdom you need to navigate the turmoil successfully. There isn't a situation in life that doesn't have a point of reference in the Bible. Knowing what to do begins with knowing where to go for advice—to God's Word. Protective and productive wisdom is as close as your Bible. Prayer is a source of wisdom as well, as we take the time to ask God for what we need (James 1:5). Staying in the throne room long enough for God to speak to our trouble through His Spirit often brings to mind something about the ways and will of God that helps us to know exactly how to respond. One thing is for sure: Don't do anything until you know the right response.

When life has you in the white-knuckle zone, as it inevitably will, know that He's in the raft with you. Take your clues from Him. He's been down the river before.

YOUR JOURNEY...

Have you been through any “rapids” lately? How did you navigate the situation? Did your approach make it better or worse?

Do you know anyone who is going through some “white water”? What are you doing to help them navigate successfully?

How do the three perspectives change the way you would normally handle difficulties? How do they change the way you would help someone else?

Read James 1:2-12. What specific encouragement do you find in this text to help you stay afloat?

Job 5:17 God's Chastening

Woodrow Kroll

Lou Holtz, former head football coach of the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame, is legendary in his adherence to discipline. In an interview with The Saturday Evening Post in 1989, he was quoted as saying, "When it comes to discipline here, we ask three questions: Will it make him a better man? A better student? A better athlete? If the answer is yes, we make him do it. The next step is up to him. An individual has a choice when you discipline him: either to become bitter or better." Judging by his squad's record, both on and off the field, Lou Holtz's charges for the most part became better men.

Job's friends failed to understand God in many ways, but Eliphaz the Temanite was right in this respect. God's discipline is never meant to destroy but ultimately to bring joy. The word in this verse for "happy" (also translated "blessed") literally means "to walk straight." God's correction is given to keep His people from wandering away from the straight path and getting into situations that

bring pain and heartache. Those who submit to His guidance will avoid many of the experiences that bring unhappiness to others.

God's discipline doesn't always feel good, especially if we fight against it. The writer of Hebrews confesses, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous" (12:11). Yet the writer continues, "Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." A right relationship with God ultimately leads to a happiness that makes everything else seem insignificant.

Are you undergoing the chastening of God right now? If so, look ahead to the fruit He will bring out of this difficulty. Remember that God is seeking to correct your course so you can avoid future pitfalls that will bring you even greater pain. Let Him have His way in your life even if, at the moment, it's hard to bear. You'll be glad you did!

Pain now means gain later.

Job 6:15

As a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away. (r. v.)

Job complains of his three friends. He was glad when they first came to his side, as likely to yield him comfort in his sore distress. Instead of this, however, they began probing his heart and searching his life, to find the secret sin on account of which his heavy troubles had befallen him. Their philosophy was at fault. They held that special misfortune is always the result of special sin; and since there was nothing in Job's outward conduct to account for his awful sufferings, they felt that he was hiding some secret defection, which they urged him to confess. Job felt that in all this they cruelly misunderstood him, and compares them in these words to one of the desert streams that are choked with ice and snow in the time of the winter rains, but dwindle and dry up on the first approach of summer. And when the weary caravans come to their banks, lo, their bed is a mere heap of stones. "They come thither and are confounded."

Is it not so with human friendships? We hoped that they would quench the raging thirst of our souls; this hope increases when they draw nigh us in days of sorrow; but how often they fail us — stones for bread, scorpions for fish, and scorching pebbles instead of water-brooks. How great a contrast to the love and friendship of Jesus! Not like a brook that dries in the time of drought, but like a well of water springing up within the heart forever. He does not merely give consolation and sympathy, but He is what He gives, He imparts Himself. His promise chases away our fears as His Spirit reminds us of the words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Nothing gives Him greater joy than to be the perfect circle of which earth's friendships are broken arcs.

Job 6:1-14 When We Don't Know What To Say

READ: Job 6:1-14

To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend. -Job 6:14

Roy Clark and his father sat in the family car in the funeral home parking lot for several minutes. As a teenager, he wasn't sure how to respond when his dad put his head in his hands and moaned, "I don't know what to say!"

A friend from their church had been in a car accident. She had survived, but her three daughters had all died when a truck hit their vehicle. What could they say to their friend at a time like this?

In the Bible we are told that during Job's time of grieving, his three friends came to mourn with him and to comfort him. For the first 7 days they sat and wept with him because he was in deep sorrow (Job 2:11-13). "No one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2:13). Their presence alone was a comfort to him.

But then they began to lecture. They told Job he must have sinned and that God was punishing him (Job 4:7-9).

When Job was finally able to respond, he told his friends what he needed from them. He asked for reasons to continue hoping (Job 6:11), for kindness (Job 6:14), and for words that did not presume guilt (Job 6:29-30).

Remembering the story of Job and his friends may help us when we don't know what to say. - Anne Cetas

Lord, give me sensitivity

To people in their grief and pain,

To weep with them and show Your love

In ways mere words cannot attain. -Sper

When someone's grieving-listen, don't lecture.

Job 6:14 A Helping Hand

READ: Luke 5:17-26

To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend. -Job 6:14

A college student named Kelly shattered her arm in the first volleyball game of the season. This meant she couldn't work at her part-time job. Then her car stopped running. To top it all off, the young man she had been dating stopped calling. Kelly felt so low that she began spending hours alone in her room crying.

Laura, a Christian friend on the volleyball team, became concerned about Kelly and decided to help her. So she planned a party. She and some friends collected money, and a couple of guys got Kelly's car running again. They found a temporary job she could do, using just one hand. And they gave her tickets to see her basketball hero when his team came to town. Before long, Kelly was herself again. When she asked why they did all this for her, Laura was able to tell her about the love of Jesus.

Kelly's story reminds me of the paralyzed man who was healed by Jesus. The afflicted man's friends cared enough about him to bring him to the Savior (Luke 5:17-26).

Do you have a friend in need? Think of some ways you can help. Show the love of Christ and then share the gospel. You never know what might happen when you lend a helping hand. - David C. Egner

Reach out in Jesus' name

With hands of love and care

To those who are in need

And caught in life's despair. -Sper

Real love puts actions to good intentions.

Job 6:24–27 The Power of Words

Woodrow Kroll

In regions of South America there is a snake called the "two-step." If it bites you, you take two steps and die. Its venom swiftly paralyzes your nervous system, which stops your heart. But even if you don't visit South America, you're in peril of something else that is just as deadly. Words have the potential to kill relationships, paralyze love, poison minds, destroy faith, stain purity and deface reputations.

Job recognized the capability of words to destroy when he exclaimed to his friends, "How forceful are right words!" After bearing up under the onslaught of Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 4:1–5:27), he was brought to the point of frustration. Instead of helping, his well-meaning companion only served to undermine his friend with his words (v. 27).

It is no small matter when we open our mouths. When our words are right, they can be a powerful force for good. But when they are wrong, they work like a deadly venom. Instead of being helpful, they are destructive. Rather than building up our friends, our words can tear them down. Those who are weak and helpless (Job's reference to the "fatherless" refers to these kinds of people) can be blown away by what we say.

Be careful today how you speak to others. Consider your words before you say them. Especially in times of crisis, the right word can bring healing and encouragement, while the wrong word can destroy your relationship with another person. Be sensitive to God's Spirit. Seek His guidance before you express yourself. And ask God to set a guard over your mouth to keep you from saying the wrong thing (Ps. 141:3).

Words are like dynamite; don't let them blow up in your face.

Job 7:18–19

What is man ... that thou shouldest visit him every morning?

God visits us with mercy every morning. Before we are awake He is at work in the world, baptizing it with dew, feeding the birds and wild things, taking pleasure in the jasmine and heliotrope, the honeysuckle, and the rose; and with all His care for His world, He does not forget man, whom He has placed there to be its tenant. There is no life so mean and abject, so suffering and wretched, that He does not visit in order to comfort and relieve it. No heart so forlorn that He does not knock at the door: no window so selfishly

curtained and shuttered, at which He does not tap. "Open to Me!" the heavenly visitor entreats, "my love, my dove, my spouse!" Alas for us! that we keep the doors and windows closed to Him — as the poor widow to a beneficent friend, who called to relieve her, but she mistook him for the rent-collector.

But probably job meant that God visits us in discipline, training, education. He is the watcher of men; not to detect their failures, but to discover opportunities of leading them on to richer, fuller experiences of His grace and life. Surely, as we consider all the time and pains which God has expended on us, we too may cry, with the patriarch, "What is man?" Man is more than we guess, else God would never take such time and pains with him. When a lapidary spends years over a single diamond, the most careless observer begins to appraise properly its intrinsic value.

Every morning God visits thee, with holy thoughts and warnings, with miracles and parables, with anticipations and forecasts — oh, realize how much thou art to Him: give Him love for love, thanks and loving recognition, a child's welcome and trust.

Job 7:6 Where Are We Going So Fast?

READ: Psalm 90:1-12

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. --Job 7:6

Scientific measurements indicate that we are moving even when we are standing still. The surface of the earth at the equator rotates at about 1,000 miles per hour. The earth is orbiting the sun at about 67,000 miles per hour. Our solar system whirls around the center of our galaxy at 490,000 miles per hour, and it zooms along at 43,000 miles per hour in the direction of the star Vega in the constellation Lyra. But that's not all. Our Milky Way galaxy is hurtling through space at 1.3 million miles per hour.

A man lying on his back in a quiet park on a cloudless summer day may feel as though all time and movement have stopped under the hot rays of a noonday sun. But the scientist and the godly person know otherwise. Just as we are hurtling through the heavens at unimaginable speeds, so too we are moving from here to eternity. Our days and opportunities to live for the Lord pass so rapidly that we cannot afford to waste any of them.

The psalmist prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). May that be our prayer today. Lord, help us to live without desperation or futility as we travel so quickly from our home here on earth to our heavenly home above. - Mart De Haan

Lord, help us to redeem the time

You give us every day-

To take each opportunity

To follow and obey. -Sper

To make your life count, number your days.

Job 7:6 Fast, Faster, Fastest "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

Woodrow Kroll

Men have always had a love affair with speed. The faster they can go—first with horses, then with cars and now with space shuttles—the happier they are. Speed has increased to the point where we have moved from measuring events by the calendar (years, months, weeks) to often measuring them in nanoseconds (one billionth of a second) to reflect how fast things are moving. And what's more, each increase in speed is usually greeted with enthusiasm.

But that was not the case with Job. He bemoaned a speed that most of us are not too thrilled about—the speed with which the days of our lives go by. The fastest object Job had to compare his life to was the shuttle used by a weaver to create a piece of cloth. A skilled weaver could sling the shuttle back and forth at eye-blurring speed. Job's lament was that his days seemed to be going by as quickly as the weaver's shuttle.

The longer we live, the faster our days do seem to go by. Even though 24 hours is still the same, the events of our lives begin to stack up quickly on the history side. At the same time, the future side gets shorter and shorter, and the events of life seem to come more rapidly. This should motivate us to make sure that we diligently invest our time more wisely. As the days speed by like a weaver's shuttle, make sure you accomplish each day what the Lord wants you to do.

If you are putting things off until "someday," stop procrastinating. Do them now. Someday will be here and gone before you know it. The days of your life are being played out as rapidly as the fast-moving weaver's shuttle. Someday the shuttle will be stilled. Don't be

caught with work for the Lord left undone.

Make sure when the cloth of your life is finished that no threads are missing.

Job 7:11-21 Her Worst Day Ever

In May 2011, a young woman took cover in a bathtub during a tornado that devastated her city of Joplin, Missouri. Her husband covered her body with his and took the blows from flying debris. He died, and she survived because of his heroism. She naturally wrestles with the question, "Why?" But a year after the tornado, she said that she finds comfort because even on her worst day ever, she was loved.

When I think about "worst days ever," I think of Job right away. A man who loved God, he lost his animals, his servants, and his 10 children in one day! (Job 1:13-19). Job mourned deeply, and he also asked the "Why?" questions. He cried out, "Have I sinned? What have I done to You ... ? Why have You set me as Your target?" (Job 7:20). Job's friends accused him of sinning and thought he deserved his difficulties, but God said of his friends: "You have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has" (Job 42:7). God did not give him the reasons for his suffering, but He listened to Job and did not fault him for his questions. God assured him of His control over everything, and Job trusted Him (Job 42:1-6).

The Lord may not give us the reasons for our trials. But, thankfully, even on our worst day ever, we can know for sure we are loved by Him (Ro 8:35-39). - June 26, 2013 - by Anne Cetas

We're grateful, Father, that You know our hearts

with our pain and joy. Thank You that You never

leave us nor forsake us, as Your Word tells us.

Please hold us close during our trials.

God's love does not keep us from trials,

but sees us through them.

Job 8:6

If thou wert pure and upright, surely now He would awake for thee.

So Bildad spoke, suggesting that Job was not pure and upright, since God did not appear to deliver him. The premises from which he argued were that God always delivers and prospers pure and upright men, and that therefore, if a man were not delivered and prospered, he was proved to be neither pure nor upright. The fallacy lay in the premise. It is not universally true that God delivers His saints from adverse circumstances, or prospers them with outward good. There have been in all ages thousands of devoted servants of God who have been destitute, afflicted, and tormented; and there are thousands of such to-day in prisons, in hospital wards, in every condition of privation and trial; but in none of these cases can there be the least imputation on the love and righteousness of God, nor necessarily on their fidelity and goodness.

God's arrangements for us are not governed by the superficial philosophy which would make material prosperity a sign of His favor, and adversity of His displeasure. There are many considerations beside. Our privations in the outward strengthen and ripen the inward. As the outward man decays, the inward is renewed day by day. We have to learn and manifest those passive virtues which can only mature in silence and sorrow. We must be taught to be largely independent of circumstances, and to find in God Himself the springs of unfailing supply. We must learn to carry the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in the living God. We have to suffer with and for others. All these things worketh God with us to make us partakers of His holiness. But amid all our sorrows, He is always awake for us.

Job 8:1-10 COUNSEL BASED ON TRADITION

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Bildad made no appeal to the revealed will of God but only to whatever wisdom the fathers may have taught.

He asked if God perverted justice. The answer, of course, is no. Then Bildad used this premise to argue that Job must have lost his children because of some transgression on their part. He also charged Job with lack of purity and uprightness.

This was little help to a man who, according to Job 1, had offered sacrifices to God just in case his children had offended God in

something they had said or done. Then to have them accused of some sin that was so great that they all died because of it was a terrible charge to make.

The arguments of Bildad were all from appearance and based on suppositions. He used many "ifs." He did not really know, but he supposed many things. This was the way he interpreted the situation, but his interpretation was wrong.

Christians need to learn to distinguish between facts and how the facts are interpreted. Just because we read something does not mean we may assume that something else is also true.

Just because one person interprets a set of facts a certain way does not mean that his interpretation is correct. All the facts may not be given. And often the withholding of one essential fact can change the interpretation.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Job 9:31

Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.

We shall never get beyond the need of using daily the Lord's prayer. He has bound by the conjunction and the prayer for forgiveness with that for daily bread, as though to teach us that we shall need the one as long as we need the other. At the end of the best day that we ever spent, when we are not aware of having consciously sinned in act, or speech, or thought, we shall still have need of the precious blood. We may know nothing against ourselves, yet we shall not be thereby justified; because He that judgeth us is our holy Lord, and the standard by which we are judged is His own perfect character. A piece of cambric looks extremely fine to the eye, but how coarse to the microscope! Sheep look white against the dark ground of the early spring; but how dark if there should be a fall of snow! Our characters seem stainless, only because we compare ourselves with ourselves, or with others.

But, when our eyes are opened to see God, to behold the whiteness of the great white throne, and we stand in the searching light of heaven, we are as those who have just emerged from a ditch. I heard the other day of a woman being proud of having lived without sin for ten years! So we deceive ourselves. No, at the best we are sinful men and women needing constant cleansing; even though we maybe kept from known sin by the grace of Christ. It was at an advanced period in the life of the great Apostle, and when he lived nearest God, that he realized himself to be the chief of sinners.

"I know not what I am, but only know I have had glimpses tongue may never speak: No more I balance human joy and woe, But think of my transgressions, and am meek."

Job 9:2 Righteous before God

"Truly I know it is so, but how can a man be righteous before God?"

Woodrow Kroll

According to Parade magazine, the zoo in Copenhagen, Denmark, has put a human couple on display. Henrik Leh-mann and Malene Botoft live in a see-through cage in the primate display next to the baboons and monkeys. Their habitat has a living room with furniture, a computer, a television and a stereo. The kitchen and bedroom are part of the display. Only the bathroom is excluded from public view. Unlike their neighbors, who aren't allowed out, the two humans occasionally leave their fishbowl existence to shop and water the flowers on their porch back at home. But for the most part, their lives are on public display.

Job realized that every human being lives under similar conditions when it comes to God. Nothing that we say or even think is hidden from divine scrutiny. Therefore, it is no surprise that Job wondered, perhaps with a hint of hopelessness, how it might be possible to be righteous in God's sight. With every sin and failure noted, who could possibly stand before God?

When we compare ourselves with other people, we might feel that we're not all that bad. After all, we don't get drunk, use drugs or cheat on our income taxes. And when it comes to volunteering for charity, helping at church or just spending time with our family, we may even be sterling examples. But take one look at God's standards and you'll see a different picture. As He looks into our hearts to see our motives and view our hidden thoughts, our self-imposed halo begins to slip. It becomes obvious that Job's question needs to become our own: How can I be righteous before God?

If you are sensing your own need for a right relationship with God, be assured that He has provided a way. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, all your sins have been paid for and you can be forgiven. When you receive Him as your Savior, you stand in His righteousness before the Father. Trust Jesus today and live right before God in the righteousness of His Son.

Christ's righteousness makes us right with God.

Job 9:10 Countless Wonders

READ: Job 9:1-10

[God] does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number. -Job 9:10

When writer Aletha Lindstrom needs a lift for her spirits, she thinks of her favorite poetry book called *Who Tells The Crocuses It's Spring?* That prompts her to ask other questions like, "Who makes the trees turn all those beautiful colors in the autumn? Who splashes rain in shining puddles? Who makes the stars shimmer in the night?"

Such questions ought to stimulate our own grateful meditation. Centuries ago, Job exclaimed that it is God who "does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number" (Job 9:10)

It is God who reminds the sun to rise at its appointed time every morning. It is God who keeps the earth steadily rotating at tremendous speed. It is God who feeds the sparrow and dresses the lilies in their splendor. It is God who guides the feathered flocks southward in the autumn and then brings them north again in the spring.

Argue if you like that all these wonders are simply the operation of the laws of nature. But just as civil law is the expression of human will, so also natural law is the expression of God's will and wisdom.

As we see the wonders of creation all around us, let's worship the One who designed them.- Vernon C. Grounds

This is my Father's world-

The birds their carols raise;

The morning light, the lily white

Declare their Maker's praise. -Babcock

In the wonders of creation we see God at work.

Job 9:25-26 The Maker Of Mountains

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people. —Psalm 125:2

The Bible uses vivid imagery to express the brevity of our life on earth. Job said that his days were "swifter than a runner" and "they pass by like swift ships" (Job 9:25-26).

I recall preaching at the funeral service of a young mother. From where I stood I could see the Rocky Mountains towering over the western horizon. The scene prompted me to consider how I will one day follow that friend through the valley of the shadow of death, and yet those peaks will still be thrusting themselves skyward. Eventually they will crumble into dust, but the God who made them will exist forever in undiminished glory. I also remember thinking that my deceased friend and I will, by God's grace, live with Him forever and ever.

Whenever we are troubled by the shortness of life and the impermanence of everything in this world, let's remember the Maker of the mountains. He has always been and will always be. As the psalmist said, "You, O Lord, shall endure forever" (102:12).

That truth inspires us with hope. If by faith we belong to Jesus Christ the Savior, who is from everlasting to everlasting, we will one day rejoice in heaven in unending praise to Him.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes;

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise. —Smith

To see God's hand in everything makes life a great adventure.

Job 10:21

The land of darkness and the shadow of death.

This represented the highest thinking of that age about the future. There were gleams now and again of something more; but they were fitful and uncertain, soon overtaken by dark and sad forebodings. How different to our happy condition, for whom death is

abolished, whilst life and immortality have been brought to light! The patriarch called the present life Day, and the future Night. We know that in comparison the present is Night, and the future Day. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us put on the armor of light."

For us, too, there is something better. We wait for His Son from heaven; we look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. "As the waters of the sea are held between two mighty gravitations, the moon now drawing them toward itself, and the earth drawing them back again, thus giving the ebbing and flowing tide, by which our earth is kept clean and healthful, so must the tides of the soul's affection move perpetually between the cross of Christ and the coming of Christ, influenced now by the power of memory and now by the power of hope." It is said of the late Dr. Gordon: "Hardly a sermon was preached without allusion to the glorious appearing. Never a day passed in which he did not prepare himself for it, in which its hastening was not sought for with prayer." "Yet a little while [Greek, how little! how little!] and He that shall come will come." The attitude of every believer should be that of waiting: with loins girt and lamp burning, let us be ready to meet our Lord.

"The Best is yet to be, The Last for which the First was made."

Job 11:7

Canst thou by searching find out God?

There is but one answer to that question. No one can. The very angels veil their faces before the insufferable glory of His face.

The firstborn sons of light Desire in vain His depths to see; They cannot reach the mystery, The length, and breadth, and height.

Do not be surprised, then, if there should be matters in the Bible, in your own life, and in the Providential government of the world, which baffle your thought. Remember you are only a little child in an infant class, and it is not likely that you can comprehend the whole system of your instructor. God would cease to be God to us, if we by searching could find Him out.

But though we cannot find out God by the searching of the intellect, we may know Him by love. "He that loveth, knoweth God; for God is Love." There is a way of knowing God, which is hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes. Seek to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Let Christ dwell deep in your heart by faith. Take care to obey all His commandments, and then the Holy God will come into you, and abide. He will give you Himself, and you will know Him as a little child knows its parent, whom it cannot grasp with its mind, but loves and trusts and knows with its heart. We cannot find out God by searching, but we can by loving.

We can also find Him in the character and life of Jesus. He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father; why then ask to be shown the Father? "What is Thy name, O mystery of strength and beauty?" "Shiloh, Rest-Giver," is the deep response.

Job 11:1-7 COUNSEL BASED ON LOGIC ALONE

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Zophar is the most dogmatic of the three. He assumes many things, based on his own intuition, or common sense, and then states his conclusion with a finality that permits no opposition.

For Job to differ with Zophar's conclusions is proof, in Zophar's eyes, that Job is a sinner.

Some people are like that today. They are so sure of what they say that anyone who disagrees with them calls forth their scorn or anger.

Zophar was a legalist and a formalist. He did not understand God's character at all. He knew a certain amount of truth, but it was distorted because it was not complete.

When men like Zophar assume what is untrue and call for repentance on the basis of their false assumptions, they only stir up anger.

God, of course, allowed these men to use their arguments against Job. The Lord wanted to help him see that though his calamities were not the result of sin, his character needed to be refined.

Job needed to be made humble, for he was proud. But we cannot force people to see this by sheer dogmatism on our part.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." (Isa. 55:8).

Job 11:7 Divine Mystery

READ: Psalm 93:1-6

The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty... You are from everlasting. --Psalm 93:1-2

At one point along the Saguenay River in southeastern Canada, the water flows through a chasm between two rugged rock formations. Their pinnacles tower over 1,600 feet into the sky. Early pioneers were so awestruck by these majestic crags that they named them Trinity and Eternity.

The two great truths expressed by these words create a sense of awe in the heart of every Christian. The Bible tells us of God's eternity-His timeless existence (Psalm 93:2) and His triune nature-the threefold expression of Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

Both of these affirmations baffle our minds. If we try to comprehend either of them, the question asked by Job's friend comes to mind: "Can you search out the deep things of God?" (Job 11:7) The answer is obvious. When we try to behold the triune God, we feel like someone who gazes up into the midday sun to study it.

At the heart of the Christian faith is mystery, because at the heart of our faith is the eternal, triune God. We have the Father who loves us, the Savior who died for us, and the Spirit who helps us to be holy. This divine mystery gives us reason to bow down and worship our eternal God. - Haddon W. Robinson

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;

Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity! -Heber

To understand God is impossible;

to worship Him is imperative.

Job 11:7 A Big God

"Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?"?

Woodrow Kroll

As the people of Job's day walked the earth, they likely didn't know that our world is 8,000 miles in diameter, with approximately 198,980,000 square miles on its surface. It is unlikely that they realized that this globe we call home is composed of 264 billion cubic miles. Most surely it was beyond their knowledge to compute that even though Earth is big, Saturn is 995 times bigger and Jupiter is 1,281 times bigger still. Furthermore, they had no inkling that beyond the few stars they could see there were at least 300 billion more.

Yet even without the benefit of all these mind-boggling figures, the people of Job's day knew that God, the Creator of all they saw, was bigger than anything they could comprehend. Zophar the Naamathite, one of Job's friends, was right when he said that no one could plumb God's depths or find God's limits. His thoughts run deeper than any human wisdom; His power outstrips man's best efforts.

Some people object to the concept of God because He is beyond their ability to understand. They argue that if they can't comprehend Him, then certainly He must not exist. Others simply dismiss Him as irrelevant because He fails to act as they feel He should. Yet God says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). Who is man to try to whittle God down to what he can understand?

Let God be God. Don't try to shrink Him down to fit neatly within your scheme of things. If He were small enough for you to comprehend, He wouldn't be big enough for you to worship. The fact that He is beyond your understanding is confirmation that no situation will ever exceed His ability to handle it. To live confidently, you don't have to understand God—you just have to trust Him.

Only small people insist on a small God.

Job 12:11

Doth not the ear try words, even as the palate tasteth its meat. (r. v.)

There is no appeal from the verdict of our palate. We know in a moment whether a substance is sweet or bitter, palatable or

disagreeable. Now, what the taste is to articles of diet, that the ear is to words, whether of God or man. More especially we can tell in a moment whether the fire of inspiration is burning in them. This is the test which Job proposed to apply to the words of his friends; and it would be well for all of us to apply the same test to Holy Scripture.

The humble student of the Word of God is sometimes much perplexed and cast down by the assaults which are made on it by scholars and teachers, who do not scruple to question the authorship and authority of large tracts of Scripture. We cannot vie with these in scholarship, but the humblest may apply the test of the purged ear; and it will detect a certain quality in the Bible which is absent everywhere beside. There is a tone in the voice of Scripture, which the child of God must recognize. This is the interesting characteristic in the quotations made in the New Testament from the Old. All the writers in the later Revelation detect the voice of God in the Old; to them, it is the Divine utterance through holy lips. Hearken, they cry, "the Holy Ghost saith." God is speaking in the prophets, as He spake in His Son.

It is one of the characteristics of Christ's sheep that they know His voice, and follow Him, whilst they flee from the voice of strangers. Ask that the Lord may touch your ears, that they may discern by a swift intuition the voice of the Good Shepherd from that of strangers; and for grace to follow immediately He calls you.

Job 12:7-13 The Variety Of Creation

In [God's] hand is the life of every living thing. —Job 12:10

Have you ever stopped to consider the amazing features God placed in the animals He created? Job did, and one of the most interesting he wrote about is the ostrich. Despite its apparent lack of good sense and its eccentric parenting skills, its offspring survive (39:13-16). And despite its membership in the bird family, it can't fly—but it can outrun a horse (v.18).

Another remarkable creature is the bombardier beetle. This African insect shoots two common materials, hydrogen peroxide and hydroquinone, from twin storage tanks in its back. Apart, these substances are harmless; together, they blind the beetle's predators. A special nozzle inside the beetle mixes the chemicals, enabling it to bombard its foe at amazing speeds! And the little guy can rotate his "cannon" to fire in any direction.

How can this be? How is it that a rather dull-witted ostrich survives despite a seeming inability to care for its young while the bombardier beetle needs a sophisticated chemical reaction to ensure its continued presence on earth? It's because God's creative abilities know no boundaries. "He commanded and they were created," the psalmist tells us (148:5). From the ostrich to the beetle, God's creative work is clear for all to see. "Praise the name of the Lord" (148:13).

All things bright and beautiful,

All creatures great and small,

All things wise and wonderful;

The Lord God made them all. —Alexander

The design of creation points to the Master Designer.

Job 12:10 26,000 Gifts A Day!

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. —Psalm 150:6

What do you do 18 times a minute, 1,080 times an hour, 25,920 times a day, yet rarely notice? The answer: You breathe. If you are 40 years old, you have already taken more than 378 million breaths. And each of those breaths was a measured gift from the hand of God!

Your lungs are among the most important parts of your body. They furnish your blood with oxygen and get rid of carbon dioxide and water. A few minutes without breathing and you would lose consciousness. You could not survive much longer without oxygen.

The Bible tells us that the Lord holds in His hand "the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). He gives us those 26,000 gifts each day so that we might honor Him with the life they sustain.

A minister was at the bedside of an elderly Christian who was near death. When he asked her what Scripture she wanted him to read, she said, "Make your own selection, pastor, but let it be one of praise." Although she was breathing her last, she wanted her parting testimony to echo the psalmist: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Ps. 150:6).

Have you thanked God today for His gift of life?

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

All that breathe, Jehovah praise;

Let the voices God has given

Joyful anthems to Him raise. —Psalter

When it's time to breathe a prayer of thanks, don't hold your breath.

Job 12:1-10 God Must Love Me More

God Must Love Me More

During a difficult recession, I organized a support group for fellow Christians to help them cope with unemployment. We provided resumé reviews, networking, and prayer support. One problem emerged: Whenever someone got a job, he or she almost never returned to the group to offer encouragement. That increased the loneliness and isolation of those left in the group.

Worse, though, were comments from those who had never experienced a job loss. They mirrored the accusations of Job's friends in his suffering: "If you were pure and upright, surely now [God] would awake for you, and prosper [you]" ([8:6|bible.18.8.6])). By chapter [12|bible.18.12.1]), Job is starting to express things in terms modern workers can understand. He says that he feels despised by those whose life is easy (v.5).

When things are going well for us, we may start to think that we who don't have troubles are better somehow, or are more loved by God, than those who are struggling. We forget that the effects of this fallen world are indiscriminate.

We are all loved by the Lord and we all need Him-in good times and bad. The successes, abundance, and positions that God has given to us are tools to help us encourage others in their time of need.- January 14, 2013 - by Randy Kilgore

Give us the humility, Lord, not to act like Job's friends

who accused him of sin because of his trials. Show us

how to help those who are struggling so that we might

give the kind of encouragement You have given us.

Humility toward God makes us gentle toward others.

Job 13:15

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.

This was a noble expression, which has been appropriated by thousands in every subsequent age. In every friendship there is a probation, during which we narrowly watch the actions of another, as indicating the nature of his soul; but after awhile we get to such intimate knowledge and confidence, that we read and know his inner secret. We have passed from the outer court into the Holy Place of fellowship. We seem familiar with every nook and cranny of our friend's nature. And then it is comparatively unimportant how he appears to act; we know him.

So it is in respect of God. At first we know Him through the testimony of others, and on the evidence of Scripture; but as time passes, with its ever-deepening experiences of what God is, with those opportunities of converse that arise during years of prayer and communion, we get to know Him as He is and to trust Him implicitly. And when that point has been reached and passed, nothing afterward can greatly move us. Instead of looking at God from the standpoint of His acts, we look at His dealings with us and all men from the standpoint of His heart. Though He put us on the altar, as Abraham did Isaac; and take the knife to slay us, we trust Him. If we die, it is to pass into a richer life. If He seem to forget and forsake us, it is only in appearance. His heart is yearning over us more than ever. God cannot do a thing which is not perfectly loving and wise and good. Oh to know Him thus!

"Leaving the final issue in His hands Whose goodness knows no change, whose love is sure, Who sees, foresees, who cannot judge amiss."

Job 13:15 Mental Toughness

This past weekend was one of my favorite pro golf events of the year: The Players Championship from the TPC Course at Sawgrass, Florida. The distinctive course design, featuring the famous island green on the 17th hole, and the strongest field of any tournament held during the year, make for high drama and challenging moments. Perhaps no player in the tournament, however,

faced the kinds of mental challenges that Kevin Na fought through. Since he recently made some rather severe swing changes, every shot for Na was a personal, internal battle. Standing over each shot, yet not trusting his new swing, Na took practice swing after practice swing, waggle after waggle but seemed incapable of pulling the trigger. Several times he even stepped away from the ball and screamed at himself in frustration. The most remarkable thing, however, was that Na entered the final day of the tournament in the lead! In spite of those inner battles and serious challenges, the 27-year-old was finding a way to fight through the mental struggles in a game that is primarily mental anyway.

In the struggles of life, we also need to develop toughness, but it is not necessarily mental in nature. It is a toughness rooted in a determination to trust in the Lord, no matter what life throws our way. King David put it this way: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

This kind of toughness expresses faith in the face of overwhelming burdens, opposition, or danger. It is the enduring confidence in Christ that cannot be diminished by the circumstances or struggles that invade our lives. It is the devotion of heart that echoes Job's words: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). This is the toughness that faces real life in the real world. And it is a toughness born out a relationship that is utterly dependent upon who He is—not what we have done. Enduring trust in the living God is the toughness that faces life with no need for fear. -- Bill Crowder, Sports Spectrum Chaplain

Job 13:4-15 CONFIDENCE IN GOD, NOT MAN

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

As we read in Job 13, Job again spoke quite forcibly of his refusal to let his "friends" arbitrate his case for him. He declared he would take it to God himself.

Job brushed his "friends" aside and told them that what they knew he knew, that he was not a bit inferior to them.

It goes without saying that Job's words to his friends and some of their words to him are hardly patterns for believers to use. A great deal of bitterness was evident on both sides.

Job was suffering greatly in body and mind, and the discourses of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar added torment to his already overburdened heart.

Job forcefully expressed his resentment against their unfair treatment. At times he "blew off steam," and yet intermingled with his strong words were often statements of remarkable truth concerning God.

From what we have already seen in chapter 13, Job stated that even if God were to kill him, he would trust Him. Would we be able to make such a statement in the midst of intense suffering?

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Ps. 118:8).

Job 13:1-15 TRUSTING IN TRIAL

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." - Job 13:15

Mary Kimbrough composed this poem based on Job 13:15 which underscores the wisdom of trusting God through trial:

"Though He slay me, I will trust Him,"

Said the sainted Job of old;

"Though He try me in the furnace,

I shall then come forth as gold."

"Though the 'worms of deep affliction'

Cause this body to decay,

In my flesh I shall behold Him --

My Redeemer -- some glad day."

"Though He slay me" -- can I say it

When I feel the searing fire,
When my fondest dreams lie shattered --
Gone my hope and fond desire?
"Though He slay me, I will trust Him,"
For He knows just how to mold,
How to melt and shape my spirit --
I shall then come forth as gold.!

A weak faith may appear to be strong when friends are true, the body is healthy, and the business is profitable. But a truly strong faith clings to the Lord's promises and relies on His faithfulness when loved ones leave, health departs, and dark clouds obscure the future.

Evangelist D. L. Moody once said, "Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in your friends, and they will die and leave you; but trust in God, and you will never be confounded in time or eternity."

Don't murmur and rebel in your hour of adversity. Learn to trust God in every trial. -- H G Bosch

Trials are the soil in which faith can flourish.

Job 13:5 Friends Listen

READ: Job 13:1-9

Oh, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom! -Job 13:5

It is about 9 in the evening. My wife Ginny and I are sitting in our living room. I'm reading a book. Suddenly she says, "Honey, I want to talk with you for a few minutes." She begins to talk-then she abruptly asks, "Are you listening?"

I'm tempted to reply, "Of course I am. I'm only 2 feet away from you." But actually my mind is still on what I'm reading. I need to close the book and give my full attention to what Ginny is saying. She deserves that from me.

Job too was frustrated because his friends weren't paying attention to what he was saying to them. He sensed that while he was talking they were planning their next response. They were bent on trying to convince him that his suffering was punishment for sin in his life. They were not listening to the deep cry of Job's heart.

Many of us are poor listeners too. Teenagers can be frustrated because their parents always have a quick answer, when actually they just want someone to listen to their struggles and accept them. One teen said, "Sometimes I would just like to talk until I know what I want to say."

Deep relationships are built on acceptance, understanding, and being a good listener.- Herbert Vander Lugt

When our friends encounter suffering,

We can help them if we're near;

Some may need a word of comfort,

Others just a listening ear. -Sper

Listening may be the most loving thing you do today.

Job 13:5 Better Than Words

READ: Job 13:1-19

Oh, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom. --Job 13:5

When we are with people who are grieving or suffering, we may feel a need to fill the awkwardness of the occasion with words. Not to say something, we fear, is to let them down. We may even find ourselves avoiding the bereaved because we're afraid we won't know what to say.

Author Joe Bayly, who lost three sons through death, described two examples of comfort he had received during his deepest grief: "Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly [and] said things I knew were true. I was unmoved, except to wish he'd go away. He finally did.

"Another came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, [and] left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go."

Job experienced similar emotions. In his grief, he too had craved silent support from his friends. He cried out, "Oh, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom!" (Job 13:5 Instead, he was worn down by their many words.

The next time you're with people who are grieving, allow your presence to be their comfort. - Joanie Yoder

Words of insight, gems of guidance

Help when someone's in a test;

But when comfort is what's needed,

Silent presence may be best. --Sper

A well-timed silence is more eloquent than words.

Job 13:13-28 Pressed Close to God

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him". -Job 13:15

The vines that sometimes grow up the side of oak trees cling to them during the fiercest storms. Although the wind beats upon them, the tendrils hold tightly to the tree's bark. If the vine is on the side opposite the wind, the great oak is its protection; if it's on the exposed side, the wind presses the vine more closely to it.

As Christians, we are sometimes sheltered by God, while other times He allows us to be exposed so we will be pressed more closely to Him. After years of faithfulness, some Christians suddenly find themselves greatly tested and in deep distress--seemingly without reason. They are subjected to terrific battles with doubts, fears, and unbelief. Doesn't God care how much they suffer? Of course He does. But He has a special purpose in withholding immediate relief.

When God spoke to Satan about Job, He described him as "blameless and upright," one who "holds fast to his integrity" (Job 1:8 2:3 God knew He could trust Job to cling to Him no matter what. Job's persevering faith in the midst of overwhelming trials would refute Satan's argument that he served God only because God blessed him.

The Lord may have a similar purpose in your trial. Remember Job's example. Hold fast to God. --H G Bosch

Though trials come, though fears assail,

Through tests scarce understood,

One truth shines clear--it cannot fail--

My God is right and good. --Hager

Our afflictions are designed not to break us but to bend us toward God.

Job 13:15 Total Trust

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Woodrow Kroll

Years ago a military officer and his wife were aboard a ship that was caught in a raging storm at sea. Seeing his wife's fear, the man tried to comfort her. Suddenly she grasped his sleeve and cried, "How can you be so calm?" He stepped back and drew his sword. Pointing it at her, he asked, "Are you afraid of this?" "Of course not!" she answered. "Why not?" he inquired. "Because I know you love me too much to hurt me," she said. He replied, "I also know the One who holds the winds and the waters in the hollow of His hand, and He loves us too much to fail to care for us!"

Job had that same trust. He had lost his children, his wealth and his health. Even his wife had turned against him. He had only one more thing to lose—his own life. Yet Job declared that even if it were to come down to that final loss, he would continue to trust that God had a purpose in everything that happened to him. In Job's eyes, the important issue was not what was happening but whose

hand was behind it. If God did it, Job knew he could trust it.

Often our trust is based on the "what" rather than the "who." We focus on the event rather than the One who controls that event. Consequently, when trials and tribulations come crashing down upon us, our faith is shaken. We can't understand why a loving Heavenly Father would allow such grief to enter our lives. Yet if we truly believe that He is loving, we can say with Job that even though He slay us, we will believe He intends it for our good. In His infinite wisdom and goodness, He will take the most difficult circumstances and use them for our good.

When you are facing life's most severe trials, focus on the character of God. Build your trust on who God is, not on what is taking place. When you know who He is, you never have to worry about what He will allow to happen.

Trust is based on character, not circumstances.

Job 14:14

All the days of my warfare would I wait, till my release should come. (r. v.)

The Lord Jesus has chosen us to be His soldiers. We are in the midst of a great campaign let us endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and strive above all things to please Him (2 Timothy 2:4 - note). Amongst other things, let us be sure not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. What purpose could a soldier serve who insisted on taking all his household goods with him on the march!

There is no pause in the warfare. We can never, like Gideon's soldiers, throw ourselves on the bank and quaff the water at our leisure. Every bush may hide a sharp-shooter; every brake an ambuscade. It becomes us to watch and pray; to keep on our harness of armor; to be on the alert for our Captain's voice. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenly places; we need to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and to take unto ourselves the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

But the release will come at last. When the soldier has fought the good fight, the time of his departure will come, and he will go in to receive the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give in that day. "Come," said the dying Havelock to his son, "and see how a Christian can die." Sometimes it demands more of a soldier's courage to wait than to charge. Remember that long waiting on the field at Waterloo, when the day passed from morning to evening. If you can do nothing else, wait. Be steadfast, immovable: lying still to suffer, to bear, to endure. This is fighting of the noblest sort.

Job 14:14 To Live Again

Woodrow Kroll

"If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes."

The Romanian weekly Tinerama reported that a woman fainted when she opened her front door and found her husband standing there. It all started when a man named Neagu choked on a fish bone, stopped breathing and collapsed. The family doctor, knowing Neagu's heart condition, didn't think twice about proclaiming the 71-year-old dead of a heart attack. But three days later, grave diggers at the cemetery heard a suspicious sound. They opened Neagu's coffin to find him surrounded by wilted flowers but very much alive. It took Neagu three weeks to convince the authorities to cancel his death certificate from their register.

Job, however, had more in mind than mere resuscitation. As he looked ahead to that day when he would put aside his mortal body, he asked the age-old question, "Will I live again?" Implied in Job's question is not the hopeless uncertainty of the pagan world but a quiet confidence that someday it would be so. As a result, he was willing to plod through his trials patiently, knowing that a greater and more glorious day lay ahead.

As believers in Christ, we have even more reason to be confident. We have not only the promise of resurrection (1 Cor. 6:14) but also the example of Christ (Luke 24:1-3). The apostle Paul assured us that what is sown perishable shall be raised imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42-44). That which is placed in the ground will someday be resurrected to rejoin the spirit from which it was separated and together spend eternity with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:14-17).

If you are troubled by pain and disappointment, be encouraged by what is to come. Wait patiently for that day when God will give you a new body in which to live a new life. The difficulties we experience now will one day vanish into eternity. Take heart—the best is yet to be.

Real life begins after this life.

Job 14:1-14 The Great Exception

If a man dies, shall he live again? ... I will wait, till my change comes. —Job 14:14

The Department of Social Services in Greenville County, South Carolina, sent the following letter:

"Your food stamps will be stopped, effective immediately, because we received notice that you passed away. May God bless you. You may reapply if there is a change in your circumstances."

How utterly absurd to expect a reply from a corpse or to suggest that a deceased person can change his circumstances! Once you're dead, that's the end of your earthly story.

That's what makes the message of the gospel so mind-boggling. It announces to all the world the death-conquering miracle of Christ's resurrection, together with the wonder of His sin-forgiving sacrifice on Calvary. It heralds the great exception to the universal law that death is the guaranteed end of everybody's story.

There's no possibility of a reappearance and a postscript added to one's life. But Jesus, breaking the power of the grave, did reappear, convincing His doubting disciples that He was alive again. He had met death and defeated that dreaded foe, bringing life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10). And because He lives, we who believe the gospel will also live again (Jn. 14:19).

Christ conquered death and broke its power

By rising from the grave;

Eternal life He gives to all

Who trust in Him to save. —Sper

Death is the last chapter of time and the first chapter of eternity.

Job 14:1-22 Sizing Up Our Troubles

Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. —Job 14:1

A soldier on the battlefield hadn't received any mail for weeks. During a break in the fighting, he was handed an envelope. Inside was a bill for \$3.52. A note read: "If this bill isn't paid in 5 days, you will be in serious trouble!" I wonder if that soldier smiled over the irony.

Troubles come in all sizes, from small irritants to life-threatening crises, from the loss of a \$20 bill to the loss of a loved one, from the breakdown of our car to the breakdown of our health. When troubles begin to add up, they can push us to the breaking point.

So it was with Job. He said, "If now I hold my tongue, I perish" (13:19). Job felt he was a righteous man. Why did he lose all his oxen, donkeys, sheep, and camels? Why were his servants and 10 children killed? Why was he afflicted with excruciating pain?

Job began to contend with God. He accused Him of destroying man's hope (Job 14:18-22). When God finally answered him, He didn't give the reason for Job's suffering. Instead, the Lord challenged him to provide explanations for the mysteries of nature. Job quickly got the point and reached the humble conclusion that he must let God be God (38-42). In all our troubles, may God help us to do the same.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,

Let this blest assurance control,

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate

And has shed His own blood for my soul.—Spafford

God may not always give us answers, but He always gives us grace.

Job 14 THE TRIUMPH OF HOPE

"Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." -- 1 Corinthians 15:20|

A little over a month before he died, the famous atheist Jean-Paul Sartre declared that he so strongly resisted feelings of despair that he would say to himself, "I know I shall die in hope." Then, in profound sadness, he would add, "But hope needs a foundation."

The patriarch Job had a foundation -- his faith in God. When he was suffering and feeling that death would come soon, he experienced mixed feelings --dread, despair, and hope. There were times when it seemed as if God was his enemy. Yet he kept

believing that the Lord does right and loves His people. In the end, hope triumphed over despair.

During the past 45 years, I have ministered to the spiritual needs of scores of dying people. I've observed that many genuine believers experience the same mixture of feelings Job had. They dread dying. Death is an unwelcome intruder to those who must face it in youth or during their prime years. Yet even in these situations, those who live close to Christ receive grace to die in hope.

We who believe in Jesus base our hope on one of history's best documented events -- His resurrection. Moreover, when we "trust and obey," our confidence in Him grows, and hope triumphs over dread and despair. -- H V Lugt

The Christian's hope is in the Lord,

He rests secure in his sure word;

And when he's tempted to despair,

He'll choose to trust God's love and care.-- DJD

To live without God means to die without hope.

Job 14:1 Suffering: How Do We Respond?

READ: Job 16:6-17

Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. -Job 14:1

Why is there suffering? You might ask that question when you hear of hurricanes, mudslides, earthquakes, and other disasters taking people's lives. Job asked that question too.

Why is there so much pain in God's world? Consider these reasons:

We can't escape the laws that govern our universe. We need such things as gravity, weather, and fire to survive, but they can lead to tragedy (Matt. 5:45). Fire is good in your stove, but an out-of-control fire can kill.

We are a social race. Our lives are intertwined, so we sometimes suffer when the sin or foolishness of others spreads trouble (1 Cor. 12:26).

Sin brought a curse on the earth and its people. This curse includes disease and death (Gen. 3:15-24).

Suffering awakens compassion. Jesus told us to care for those who suffer in poverty. We are His partners in helping others (Luke 10:33-35). As Job discovered, God's world is a fallen place. When we see suffering, we can use it as an opportunity to serve God by helping others, to trust Him in spite of the difficulty, and to grow in our faith in Him.

When trouble hits, let our first reaction be to trust the Lord and care for the needs of others. - Dave Branon

For Further Study

Wondering about the reason for your trials?

Read the online booklet [Why Would a Good God Allow Suffering?](#)

Our response to suffering can either make us or break us.

Job 14:1 Sizing Up Our Troubles

READ: Job 14:1-22 18.14.1-18.14.22

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Let this blest assurance control,

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate

And has shed His own blood for my soul. --Spafford

God may not always give us answers,

but He always gives us grace.

Job 14:14 A Mystery Solved

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

If a man dies, shall he live again? --Job 14:14

What happens to us when we die? That mystery has intrigued people down through the ages.

Some researchers are cautiously suggesting that they may be close to an answer. They are checking into reports from individuals who claim to have undergone near-death experiences that took them beyond time and space. Some analysts think that further research will eventually solve the mystery of death.

Must we anxiously await their verdict? By no means! God has already revealed in the Bible what happens after death.

If we have trusted God's Son Jesus Christ as our Savior, we know we will be "present with the Lord" when we die (2Cor. 5:8). Paul said that because Christ died for our sins and rose from the grave, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). But those who reject Christ will have to face God's fierce judgment and an eternity in hell (Rev. 20:11-15).

Anyone looking for clues about what happens to us when we die would be wise to research the Bible. It gives us God's answer to the most pressing question of the ages. Christ's empty tomb assures us that it is a mystery already solved. - Vernon C. Grounds

He lives, and grants me daily breath;

He lives, and I shall conquer death;

He lives, my future to prepare;

He lives to bring me safely there. --Medley

Because Christ lives, death is not tragedy but triumph.

Job 15:4

Thou restrainest prayer before God.

Job's friends were bent on discovering the cause of his sufferings in some secret failure and declension. This is why Eliphaz accused him so groundlessly. They did not know of those secret habits of intercession described in the first chapter. But this charge is eminently true of some professing Christians.

They restrain private prayer. — The closet door is too seldom shut behind them, or it is kept shut for too brief a period. They do not give themselves time to get into the mid-current of intercession and be borne forward by it whither it will. The voice of the Holy Spirit is barely able to assert itself amid the hubbub of voices within. They are so taken up with speaking of the Lord, or working for Him, that they slur over private audiences with Himself.

They restrain social prayer. — Their minister never sees them in the gatherings for intercession on behalf of the work of the Church and the salvation of the lost. They forsake the assembling of themselves with the saints. Like Thomas, they are absent from the gathering in the upper room, and miss the smile of the Lord.

They restrain family prayer. — Surely we ought to gather at least once a day around the family altar. Where Abraham pitched his tent he erected the altar. A prayerless home is apt to become a worldly and unhappy one. There is no such keystone to the arch of home-life and home-love, as the habit of family worship.

How foolish, how short-sighted, how sinful, it is to restrain prayer! What wonder that your soul is famished when you fail to feed it, or impoverished when you neglect intercourse with heaven!

Job 16:12

I was at ease, and He brake me asunder. (r. v.)

The other day, it was the Lord's Day morning, two sparrows fell from the leads of my church into the vestry, which has a lofty glass skylight. As soon as they had recovered from their astonishment at finding themselves prisoners, they flew up against this skylight as though to break through it to the open heaven, and then round and round the room. They were desperately afraid of myself and the verger, whom I had called, not realizing that we were as anxious as they to get them out again into the air. The only thing we could do to help them was to keep them from alighting to rest; so with long brooms and soft missiles we constantly drove them from every cornice and picture-frame on which they alighted, till they fell exhausted, and with panting breasts, to the ground. Then we captured them and set them free. They might have said many a time, in the course of that encounter, "We were at ease, and they brake us asunder; they also set up for their mark." But if they could review that episode now, they would doubtless see that it was love which forbade them to rest any where in the vestry, because it desired to give them their fullest liberty.

So with Job. God would not allow him to rest in anything short of the best, and therefore He broke up his nest. Is not this the key to His dealings with you? Oh, believe that behind the perpetual change and displacement of your life God is leading you into the glorious liberty of His children!

"Therefore to whom turn I but Thee, the ineffable Name? Builder and Maker Thou of houses not made with hands! What? have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same? Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands? There shall never be one lost good."

Job 16:1-5 Sharing The Pain

READ: Job 16:1-5

Weep with those who weep. --Romans 12:15

From the way Job's friends tried to console him, we learn a basic principle about giving comfort to others in their suffering: A comforter's ability to help is not so much his talent for using words as it is his capacity to be sympathetic. That's the type of understanding Job longed for when his friends began trying to correct him.

Dr. Paul Brand has beautifully expressed this truth in his book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. He writes: "When I ask patients and their families, 'Who helped you in your suffering?' I hear a strange, imprecise answer. The person described rarely has smooth answers and a winsome, effervescent personality. It is someone quiet, understanding, who listens more than talks, who does not judge or even offer much advice. 'A sense of patience.' 'Someone there when I needed him.' A hand to hold. An understanding, bewildered hug. A shared lump in the throat."

Sometimes, in trying so hard to say the right thing, we forget that the language of feeling speaks much louder than our words. There are times when the best thing we can do is "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Helping others in distress begins when we share their pain (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). -Mart De Haan

Lord, keep me merciful and kind,

With You, O Christ, first in my mind;

Teach me to feel another's woe,

And mercy to all people show. -Brandt

Sympathy is two hearts tugging at one load.

Job 16:12 Ground Squirrels

READ: Romans 8:27-39

I was at ease, but He has shattered me. -Job 16:12

Ground squirrels hibernate near our home during the winter, and they reappear when the snow melts in the spring. My wife Carolyn and I enjoy watching them scurry back and forth from one hole to another, while others stand like tiny sentries watching for predators.

In mid-May, a man from a nearby golf course arrives on a little green tractor with a tank loaded with lethal gas. The groundskeeper tells us that these little critters have to be eliminated because they dig holes in the fairways. Some survive, but most do not. It always makes us a little sad to see the tractor arrive.

If I could, I'd chase the little animals away. I'd destroy their holes and force them to settle someplace else. I'm sure they would resent my interference, but my actions would be solely for their good.

So it is with God. He may break up our comfortable nests now and then, but behind every difficult change lies His love and eternal purpose. He is not cruel or capricious; He is working for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). He wants us to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29) and to give us glorious enjoyment in heaven forever. How then can we fear change when it comes from Someone whose love for us never changes? (Ro 8:38-39).- David H. Roper

What tenderness the Father shows

To sinners in their pain!

He grants to them His strength to bear

The hurt that brings them gain. -D. De Haan

God's love can seem harsh until we view it with hindsight.

Job 16:6-17 Suffering: How Do We Respond?

Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. —Job 14:1

Why is there suffering? You might ask that question when you hear of hurricanes, mudslides, earthquakes, and other disasters taking people's lives. Job asked that question too.

Why is there so much pain in God's world? Consider these reasons:

We can't escape the laws that govern our universe. We need such things as gravity, weather, and fire to survive, but they can lead to tragedy (Matt. 5:45). Fire is good in your stove, but an out-of-control fire can kill.

We are a social race. Our lives are intertwined, so we sometimes suffer when the sin or foolishness of others spreads trouble (1 Cor. 12:26).

Sin brought a curse on the earth and its people. This curse includes disease and death (Gen. 3:15-24).

Suffering awakens compassion. Jesus told us to care for those who suffer in poverty. We are His partners in helping others (Luke 10:33-35).

As Job discovered, God's world is a fallen place. When we see suffering, we can use it as an opportunity to serve God by helping others, to trust Him in spite of the difficulty, and to grow in our faith in Him.

When trouble hits, let our first reaction be to trust the Lord and care for the needs of others.

For Further Study

Wondering about the reason for your trials?

Read the online booklet [Why Would a Good God Allow Suffering?](#)

Job 17:9

Yet shall the righteous hold on his way. (r. v.)

When the real life of God enters the soul, it persists there. Genuine religion is shown by its power of persistence. Anything short of a Godgiven faith will sooner or later fail. It may run well for a time, but its pace will inevitably slacken till it comes to a stand. The youths faint and are weary, and the young men utterly fall. The seed sown on the rock springs up quickly, and as quickly dies down

and perishes. But where there is the rooting and grounding in God, there is a perpetuity and persistence which outlives all storms and survives all resistance.

You shall hold on your way because Jesus holds you in His strong hand. He is your Shepherd; He has vanquished all your foes, and you shall never perish.

You shall hold on your way because the Father has designed through you to glorify His Son; and there must be no gaps in His crown where jewels ought to be.

You shall hold on your way because the Holy Spirit has deigned to make you His residence and home; and He is within you the perennial spring of a holy life.

It is said that there was once a debate in heaven, as to which kind of life needed most of God's grace. That of a man who after a lifetime of gross sins was converted at the eleventh hour, or of a man that for his whole career had been kept from destruction. And finally the latter was agreed to be the most conspicuous miracle. And there is no doubt that this is so. Yet for this also shall God's grace avail: and He shall enable thee to hold on thy way till heaven open to thee.

Job 18:14

The king of terrors.

So the ancients spoke of death. They were constantly pursued by the dread of the unknown. Every unpeopled or distant spot was the haunt and dwelling-place of evil and dreadful objects. But the grave, and the world beyond, were above all terrible, and death the King of Terrors. It is difficult for us, who inherit centuries of Christian teaching, to realize how dark and fearsome was all the realm that lay under the dominion of death and the grave. What a shiver in those words, King of Terrors!

But for us how vast the contrast! Jesus has abolished death, and brought life-and immortality to light. He has gone through the grave, and come again to assure us that it is the back door into our Father's house, with its many mansions. At His girdle hang the keys of death and Hades; none can shut the door when He opens it, and none open when He keeps it shut. He was Himself dead; but He lives forevermore, and comes to the side of each dying saint to escort him through the valley to His own bright abode.

There is something better. In the case of immense numbers, who shall be alive and remain when He comes again, death will be entirely evaded. "He that liveth and believeth in Him shall never die." They shall be caught away to meet the Lord in the air. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible incorruption. At His coming the grave shall be despoiled of its treasures, and death shall miss its expected prey.

"O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Job 19:25

I know that my Redeemer liveth.

Those words express the deepest and most radiant conviction of believing hearts. "He lives, the great Redeemer lives!" Man did his worst; the nail, the cross, the spear, were bitter; but He liveth! Death stood over Him as a vanquished foe; but He liveth! Captain Sepulcher and his henchman Corruption held earnest colloquy together about the best method of detaining Him; but He liveth! He ever liveth and because He continueth ever He hath an unchangeable priesthood.

But it is not probable that His words meant all this to Job. The word translated "Redeemer" is Goel — the nearest kinsman, sworn to avenge the wrongs of blood relations. This conception of the kinsman avenger has been always in vogue in the East, where the populations are scattered and migratory, and our system of law impossible. Beyond the heavens Job thought there lived a Kinsman, who saw all his sufferings, and pitied, and would one day appear on earth to vindicate his innocence and avenge his wrongs. He was content to leave the case with Him, sure that He would not fail, as his friends had done.

Beyond the sorrows and anguish of time he should yet see God; and he longed to see Him, that he might learn the secret purpose, which explained the sorrow of his lot. He had no dread of that momentous event, since his Goel would be there to stand beside him.

"Sudden the Worst turns the Best to the brave, The black minute's at end! — And the Elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave, Shall dwindle, shall blend, Shall change, shall become, — first a Peace out of Pain, Then a Light, then thy breast."

Job 19:25 Hallelujah!

I know that my Redeemer lives. —Job 19:25

Read: Isaiah 9:1-7 | Bible in a Year: Micah 1-3; Revelation 11

Composer George Frideric Handel was bankrupt when in 1741 a group of Dublin charities offered him a commission to write a musical work. It was for a benefit performance to raise funds to free men from a debtors' prison. He accepted that commission and gave himself tirelessly to work on it.

In just 24 days, Handel composed the well-known masterpiece Messiah, which contains "The Hallelujah Chorus." During that time, he never left his home and often went without eating. At one point, a servant found him weeping over his evolving score. Recounting his experience, Handel wrote, "Whether I was in my body or out of my body as I wrote it I know not. God knows." Afterward he also said, "I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself."

"The Hallelujah Chorus" stirs my soul whenever I hear it, as I'm sure it does yours. But let's be sure we do more than resonate to that magnificent music. Let's open our hearts in faith and adoration for the Messiah promised in the book of Isaiah (Isa. 9:1-7). He has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ to be our Savior. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder" (v.6).

Beautiful Savior! Lord of the nations!

Son of God and Son of Man!

Glory and honor, praise, adoration

Now and forevermore be Thine! —Seiss (trans.)

God's highest Gift awakens our deepest gratitude.

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Job 19:25 My Redeemer Lives

Woodrow Kroll

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth.

Some years ago an article appeared in National Geographic magazine that told of a young man from Hanover, Pennsylvania, who was badly burned in a boiler explosion. To save his life, physicians covered him with 6,000 square centimeters of donor skin as well as sheets of skin cultured from a stamp-sized piece of his own unburned skin. A journalist later asked him, "Do you ever think about

the donor who saved you?" The young man replied, "To be alive because of someone else is too big, too much, so I don't think about it."

Job, on the other hand, not only thought about the One who would save him, he longed for Him. As he looked at his life, he realized his need for a redeemer. In spite of his best efforts, his life fell far short of the perfection that God required. Yet he rejoiced in the fact that the One who would pay the price for his sins was alive—not only alive, but would someday actually stand upon the earth. It was on this great event that Job pinned all his hopes.

For those of us who live on this side of Christ's birth, we know that our Redeemer came, lived among us and died on the cross for our sins. And, like Job, that is the great event on which we pin all our hopes. Even though it took place centuries ago, the death and resurrection of Jesus is the crux around which everything else revolves. Because of this Redeemer, we have the assurance that we are free from the penalty of sin. The price has been paid, God's justice has been satisfied, and we are restored to a full relationship with the Father.

Have you been redeemed? If not, Christ offers you that opportunity right now. He paid the price for your sins when He died in your place at Calvary's cross. Accept Him as your Redeemer today. If you've done that, then give Him thanks. Christ has set you free.

Redemption: don't leave life without it.

Job 20:29

This is the portion of a wicked man from God.

Repeatedly in reading this book we are reminded of the strong convictions entertained by thoughtful men among these Eastern peoples, of the sure connection between wrongdoing and its bitter penalty. The friends of the sufferer express their opinions in cold-blooded and unfeeling words; but we can detect their intense convictions beneath all — that special suffering indicates the presence of special sin, and that all wickedness is sooner or later brought to light and punished.

We are less able to follow the track of God's providences in these crowded, hurrying days; but there can be little doubt of the connection between wrongdoing and punishment. The law is immutable. As a man soweth, so shall he also reap. The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment. He shall disgorge his wealth; he shall suck the poison of asps in the remorse and bitterness of his soul; the heavens shall reveal his iniquity; and his descendants shall seek favor of the poor. These things are still to be seen among us, in the rise and fall of proud men and their families.

Let us go into the sanctuary of God, and consider their latter end; and as we contrast it with that of the poorest of His children, we shall find no reason to envy them. Even though no human tribunal sentence them, they carry the harpoon in their heart, and sooner or later it will bring them to a certain and awful doom. It cannot be otherwise whilst God is God. The psalmist said:

"I have seen the wicked in great power, And spreading himself like a green bay tree, Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not."

Job 20:4-23 About That Sandwich

Though evil is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue, ... his food in his stomach turns sour. --Job 20:12,14

The absent-minded professor strode into his freshman zoology class with a paper bag in his hand and a twinkle in his eye. His broad grin projected the delight he felt in knowing he was about to initiate his rather squeamish students in the methods of animal dissection. In his typical professorial style he proudly announced, "I have brought a frog, fresh from the pond, that we might together study its outer appearance and later dissect it." With that he opened the bag and carefully unwrapped the contents. To his complete puzzlement, there was a ham-on-rye sandwich. "That's strange," he said. "I distinctly remember eating my lunch."

Job 20 tells about a person who recognized that evil can taste good, despite being very bad for the one who partakes of it. Even though Zophar wrongly implied that Job was suffering as a consequence of his sin, the principle he set forth was right: A person who feeds on evil will sooner or later realize what a fool he has been.

Are we careful what we feed on? Is what we take into our minds pure and true and honoring to God? Or are we swallowing the pleasures of sin for a while? We must be careful that our lives are not marked by an absent-mindedness that we will someday regret.

— Mart De Haan

Sin's pleasures have such great appeal,
They look like bargains rare;
But seldom do we clearly see
The hidden costs they bear. --DJD

**If you don't want the fruits of sin,
stay out of the devil's orchard.**

Job 20:4–5 Momentary Pleasures

Woodrow Kroll

"Do you not know this of old, since man was placed on earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?"

Scripture: Psalms 16:11 Job 20:4-5

John Bunyan was a Puritan preacher and author of the classic *Pilgrim's Progress*. A local magistrate threatened to put Bunyan in prison unless he promised that he would not preach, but he refused to quit. For the next 12 years (1660-1672), he was intermittently in and out of jail. Defiantly he declared that he would remain in prison until the moss grew on his eyelids rather than fail to do what God had commanded him to do. To John Bunyan, the pleasures that come with freedom were not worth the price of disobedience.

Job's friend Zophar the Naamathite understood this as well. He was wrong in assuming Job had some hidden sin in his life that he would not confess. Zophar was right, however, in pointing out that the pleasures enjoyed by the wicked and the hypocrites are only momentary. As substantial as they might seem, perhaps continuing for many years, compared with the rewards of the righteous that will last for eternity, such pleasures are short-lived. Stripped of sin's glamour, it's obvious that the ungodly are making a pretty poor deal.

We should always make choices with God's timetable in mind. While the pleasures available to those willing to compromise their stand for the Lord are varied and enticing, they can endure at best for only a lifetime. On the other hand, the psalmist reminds us, "At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11). How shortsighted it would be to choose a few years of comfort and ease over the never-ending pleasures that God has stored up for those who are faithful to Him.

If you are facing a choice today, ask yourself if your decision will result in temporary pleasures or eternal rewards. That answer will make it clear which way you should go. If you live for what is eternal, the temporary will have little appeal.

Today is no substitute for eternity.

Job 21:22

Shall any teach God knowledge?

We cannot tell God anything He does not know already. The most fervent and full of our prayers simply unfold in word all that has been patent to His loving, pitying eye. This does not make prayer needless; on the contrary, it incites to prayer, since it is pleasant to talk with one who knows the whole case perfectly; and it is a relief to feel that God's answers depend — not on the information we bring Him, or even on the specific requests we make, but on His infinite and perfect acquaintance with circumstances and conditions of which we are altogether ignorant.

"Your Father knoweth." Quicker than lightning is His notice of every transition in your inner life — of your downittings and your uprisings; of every thought in your heart; every word on your tongue; of the fretting of that inward cross; of the anguish of that stake in your flesh; of the enemy that, like a sword in your bones, reproaches you with the derisive challenge. "Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Yes, He knows it all, and loves you better than you know.

Do not presume to dictate to Him; do not dare to say that some other way would be better, some other lot more likely to develop your best self. He knows every track by which to bring sons to glory; and that He has chosen this one is a positive proof that it is the best, the one most adapted to your idiosyncrasies and needs. His ways are higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts. You could not teach Him knowledge, or increase His love — then trust both.

Job 21:22 Informing God

READ: Psalm 139:1-6

Can anyone teach God knowledge? —Job 21:22

We cannot tell God anything He doesn't already know. When we pray, we simply put into words what He's been aware of all along.

That doesn't make prayer unnecessary; rather, it encourages us to pray. We find relief in talking to Someone who knows us and our situation fully. It's a comfort to know that God's response arises not from information we give Him, but from His perfect knowledge of

our circumstances. He knows all conditions—past, present, future—that bear on our well-being.

"Your Father knows," Jesus said in Matthew 6:8. He knows our thoughts, our intentions, our desires; He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). He knows the anguish of our heart, the strain of continual frustration, the enemies inside and outside that war against our souls.

So, can we presume to dictate the time and terms of our deliverance from trials or adversity? Can we say our way is better, more likely to develop our soul? No, we cannot teach God anything. He alone knows the way to bring us to glory. Out of all possible paths, He has chosen the best, the route most adapted to who we are and what He has in store for us.

We cannot teach God knowledge, but we can love and trust Him. That's all He asks of us.— David H. Roper

The answer God may choose for me
Is sure to be the best,
So may I always thankful be,
And in His goodness rest. —D. De Haan

**God knows the end from the beginning,
so we can trust Him with everything between**

Job 22:23

If thou return to the Almighty.

These words introduce a most exquisite picture of the blessings consequent on return to God. They do not fit the case of Job, to whom they were addressed, because he had not left God; and they sound strange as coming from the mouth of Eliphaz. Still they are full of sublime truth.

There are three conditions. — We must retrace the steps of our backsliding and wandering lives. We must put away unrighteousness from our home-life and business engagements, so that the tent may be free from idols. We must be content to lay our most treasured possessions in the dust at God's feet for Him to deal with as He pleases.

There are four consequences. — Whatever we give up for God, we shall find again in Him; He shall become our treasure. Prayer shall have new zest, new success; be full of delight; become the interchange of face-to-face fellowship. There shall be more certainty and permanence in our decisions and achievements. Our decrees shall stand, our work shall last, our path shall be illumined with light. Trouble and trial shall depress us for only a brief space, like the passing of an Atlantic breaker over a lighthouse rock, whilst a glad relief shall always follow close on disaster.

Let us ask for all this in our daily prayer. O God, be my precious silver; give me delight in Thee; hear my prayers; may I decree what Thou canst establish; let Thy light shine on my ways; lift me up above all my depressions and fears — that I may stretch out a strong hand to those who are in trouble.

"Oh strengthen me, that while I stand
Firm on the Rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea."

Job 22:1-30 Culprit Or Comfort?

God ... comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble. —2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When we experience adversity and trials, we may blame ourselves and feel we have done something wrong to deserve punishment. While honest self-examination is healthy, we should not become preoccupied with our faults and failures.

It's even worse if someone else tries to load guilt on us when we are going through a tough time. That was the mistake of Job's friend Eliphaz, a man with a high view of God and a great respect for His moral standards. He correctly observed that when we do what's right we are doing only what God requires. Therefore, we shouldn't expect special praise or reward (Job 22:3). But Eliphaz mistakenly insisted that Job's trouble was the result of his own wickedness (v.5). He was also wrong in promising Job that God would bless him and give him immediate relief if he would repent.

Most of our troubles are the result of living in an imperfect world. God uses these adversities, however, to prepare us to help others. Paul said that God comforted him in his trials so that he could comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

When trouble invades our lives or the lives of others, let's not immediately conclude that the culprit is sin. Instead, let's seek God's comfort so we can comfort others.

Oh, comfort us, Lord, when life's trials assail—

How often we stumble, how often we fail;

But You would renew us, and help us to grow

That others Your goodness and comfort may know. —DJD

God can transform trials into triumphs.

Job 23:3

Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!

Poor tempest-driven man, he knew not that God was intimately near, nearer than breathing. There was no need for him to go forward and backward, on the right hand or the left. The Lord his God was nigh him, even in his heart; for His throne was pitched, there on the sands of the desert, between job and his pitiless accusers.

Thou needest not speak like this. Thou knowest where to find Him; thou canst find the way to His seat. He is to be found in Jesus, seated on the mercy-seat; in that room where thou sittest reading these words; in that railway train or store. No need to ascend into heaven, or descend into the abyss. Thou couldst not be nearer God, if thou wert in heaven. True, the obscuring wail shall be then removed.

“And without a screen,

At one burst shall be seen,

The Presence in which we have ever been”;

but the dropping of the scales from our eyes will not make us nearer God than we are at this moment.

Now go to His seat, just in front of thee. Order thy cause before Him, and argue it. Wait to know the words with which He shall answer thee, and understand His reply. Only be sure that He will not contend against thee with His great power. Sometimes we are so bewildered and perplexed that we lose the realizing sense of God's presence; but there is no real difference. God is not really farther away; and nothing glorifies and pleases Him more than for us to go on speaking with Him as though we could see His face, and realize His embrace. Be still for a moment, and say, reverently and believingly: “Lo, God is in this place.”

Job 23 THE SEARCH FOR GOD

“(God) is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” --Hebrews 11:6 (note)

Job must have felt as if he were on a roller coaster. One day he seemed to have everything, then suddenly everything was taken away. He lost his family, his possessions, his health, and he even became alienated from his wife and friends.

When Job's thoughts sank into the dark depths of doubt, he felt as if God had become an inaccessible stranger. He cried out, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” (Job 23:3).

Many people would say that Job was foolish to think that he could ever find God. In fact, one present-day atheist has called the quest for God “the biggest wild goose chase in history.”

But if you once felt close to God and now feel distant, or if you've never known the reality of a relationship with Him, don't believe for a split-second that you're on a wild-goose chase.

Remember, He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you (Jn. 3:16). While you are groping for Him in the darkness, a nail-pierced hand is being lovingly extended toward you. Grasp it in faith! You will discover that the quest for God is not a wild-goose chase, but the way to find forgiveness of sin and the fulfillment of your deepest desire: a personal relationship with the God of the universe. -- V C Grounds

Found by God! Found by God!

Lost in sin, but now I am set free;

It was not I who found, O Shepherd true

No, I was found by Thee. -- Anon.

God sometimes puts us in the dark so that we may see the light.

Job 23:3 Where Is He?

READ: Job 23:1-12

Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! --Job 23:3

When the regime of a repressive dictator was overthrown in 1979, most citizens of Uganda felt a great sense of relief. Even in the midst of disarray and destruction, the people celebrated when the government changed hands.

The comment of one happy citizen, though, expresses how many Christians respond to adversity. He said, "I stopped going to church because I thought God had forgotten us. Now I can go again."

An opinion like that isn't new. Through the years, many of God's children have made the mistake of thinking the Lord had abandoned them when times got bad. Job cried out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" (Job 23:3). We too can so quickly fall into that pattern of thinking. Somehow we feel that God and good times always go hand in hand. And someday they will—in heaven. But now it's so different. Trouble periodically rolls in like a heavy fog, and we must take by faith the fact that God is very much with us, even though we may not sense His presence.

God always sees us. Nothing gets by Him or escapes His notice. He always knows and cares. The question is whether we will continue to be as trusting as He is faithful. Will we be good and godly even when times are bad? — Mart De Haan

Trust in Him, ye saints, forever—
He is faithful, changing never;
Neither force nor guile can sever
Those He loves from Him. —Kelly

The presence of trouble does not mean the absence of God.

Job 23:8 God Was At Columbine

READ: Job 23:8-17

I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. --Job 23:8

This item appeared in a newspaper after the 1999 fatal shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado:

Dear God: Why didn't You save the children of the Littleton school? —Sincerely, a student

Dear Student: I am not allowed in schools. —Sincerely, God

The intended message seems clear: If we bring God back into the public schools by allowing prayer and Bible reading, then such tragedies would not occur. Whether you agree with that sentiment or not, one thing is sure—laws can't keep God out of school. They didn't that fateful day at Columbine High! God reached out to the gunmen through those who confessed their faith in Christ before being shot. He was there in the courage of a teacher who gave his life helping students escape.

God may be doing His greatest work when evil seems to triumph. When Job looked back, he saw that his suffering gave him a new understanding of God (Job 42:5-6). At Calvary, man crucified the only sinless One who ever lived, yet God turned history's darkest day into man's redemption.

Are you facing a great injustice? Keep trusting God. Those who go through the greatest darkness are those who most fully appreciate the glory of His light. — Dennis J. De Haan

When tragedy, heartache, and sorrow abound,
When evil appears to have conquered the right,
We center our heart on our Father's great love,
For He will bring hope in the darkest of night. —DJD

God may be doing His greatest work when evil seems to triumph.

Job 23:8-17 Bring Out The Shine

Many years ago I bought a 1964 Volkswagen from my neighbor. The car was mechanically sound, but the outside looked pretty rough. Dents marred its surface, and dirt and grime had dulled its once deep blue color.

As time passed, I wondered if its original luster and beauty could be restored. I was sure its bumps could be eliminated, but what about the finish? So I began to experiment on some of the worst spots. Much to my delight, I discovered that with a lot of elbow grease and some rubbing compound my drab little Volkswagen could be brought to a beautiful shine.

We as Christians have the wonderful potential of reflecting the beauty of our Savior. But sin has left its mark on our personalities, and a lot of "road film" needs to be removed before the lovely character of Jesus can be seen in us.

God often brings about this change through the buffing of hardship and trials, for pressure has a way of loosening the dirt and grime of rebellion and selfishness. The Bible tells us that tribulation produces perseverance, character, hope, and confidence by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:3-5).

We might wish that a speedy "car wash" could do the job, but there's no substitute for the difficulties that can bring out the shine of Christlike character. — Dennis J. De Haan

What pains my dear Lord must be taking,
How true and how faithful His care;
I know if He gave me all sunshine
I could not His own image bear. —Beattie

**A gem cannot be polished without friction,
nor a man perfected without adversity.**

Job 23:10 From Complaining To Trusting

READ: Job 23:1-117

When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. --Job 23:10

Job was a good man. He feared God, helped the needy, and opposed the wicked. Yet he made the mistake of placing too much emphasis on his own good character. We see this in his bitter complaint (Job 23:2). Job claimed that if God would only listen to him the way a judge and jury listen to a defense attorney, He would conclude that Job is pure gold (Job 23:2-10).

We usually take verse 10 to mean that God was testing Job to burn away the dross of sin. But Eliphaz had accused him of "iniquity without end" (Job 22:5), and the patriarch's reply was his defense against that charge. Job said that God's testing of him would eventually reveal that he was already pure gold. So he kept on affirming his uprightness. Finally, the Almighty confronted Job. "I will question you, and you shall answer Me," He said (Job 38:3). When God had finished, Job was silenced and humbled. Every trace of self-righteousness was gone. He admitted that he had spoken ignorantly (Job 42:1-5). Then he said, "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (v.6).

Whenever we think we deserve better from God, we need to remember that His sinless Son gave His life for us. This will silence our complaint and renew our trust in God's love, wisdom, and goodness. — Herbert Vander Lugt

O Lord, what is the meaning of my loss?
My heart is right, and yet how great the pain!
Then graciously You draw me to Christ's cross
And show me that my faith is not in vain. --DJD

Strong trials build strong faith.

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Job 23:10 Tested By Fire

READ: 1 Peter 1:3-9

He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. --Job 23:10

In October 1991, a firestorm destroyed 2,500 homes in the vicinity of Oakland, California. When the devastated owners returned and sifted through the black debris, they found that all their possessions had been reduced to soot. But one man and his daughter

discovered a tiny porcelain rabbit. They marveled that so fragile an object had survived intact. Other victims of that catastrophe also found pottery and porcelain items that had somehow defied the all-consuming firestorm.

The Sunday after the disaster, a local minister carried to his pulpit an unbroken vase, which was the only thing recovered from his home. He asked his congregation, "Do you know why this is still here and my house is gone?" He answered his own question by saying, "Because this had passed through the fire once before."

Can the fiery trials of life actually prove to be a blessing? The apostle Peter indicated to us that they can. He explained that various trials can result in "praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Fiery trials may be very painful, but if by God's grace we endure them, our faith can emerge from the blazing furnace purer and stronger than it was before. —Vernon Grounds — Vernon C. Grounds

Some through the water, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood,
Some through great trials, but God gives a song
In the night season and all the day long. —Young

Fire refines gold; adversity refines man.

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Job 23:10 Blue-ribbon Christians

READ: Hebrews 12:1-29

He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. --Job 23:10

While visiting New England, I was presented with a tin of pure Vermont maple syrup. It was given to me by a man who consistently had won blue ribbons for his product.

Producing syrup of that quality is no easy task. Its richness, flavor, and color depend on many factors: the tree from which the sap is drawn, the time it is collected, the existing weather conditions, and the skill of the one who controls the boiling and filtering process. A blue-ribbon award is the result of a carefully controlled procedure from start to finish.

This reminds me of the way the Lord refines the lives of His children. Even now, He is working on us. The fires of affliction and trial may be painful for a time, but afterward they will result in great blessing and reward (Hebrews 12:11).

I remember well when my brother and I collected some sap from our maple trees in the back yard. We put it in a big tub on a burner in the basement, and then promptly forgot all about it. Many hours later Mother almost fainted when she opened the basement door and was greeted by billowing clouds of smoke. How thankful we can be that God never forgets us in that way. He knows just the right amount of heat necessary to make us blue-ribbon Christians! — Richard De Haan

All God's testings have a purpose—
Someday you will see the light;
All He asks is that you trust Him,
Walk by faith and not by sight. —Zoller

God sends trials not to impair us but to improve us.

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Job 23:10 The Pain That Perfects

READ: Job 23:1-10

May the God of all grace ... perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. --1 Peter 5:10

As children of the heavenly Father, we can be grateful that He loves us enough to discipline us. Whatever He sends our way or allows to come into our lives is "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

In the book *Flashes of Truth*, James Duff writes, "The colors that are painted on china are burned into the clay. Otherwise they would easily rub off. It is said that what is to become a golden color on the finished article is a dark liquid before the fire is applied. And the first two or three applications of heat obliterate all trace of color, which has to be renewed again and again.

"So it is with God's dealings with us. No sooner has God finished a work with us than He plunges us into the fiery furnace of pain or

sorrow ... What for? That through the fire, beauty of character--the heavenly Potter's work--might be rendered permanent in us."

Are you in the furnace of affliction? Remember, the heavenly Father loves you. If He didn't, He would be ignoring you. In His great wisdom He is working to "establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Pet. 5:10). So even though you don't understand His ways, you can trust Him and be grateful that He allows the pain that perfects! — Richard De Haan

All God's testings have a purpose--
Someday you will see the light;
All He asks is that you trust Him,
Walk by faith and not by sight. --Zoller

**A Christian's character, like a beautiful gem,
is formed by pressure and polished by friction.**

Job 23:12 Are You Starving?

READ: Psalm 119:33-40

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. --Matthew 4:4

Hold everything! Wait a minute! Have you read the Scripture for today? It's only eight short verses, and it will take you only 45 seconds.

No, don't lay this booklet down and mumble to me, "I'm in a hurry and you're delaying me." I see you're eating breakfast this morning even though you're late. You take time to feed your body, but you were going to starve your soul. Take 45 seconds and read Psalm 119:33-40. If you don't read the rest of this devotional, that's okay--as long as you read the Bible.

These articles in Our Daily Bread are not designed to be a substitute for the Bible; they are meant to stimulate your desire to read more of the Bible. If reading this booklet has caused you to neglect the Word of God, please throw this booklet in the wastebasket!

Job said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Jesus taught, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4).

Yes, you may have had a rough day yesterday and you're way behind. But why should you be surprised that it was such a bad day if you started it without God's Word? Don't make the same mistake today. Take time to read. --M. R. De Haan, M.D. (founder of RBC Ministries) — M. R. De Haan

Read Psalm 119:33-40 and make its words your prayer:
Teach me (v.33). Give me (v.34).
Make me (v.35). Incline me (v.36). Turn me (v.37).
Establish me (v.38). Spare me (v.39). Revive me (v.40).

If you're too busy to read the Bible, you're too busy.

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Job 23:12 The Book To Treasure

READ: Psalm 19:7-11

I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. --Job 23:12

Joseph Brodsky won the Nobel Prize for Literature and was a US Poet Laureate. He proposed that books of American poetry be placed next to Gideon Bibles in motel rooms. "Poetry," he reasoned, "is perhaps the only insurance we've got against the vulgarity of the human heart." Before Brodsky's death in 1996, many books had already been distributed to hotels and hospitals.

Those of us who love poetry find in it pleasure, wisdom, and inspiration. But even the best literature cannot be compared to the value of the words of the Bible.

Imagine a despairing soul on the verge of suicide picking up a book of poetry and thumbing through its pages. It's highly unlikely that even the noble thoughts of Henry W. Longfellow or John Greenleaf Whittier, to say nothing of a modern poet like T. S. Eliot, would inspire him to fall on his knees and cry out to God for mercy and grace. Yet the Gideons' files are full of testimonies from individuals who, alone in their hotel rooms, have opened a Bible and through its message have been born again to newness of life.

Poetry has its honored place in our culture. But human words, however creatively woven together, can never take the place of God's

A well-turned phrase and words that rhyme
Can give us inspiration,
Yet nothing but the Word of God
Can bring us His salvation. --Sper

**Many books can inform.
Only the Bible can transform.**

Job 23:10 Like Gold

"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."

Woodrow Kroll

It's a well-known fact that many people have become successful by compensating for personality or physical flaws. Winston Churchill, for example, stuttered as a youth yet became a great orator. Glenn Cunningham was so badly burned as a boy it was thought he would never walk again. He became, however, one of the world's great milers. George Bernard Shaw was so painfully shy that he found it difficult to talk with anyone. But Shaw forced himself to join organizations where he would have to speak before audiences. In each of these situations, it was the fiery trials that brought out the best in the person.

As Job looked at the tests that God allowed in his life, he did not despair. Instead, he saw them as the instruments that would be used to bring about good. He knew that as the heat of a fiery furnace was needed to remove the dross from precious metal, so it took the cleansing flames of affliction to remove thoroughly the impurities from his life. He was confident that he would come forth not as a burned-up cinder but as a nugget of purest gold.

God is not in the demolition business, but He does run a refinery. His purpose is not to destroy but to purify. The burning difficulties that test us are designed to remove the dregs that hinder us from serving Him with clean hands and a pure heart. He seeks not to ruin us but to increase our value. His desire is to separate from us anything that would detract from our worth and make us ever more useful in service to Him.

If you are in the fiery furnace of affliction, take heart. God's hand is on the thermostat. He will allow the heat to do no more than remove the impurities. As you go in mixed with the dregs of this world, you will come forth pure and refined.

Only precious ore is put in the Refiner's fire.

Job 24:24

Yet a little while, and they are gone. (r. v.)

Job here describes the insecurity of the wicked. He may have raged against the poor and innocent; but in a moment he comes down to Sheol, is hurried to stand before his Maker to receive his sentence. As he had treated the poor, so he is treated. As he had devoured the houses of the innocent, so he is devoured. "How are they become a desolation in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image."

For those who fear God there is a greatly contrasted lot. They receive a kingdom that cannot be moved. Zion may be a desolation, and Jerusalem a wilderness; the holy and beautiful institutions in which their early religious impressions were made may crumble; but they are come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The removing of those things that are capable of being shaken only makes more apparent those which cannot be shaken.

Where do you build your nest? In the trees of this world, that sway in the tempest, or may be hewn down by the woodman's axe; or have you learned to build in the clefts of the Rock of Ages? Is your treasure in human friendships, which may change or be cut in twain by the sharp shears of death; or is it in the love of God, the unchangeable and everlasting Lover of souls? Let us look off from ourselves; from that diseased introspection that so confuses and dims our life; from the old fears that made us tremble and the old matters of which we must speak no more. And let us look upward and forward to that near future, which is so much larger and better than the past has been, and where we shall attain more than the heights of our dreams.

Job 25:4

How then can man be just with God? (r. v.)

This is the question of the ages. Man knows that he is as a worm, and worse. For no animal, however humble, has consciously and

determinedly broken the law of God, and defiled its nature.

Our first effort is to go about to establish a righteousness of our own. Repeated failure only aggravates our misery and chagrin, till we fall helpless at the foot of Sinai. Our vows are broken, the law of God lies shivered around us, the thunders and lightnings make us afraid. Then God in the Person of Jesus comes to our help. First, He meets and satisfies the demands of the broken law, so that it can ask no more. With His own hands He works out, and brings in, everlasting righteousness. And finally, He produces in us that faith by which His finished work is applied to our conscience and heart.

By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation. God is Himself the Justifier of the ungodly. "Whom He called, them He also justified." He takes off the filthy garments, and clothes us in change of raiment.

But the condition is faith. We must believe in Him who justifieth the ungodly. They who believe are justified from all things. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not saved by believing about His work, but in Himself. The Greek of John 3:16 might be rendered, Whosoever even believeth into Him. The motion of faith is ever toward the heart of Him who died, and rose, and lives. Then through our faith the Spirit produces a holy character.

Job 26:14

How small a whisper do we hear of Him! (r. v.)

Job in thought passes through the universe. Sheol stands for the grave and the unseen world; Abaddon, for Satan, or for the great reservoirs in which the destructive agencies of creation have their home. With a marvellous anticipation of the conclusions of modern science, he speaks of the world as pendant in space. He passes to the confines of light and darkness, rides on the wings of the wind, discourses of the clouds, skims the mighty surface of the sea. All this, however, he deems as the outskirts of God's ways. It is but a whisper compared to the mighty thunder of His glory and power. If this is a whisper, what must the thunder be! If this universe is but a flower on the meadows of God's life, what must not God Himself be!

Perhaps we know something more of the thunder of His power than Job could, because we have stood beneath Calvary and seen Jesus die, and He is the wisdom and power of God; yea, we have witnessed the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of the strength of His might, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.

Who of us can fathom or understand the power of God? But what a comfort to know that it is an attribute of His heart. God is not power, but He is love, and His love throbs through and commands His power. Be reverent when you kneel before the great and mighty God; but believe that all His power is engaged on the side of His weakest, neediest child. And more cease not to wait upon God until He endue you with His mighty power, for service and for daily living. A Nasmyth hammer can break a nutshell without crushing or touching the kernel.

Job 26:5-14

Hanging on Nothing

A world map published by the National Geographic Society has this notation: "Earth's mass is 6.6 sextillion tons." And what supports all that weight? Nothing. The planet we inhabit spins on its axis at 1,000 miles per hour as it hurtles through space in its orbit around the sun. But it's easy for that to remain unnoticed in the midst of our daily concerns about health, relationships, and how to pay the bills.

The Old Testament character Job repeatedly considered God's creation in his struggle to make sense of the numbing loss of his health, his wealth, and his children. "[God] stretches out the north over empty space," Job said. "He hangs the earth on nothing" (Job 26:7). Job marveled at the clouds that did not break under the heavy water inside them (Job 26:8) and the horizon "at the boundary of light and darkness" (v.10), but called them "the mere edges of His ways" (Job 26:14).

Creation itself did not answer Job's questions, but the heavens and the earth pointed him to God the Creator, who alone could respond with help and hope.

The Lord who upholds the universe by the "word of His power" (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17) is in control of our everyday lives. Experiences that seem "empty places" are all undergirded by our heavenly Father's power and love. - June 22, 2013 — by David C. McCasland

Dear Lord, we praise You for Your infinite power.
You created the world out of nothing and uphold
it by Your word. Help me to remember that You
are also in control of every part of my life.

**When we reflect on the power of God's creation,
we see the power of His care for us.**

Job 27:6

My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.

Job had an ideal and clung to it. Have you such? A vision of what you may be, and, by the grace of God, will aim at being. Bishop Westcott says:— "The vision of the ideal guards monotony of work from becoming monotony of life." Bitter indeed is life for those who have not seen the heavenly vision, or heard the calling upward of the voice that says, Come up hither. Any life looks more interesting and attractive when the light of our ideal falls on it, and we realize that every yard leads somewhere, and every step is one nearer the goal. So some one has suggested that, "If we cannot realize our ideal, we may at least idealize our real."

But there are many hindrances, many adverse influences to combat, many suggestions that we should let go our ideal. We have so often failed, slipped where we thought we should stand, limped where we thought to overcome by wrestling. The crags are so steep, the encouragement we receive from fellow climbers so scant, the dissuasions and misconstructions — like those Job had from his friends — so many. But Jesus who inspired the ideal waits to realize it, if only you will open your heart and let Him enter. Do you hunger and thirst? then He, will satisfy. He does not tantalize and disappoint the seeking soul.

Have we not all, amid life's petty strife, Some pure ideal of a noble life That once seemed possible? It was. And yet We lost it in this daily jar and fret, And now live idle in a vague regret. But still our place is kept, and it will wait, Ready for us to fill it, soon or late No star is ever lost we once have seen We always may be what we might have been.

Job 28:14

The deep saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. (r. v.)

In this sublime chapter the holy soul goes in quest of wisdom, which is the perfect balance of the moral and intellectual attributes of the soul; that knowledge of God, and life, and truth, which is only possible when the eyes of the heart have been enlightened to know; that radiancy of spirit which is enlightened and illuminated with God who is Himself the Light.

In a marvellous description of mining operations, which would arrest any company of miners in the world, if read from the Revised Version, Job declares it is not to be found in the deep. From one quarter of the universe after another, he receives the intelligence that it is not there. God alone has the secret; He only can communicate it, or give the disposition to appreciate and receive.

We must deal with God. Looking away from every other source of illumination and satisfaction, we must have close and searching fellowship with Him. Dr. Gordon was wont to say that evangelical faith consists not in a glance alone, but in a gaze. "We live in a very busy, perspiring time, when a thousand clamant calls assail us on every side; but we must have more time for visions if we would be well equipped for our tasks." Let us then turn from the quarters where we have been accustomed to draw our supplies — broken cisterns, with uncertain and brackish water — and let us come to God, the eternal source of life and peace. Love and rest we want. Thy love and rest, oh, give us! From men and things; from the mine, the deep, and the sea; from the murmur of human voices, and the cross-lights of human interests, we come back to Thee, our Home.

Job 28:12 Gold Rush

READ: Job 28:12-28

Where can wisdom be found? --Job 28:12

In the late 1970s, thousands of men and women rushed to the American West. In the tradition of the diehard prospectors of 1849, they dredged river bottoms and reopened gold fields long since abandoned. The activity, however, was not sparked by new finds. The same old metal had been there all the time. But because the value of gold had skyrocketed, the dust and flecks were now worth mining.

Suppose you knew that 100 pounds of pure gold could be found somewhere in the walls of your house? What you wouldn't do to find it!

Now let's change the stakes. What would we do if we knew that a large amount of wisdom was in our house? Well, it is! God tells us that nothing compares in value with the spiritual treasures contained in the Bible--not even gold at the highest prices (Job 28:12-17).

We would probably search everywhere in our house to find 100 pounds of gold. Yet, do we seek with as great a diligence the mind and will of God? As His followers, we should long to understand the fear of the Lord and to develop a hatred of evil--which the Bible says is true wisdom (v.28). And its value has never been higher. We need a new rush--not for gold, but for God! — Mart De Haan

More valuable than diamonds rare
Is priceless wisdom from above;
With purest gold it can't compare
Because it's filled with truth and love. --DJD

Wisdom is understanding what's really important.

Job 28:12, 28 Where Is Wisdom?

Woodrow Kroll

A young man got into financial difficulty by loaning a friend in another town \$500. He neglected to ask his friend to sign a written note. He didn't even ask for a receipt indicating the amount loaned. When the young man needed his money back, he realized he had nothing with which to document his claim. In desperation he turned to his father for advice. After a moment of consideration, the father said, "Write him and say you need the \$1,000 you loaned him." The young man said, "You mean \$500." "No," said the father, "you say \$1,000, and he will immediately write back that he owes you only \$500. Then you will have it in writing." The son followed his father's wisdom and the problem was solved.

Job, too, was perplexed by his situation. He had been a righteous man, yet now it seemed as though his world was falling apart. He felt the need for wisdom. "But where," he asked, "do I find it?" His Heavenly Father gave him the answer: It is in the fear of (respect for) the Lord. Only to the degree that those who seek wisdom are willing to respect God will they be motivated to apply the truths that He shares with them.

If earthly fathers can give wise counsel, how much more so can our Heavenly Father? But to gain true benefit from that counsel we must have reverence toward the One who gives it. Unless we respect the source, we'll never value the product. We not only need to hear, but we also must heed.

If you are looking for wisdom today, the best source you'll ever find is as close to you as your Bible. God speaks clearly through His Word to give you the guidance you need for your daily life. If you fear Him, obey what He says and take note of the benefit of heeding His Word.

If you respect the Lord, you'll benefit from His wisdom.

Job 29:2

Oh that I were as in the months of old! (r. v.)

We are irresistibly reminded of Cowper's sad complaint:—

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!

How sweet their memory still;

But they have left an aching void

The world can never fill.

We are all prone to think that the earliest days were the best; and it is quite possible they were. But we must carefully distinguish between the exchange of the freshness and novelty of our first love for a deepening and maturing love, and the loss of love. The streamlet may not babble so cheerily, but there may be more water in the river. We lose the green Spring, but is it not better to have the intense light of Autumn in which the fruits ripen? There may not be so much ecstasy, but there may be stronger, deeper experience. We should not reckon our position in God's sight by our raptures, and count ourselves retrograding because they have gone; there is something better than rapture: the peace of a settled understanding and unvarying faith.

Still, if it be really so, that you have left the old place on the bosom or at the feet of Christ, that your love is cooling and your spirituality waning, I beseech thee, get back! Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. Jesus yearns to reinstate thee, and has permitted this restless longing for the past to come, that it may be with thee as in the months of old. Again His lamp shall shine above thy head, and the secret of the Lord shall be upon thy tent; thy steps shall be washed with butter, and the rock pour out rivers of oil; thy roots shall spread to the waters, and the dew shall lie all night upon thy branch.

Job 29:12-13 Bring Them Joy

READ: Job 29:1-16

Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me. --Luke 9:48

Poet Shel Silverstein wrote a heart-touching verse titled, "The Little Boy and the Old Man." In it he portrays a young boy talking to an elderly gentleman.

The boy says, "Sometimes I drop my spoon." "I do that too," replies the old man.

"I often cry," continues the boy. The old man nods, "So do I."

"But worst of all," says the boy, "it seems grownups don't pay any attention to me." Just then the boy feels "the warmth of a wrinkled old hand." "I know what you mean," says the little old man.

But do we really know what those two meant? Are we like the righteous patriarch Job, who was a man of compassion, helping the helpless? (Job 29:12-13). We consider Job good and godly (Job 1:8) because he demonstrated love to others, not just because he believed in God and offered prayers for his own family. He had Christlike compassion long before Jesus walked this earth.

The concerns of the Lord's heart have not changed. He still is asking all who have accepted Him as Savior to be instruments of His love for those who need help (Mt. 22:39; Lk. 10:30-37; 1 Cor. 13; 1 Pet. 3:8). He longs to touch others' lives through you and me. — Mart De Haan

I long to have a caring heart,
To show God's love to those in need;
So help me, Lord, to share a part
Of all I have through word and deed. --Hess

People with a heart for God have a heart for people

Job 30:20

I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not answer me. (r. v.)

It may have seemed so to the sufferer; but there is not a cry that goes from the anguished soul which does not ring a bell in the very heart of God, where the Man of Sorrows waits, touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

I have sometimes gone to a telephone office, and have rung the bell, asking to be put in connection with my friend, but it has seemed impossible to get at him; either he has been engaged or absent, and one has found oneself speaking to a stranger, and the voice which replied has been unfamiliar. Thoroughly disappointed, one turns away. But this is never the case with God. And the comfort is, that He is most quick to succor those whose cry is lowest. As a mother goes about her work, she is less sensitive to the trains that thunder past, and the heavy drays, and the laughter of boisterous health, than to the stifled cry of her little invalid; and if there could be one thing more sure than another of awakening God's immediate response, it would be such broken cries as pain elicited from Job.

But the answer will come — nay, it is on its way, timed to arrive in the fourth watch of the night. Perhaps the delay is the answer, because the heart needs to be prepared to receive the great gift when it comes. Perhaps, like the Syrophenician woman, you have to give Christ His right place is Lord, and take yours amongst the dogs. Perhaps the answer is coming all the time by one door, whilst you are looking for it through another; but you cannot and must not say that God is not answering. All the time you are crying, the answer is to your hand, awaiting your appropriation. Go to the post office for the letter: hasten to the landing-stage for the ship — it is in.

Job 31:6

Mine integrity.

Integrity is from the Latin word *integritas*, wholeness. It means whole-heartedness. It is interesting in this chapter to see what, in Job's estimation, it involved.

Job 31:1. Purity in the look.

Job 31:7. Cleanliness of the hands.

Job 31:13. Thoughtfulness for domestic servants and underlings.

Job 31:16. Justice to the poor and the widow.

Job 31:17. Willingness to share morsels, and to be a father to the fatherless.

Job 31:19–20. Clothing for the naked.

Job 31:21. The refusal to depute to others help which one might render.

Job 31:24. The heart weaned from the love of gold.

Job 31:26. Refusal to turn aside to idols.

Job 31:29. Inability to rejoice at the destruction of those who had derided and hated.

Job 31:33. The frank confession of wrongdoing.

It becomes us, prayerfully, to go over these items, and use them as the catechism of our soul, for if this was the standard of character for one who lived so many centuries before the full revelation of Christ, what should not our standard be! How impossible, however, it is to live like this from without! We must enshrine within us the blessed Spirit of God, who alone originates and maintains that perfect love to God and man which compared to Job's maxims is as the heart to the body. Law is given as the expression of God's will for the regulation of life: but it is impossible to keep the law till we have the love; and it is impossible to have the love until we have the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Ghost.

Job 31:1 The Eyes Have It

Woodrow Kroll

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"

Millie Dienert worked with the Billy Graham evangelistic team for 40 years. She commented, "I have always appreciated from a moral point of view how the men have been in their attitude toward the secretaries. The doors are always left open. They have always kept everything above reproach. When you are working on a long-term basis with the same person, constantly in hotels where the wife is not there and the secretary is, that is a highly explosive situation. You have to take precautions. I have always respected the way they have handled that."

Job also desired to live a chaste life. Even though he was a married man, he knew how easy it would be to slip. And it all begins with a look. Perhaps at first it is nothing more than just a casual glance, but then comes a lingering stare. Before long the look becomes something more. Therefore, Job made a covenant with his eyes, where it all begins. He knew that if nothing was started, he wouldn't have to worry about where it would go.

Christians need to remember that immorality begins with the eyes. Where people look, how long they look and what they allow to be communicated through their eyes are all factors that can bring about a fall. What we allow to come in through the eye-gate makes or breaks our Christian testimony. If we set up a roadblock at the source of our temptation, we can insure that our witness for the Lord will remain untainted.

Begin with the eyes. You can't help the first look, but you are definitely responsible for every look thereafter. Close that gate as soon as you can. Make a covenant with yourself and the Lord that you will not allow your eyes to be your downfall. Guard your eyes, and the rest of your behavior will be easier to control.

Wrong looks lead to wrong behavior.

Job 31:1 HE SEES US! - In this age of electronics, we have all become aware of bugging devices. A person's office, hotel room, or telephone can be monitored so that every sound is picked up. This is accomplished through highly sensitive microphones that are so small they can easily be hidden. Heads of state, government officials, and business people in strategic positions must be exceedingly careful of what they say, especially when entering a strange setting. The awareness that they might be overheard is sure to make them think twice before they speak. Did you ever stop to think that God sees everything we do and hears everything we say every moment of the day? Heb 4:13-note says that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." This truth is both comforting and sobering—comforting because God stands ready to deliver us when we are in trouble (Ps 33:18-19-note), and sobering because "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Pr 15:3-note). What a profound effect this should have on the way we live! The next time you are tempted or in trouble, remember that God is watching and listening. —R W De Haan

There is no time of day or night,

No place on land or sea

That God, whose eye is never dim,

Does not see you and me.

—DJD

To know that God sees us

brings both conviction and comfort.

Job 31:1 A COVENANT WITH MY EYES - Our friend is a computer “techie.” One night when our family was at his house, I noticed a verse taped to his monitor: “I have made a covenant with my eyes” (Job 31:1). Evidently, he understood the potential danger of spending hours alone in front of a computer with easy access to indecent images.

Our friend’s “reminder verse” is a quote from Job, and it continues, “Why then should I look upon a young woman?” Like many of us, Job had promised himself to stay free of lust. Reflecting on that oath, he said, “Does [God] not see my ways, and count all my steps?” (Job 31:4, cp Pr 15:3-note, 1Pe 1:17-note). The Bible assures us that God does (Heb 4:13-note), and that we are accountable to Him. This is why believers must “abstain from sexual immorality” (1Th. 4:3-note). While some want to debate the boundaries of morality, the Bible says, “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28-note).

If you have made a covenant with your eyes, consider how Scripture might help you keep this pledge. Post a verse on your computer screen, television, or the dashboard of your car, and remember, “God did not call us to uncleanness” but to holiness (1Th. 4:7-note). -- February 11, 2012 — by Jennifer Benson Schuldt

When lustful thoughts assail your mind
To play with immorality,
Remember that God’s will for you
Is holiness and purity. —Sper

A look that lingers can lead to lust.

The cartoon depicted a frustrated father changing a flat tire in the rain. His two children were peering out the car window. In response to their complaining, he said, "Don't you understand? This is life. This is what's happening. We can't switch to another channel!" Television and reality—does the former distort the latter? After 10 years of research, media analyst Kenneth Curtis measured TV's impact on society. He concluded that the omnipresent, flickering screen constantly tries to tell us what behavior and attitudes are desirable. He described the effect of TV as a subtle process that has become a significant force in defining reality. If this is true, we had better be careful about what we watch. The networks are not committed to portraying Christian values. Many things that are presented as acceptable are in fact dangerous. Furthermore, watching TV makes us passive observers rather than active participants in solving life's problems. The violence, sex, and materialism on TV can make us insensitive to our calling as Christians to be salt and light in a sinful world. Only as we meditate on God's Word (Psalm 1:2) can we have the right perspective. To avoid a distorted view of life, we must allow God's truth to define reality. —MRD II

Our thoughts are shaped by what we see,

And thoughts affect our soul;

So if we'd profit from TV,

We must be in control.

—DJD

The Bible is the best TV guide.

Job 31:35 A Way Of Loving

READ: Job 16:1-6

Oh, that I had one to hear me! --Job 31:35

In her book *Listening To Others*, Joyce Huggett relates her experiences of listening to suffering people. She says they often raved about all she had done for them. "On many occasions," she writes, "I had not 'done' anything. I had 'just listened.' I quickly came to the conclusion that 'just listening' was indeed an effective way of helping others."

This was the help that Job's wordy, preachy friends failed to give him. He complained that they were "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2) and was so distraught that he even accused God of not listening. He cried out, "Oh, that I had one to hear me!" (Job 31:35).

What does active listening accomplish? Listening is a way of loving others. It says, "I want to understand and know you." It comforts the brokenhearted, builds relationships, and encourages faith in God. Listening is also a means of learning the facts. Solomon, in Proverbs 18:13, warned that it is folly to answer a matter before hearing it.

Most of all, listening to others should reflect our attentiveness toward God and His Word. He has so much He wants to teach us and tell us. As you take a moment of stillness today and give Him a listening ear, you'll be better able to listen to the hurting people around you. — Joanie Yoder

A caring heart, a listening ear,
A thoughtful word, a loving tear
Will help to lift the heavy load
Of hurting people on life's road.
--DJD

**You can win more friends with your ears
than with your mouth.**

Job 31:6-8,33-35 WHEN THE HEAVENS SEEM AS BRASS

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Job was an unusual man. He had done many noble deeds. He was outstanding in many ways. He was the kind of man who, once he humbled himself before God, could be trusted with more responsibility.

The Scriptures say that the person who is faithful in little things will also be faithful in great things (see Matt. 25:23; Luke 16:10). Job's pride, however, was still keeping him from enjoying the best that God offered.

It was no light decision for Job to ask God to weigh him in the balances. Job was a chaste man, God-fearing, kind and sincere. He was ready to put his signature on the list of his own virtues. And he wanted his Adversary to put his charges down in writing.

Job thought that since he had always pleased God before, everything was all right. He was worthy of the best God could give him. This was his personal evaluation, however.

In and of himself, no one is ever worthy of anything from God. The more we realize our unworthiness, the better position we are in for God to use us. Then we must yield ourselves to Him to do with us and through us what He pleases.

"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12).

Job 31:24–25, 28 Trusting in Your Treasures

Woodrow Kroll

"If I have made gold my hope, or said to fine gold, 'You are my confidence'; if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gained much; ... this also would be an iniquity worthy of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above."

Dr. Howard Hendricks, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, shared how he and his wife, Jeanne, dined with a very rich man from a blue-blooded Boston family. During the course of the dinner, Dr. Hendricks asked him, "How in the world did you grow up in the midst of such wealth and not be consumed by materialism?" The man replied, "My parents taught us that everything in our home was either an idol or a tool."

Before the Sabeans raided his oxen and donkeys, the Chaldeans stole his camels and fire from heaven burned up his sheep, Job had been a very wealthy man, but he was also wise enough to know that these were not the things in which he should place his trust. In fact, had he done so, he would have been worthy of all the affliction he experienced. It would have made him guilty of denying God the most important place in his life.

Wealth is not wrong, but how we view our possessions can be very wrong. Christians must realize that everything we have is a gift from the Lord. When what we have received becomes more important than the One who gave it, we have fallen into the trap of

idolatry. We are putting possessions ahead of the Lord. Our security then rests not in whom we belong to but in what belongs to us.

You may not consider yourself wealthy. Most people don't. But whether you have a lot or a little, your attitude toward what you do possess may be causing you to stumble. Examine your heart. Are your possessions a tool to be used for God's glory or an idol in which you trust?

Honor the Giver more than the gift.

Job 32:8

There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth understanding. (r. v.)

Elihu had waited whilst the three elder men said all that was in their hearts. He now excuses his youth and demands audience, because so conscious that the breath of inspiration had entered his soul. Wisdom is not with age; but wherever the heart is freely open to God, He will make it wise. We have received not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know.

George Fox tells us that though he read the Scriptures which spoke of Christ and of God, yet he knew Him not till He who had the key did open. "Then the Lord gently led me along and let me see His love, which was endless and eternal, surpassing all the knowledge that men have in the natural state, or can get by history or books. I had not fellowship with any people, priests or professors, but with Christ, who hath the key, and opened the door of life and light unto me. His one message was the necessity of the Inner Light, the inward witness of the Spirit, His secret revelations of truth to the soul."

This distinction needs to be deeply pondered. We have been trying to know God by the intellect, by reading the Bible intellectually, by endeavoring to apprehend human systems. There is, however, a deeper and truer method. "There is a spirit in man!" Open your spirit to the Divine Spirit as you open a window to the sunny air. Instantly God enters and fills. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit. The inbreathed life of God gives us light. We know by intuition, by fellowship with God, by direct vision, what the wise of this world could never discover.

Job 32:9 No Guarantees

Woodrow Kroll

"Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice."

When we buy a product, especially an expensive item such as an automobile or a computer, we want to know what guarantees come with it. What does the company that made the item promise to do for the one who bought it? If it ceases to function six months after we purchase it, will the manufacturer guarantee to replace it at no cost to the buyer? What if we're simply not satisfied with the way it works? Can it be returned? Next to the price, the guarantees that come with a product can be the most influential selling point.

The fourth friend of Job, Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, made a valid observation. The youngest of those seeking to help Job during his time of trouble, he declared that there are no guarantees in life. As he considered the advice given by his more esteemed colleagues, it was obvious to him that they were off base. He realized that their reputed greatness didn't guarantee their wisdom, nor did the fact that they were older than he mean that they understood justice. Nothing about life is guaranteed.

Yet for those who have placed their faith in Christ, life is not that gloomy. It is still true that following certain practices will not guarantee a particular result. Godly parents have raised prodigal children. Committed Christians have contracted incurable diseases. Devout believers have lost all their possessions. But God does make this guarantee—eventually everything will turn out all right. He promises, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). That's the best guarantee of all.

Face it—you have no guarantees in life. But God is able to massage your life and make it fit into His guarantee. Whatever happens to you, God guarantees He will use it for your good.

What life lacks, God supplies.

Job 33:23

If there be with him a messenger, an interpreter.

God is greater than man, and by His love seeks to hold man back from his purpose. Sometimes He comes in the visions of the night; some times in pain and sickness. But we are too dull to understand the inner reason of God's endeavors to deliver us from the brink of destruction, and therefore we need an interpreter, one among a thousand, to explain the meaning of His dealings, and to show us the way in which we should amend our ways. How often has the sick visitor, the minister, the friend, interpreted God's purpose,

enabling us to see light in His light. There are few higher offices in this world than to act in this way between God and our fellows.

To perform this function, however, we need to understand two languages; the one of the throne, obtained from deep and intimate converse with our Father, while the other is man's native language of pain and sorrow. Each must be spoken perfectly before we can interpret:—

“And to the height of this great argument

Assert eternal Providence,

And justify the ways of God to man.”

But, as Bunyan truly says, the best Interpreter is the Holy Spirit. As soon as the Pilgrim has passed the Wicket-gate, he is conducted through the Interpreter's House by the Interpreter Himself. Are you perplexed as to the meaning of God's Word, the dealings of God's providence, the mystery of God's moral government? Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through chamber after chamber, unfolding to you the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They are for babes — for the childlike and pure in heart. He will show you wondrous things out of His law.

Job 33:4 Breath Of Life

The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. —Job 33:4

In his book *Life After Heart Surgery*, David Burke recalls his close brush with death. Lying in his hospital bed after a second open-heart surgery, he found himself in incredible pain, unable to draw a full breath. Feeling that he was slipping toward eternity, he prayed one last time, trusting God and thanking Him for forgiveness of his sin.

David was thinking about seeing his dad, who had died several years earlier, when his nurse asked how he was feeling. He replied, “I'm okay now,” explaining he was ready to go to heaven and meet God. “Not on my shift, buddy!” she said. Soon the doctors were opening his chest again and removing two liters of fluid. That done, David began to recover.

It's not unusual for any of us to ponder what it will be like when we face our final moments on earth. But those who “die in the Lord” have the certainty that they are “blessed” (Rev. 14:13) and that their death is “precious in the sight of the Lord” (Ps. 116:15).

God fashioned our days even before we existed (Ps. 139:16), and we exist now only because “the breath of the Almighty gives [us] life” (Job 33:4). Though we don't know how many breaths we have left—we can rest in the knowledge that He does.

God holds our future in His hands

And gives us every breath;

Just knowing that He's by our side

Allays our fear of death. —Sper

From our first breath to our last, we are in God's care.

Job 33:1-12 GOD IS GREATER THAN MAN

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Elihu's first thought in approaching Job and his problem was to make very clear that God is greater than man. This is a fact that we must clearly understand if we are to have the right answers in our times of trouble.

Elihu uncovered Job's faults without stirring up his opposition. This is an art that the Spirit of God imparts if we allow Him to take charge of our helping others. Nothing wounds an upright person as much as unfounded suspicion and any charges that may grow out of it.

Bible-believing churches and pastors could well apply this principle of pointing out faults without offending. We need to be careful that we do not let a carnal spirit divide us and hurt us so the Lord finds it difficult to use us.

Job's problem was pride, self-will and doubting God's goodness. This is what Elihu brought to Job's attention.

He told Job this was not right and then emphasized the fact that God is greater than man. For this reason man has no right or authority to ask God for an explanation of His actions.

God does things that are incomprehensible to us. He is infinite and we are finite. He is the Creator and we are the creatures. His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts (Isa. 55:9).

We must clearly understand this fact if we are going to have any peace of mind with regard to the everyday happenings of life and God's control over this universe.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

Job 34:29 He giveth quietness.

Quietness amid the accusations of Satan. — The great accuser points to the stains of our past lives, by which we have defiled our robes and those of others; he says that we shall fall again and again; he imputes evil motives to our holiest actions, and detects flaws in our most sacred services; he raises so great a hubbub that we can hardly hear another voice within our souls. Then the great Intercessor arises and saith, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; I have loved with an everlasting love, I have paid the ransom." So "He giveth quietness."

Quietness amid the dash of the storm. — We sail the lake with Him still, and as we reach its middle waters, far from land, under, midnight skies, suddenly a great storm sweeps down. Earth and hell seem arrayed against us, and each billow threatens to overwhelm. Then He arises from His sleep, and rebukes the winds and the waves; His hand waves benediction and repose over the rage of the tempestuous elements. His voice is heard above the scream of the wind in the cord age and the conflict of the billows. Peace, be still! Can you not hear it? And there is instantly a great calm. "He giveth quietness."

Quietness amid the loss of inward consolations. — He sometimes withdraws these, because we make too much of them. We are tempted to look at our joy, our ecstasies, our transports, or our visions, with too great complacency. Then love, for love's sake, withdraws them. But, by His grace, He leads us to distinguish between them and Himself. He draws nigh, and whispers the assurance of His presence. Thus an infinite calm comes to keep our heart and mind. "He giveth quietness."

Job 34:10 Don't Blame God

Woodrow Kroll

"Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity."

Scripture: James 1:17 Job 34:10

A man was handing out business cards that read, "Federman and Coe, Merchants." When asked about his partner the man admitted there was no such person. "Then why do you have the name on your card?" someone wanted to know. "Well, you see," the man replied, "if something goes wrong I just blame it on Coe. That way I get out of trouble easily."

Three of Job's friends were suggesting the same. As they saw it, God was responsible for all the evil that had befallen Job. Even though they suspected some hidden sin in Job's life, his troubles still came down to a smear on God's character. But Elihu, Job's fourth friend, objected to such a charge. God does not commit wickedness, even if some might consider it justified. Admittedly, we have the benefit of seeing behind the scenes and knowing that it was Satan who committed these acts of iniquity. But Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar could have realized the same if they had truly understood God's nature.

Christians are good at blaming God when things go wrong. If a child dies, it's God's fault. If the house burns down, it's God's fault. Such accusations cannot be true. God permits bad things to happen, but He doesn't cause them. Sometimes things happen because of our own carelessness or sinfulness. Other times they happen because of the forces of evil in the world. But God is not to blame. James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). We may not understand much about God, but there is one thing we can know for certain: There is no "dark side" to God.

Don't blame the Lord for your troubles. They come as a result of sin in this world. Confess to God any anger or bitterness you might feel for what you've experienced in life. Then ask Jesus to heal your wounds and make you whole.

God permits, but He never commits.

Job 34:21–22 No Place to Hide

Woodrow Kroll

"For His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of

iniquity may hide themselves."

Have you noticed that when people try to hide from trouble they rarely succeed? A true story relates that a retired couple was alarmed by the threat of nuclear war, so they undertook a serious study of all the inhabited places on the globe. Their goal was to determine what geographical location would be least likely affected by a nuclear war. They studied books and traveled the world and finally found the place. That Christmas they sent their pastor a card from their new home on the Falkland Islands. Shortly afterwards, however, their "paradise" was turned into a war zone by Great Britain and Argentina. Even though they had tried to hide from trouble, trouble had found them.

Elihu, Job's youngest friend, made this same observation about God. No one can hide from Him. His all-seeing eyes observe man's every step. Although Elihu was wrong in his assumption that Job had some hidden sin in his life, he was right to claim that nothing could be concealed from God's sight. Had Job truly been a worker of iniquity, God would have known it.

Sometimes we feel frustrated because many evildoers are able to cover their wickedness so cleverly that they never can be brought to trial. Other times they simply disappear with their ill-gotten gains and no one can find them. But no one escapes the watchful eye of God. He knows what they've done and where they can be found. When the time is right, God will make sure justice is done.

If you are the victim of a miscarriage of justice or know some guilty person who has disguised his wrongdoing, be encouraged. No one can hide from the Lord. The most clever criminal can never conceal his deeds or himself from the watchful eyes of God. God observes all that we do, and He is a just Judge.

Justice is blind, but God isn't.

Job 34:21 "That Ain't It!"

READ: Isaiah 55:6-9

His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps. —Job 34:21

Visiting Alaska for the first time, I was excited that we were staying at the Mt. McKinley Lodge. As we were checking in, I caught a glimpse of a mass of rock through a large picture window, and I hurried out to the deck facing the mountain.

"Wow," I murmured softly as I took in the view.

A man standing a few feet away said, "Uh, ... that ain't it!"

As I discovered that day, visitors to Alaska often miss seeing all of "The Great One." Standing at 20,320 feet, the mountain is so tall that most of it is hidden on cloudy days. I was seeing only a part of the whole.

Often we're satisfied with our limited view of life. But Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us, "'I know the thoughts that I think toward you,' says the Lord, 'thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.'" With God's omniscient, panoramic view, He sees the people He wants us to help, the things He wants us to accomplish, the character traits He wants to develop in us.

Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." Our view of life is restricted by our humanness, but we can trust ourselves to the One who has an unlimited view! — Cindy Hess Kasper

There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim,
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him. —Overton

We see in part; God sees the whole.

Job 35:10

None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?

Do you have sleepless nights, tossing on the hot pillow, and watching for the first glint of dawn? Ask the Divine Spirit to enable you to fix your thoughts on God, your Maker, and believe that He can fill those lonely, dreary hours with song.

Is yours the night of doubt? — A holy man tells us that once as he was sitting by the fire, a great cloud came over him, and a temptation beset him to think that all things came by nature; and as he sat still under it, and let it alone, a living hope arose in him, and a true voice said, "There is a living God who made all things." And immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all. His heart was glad, and he praised the living God. Was not this a song in the night?

Is yours the night of bereavement? — Is it not often to such God draws near, and assures the mourner that the Lord had need of its beloved, and called “the eager, earnest spirit to stand in the bright throng of the invisible, liberated, radiant, active, intent on some high mission”; and as the thought enters, is there not the beginning of a song?

Is yours the night of discouragement and fancied or actual failure? — No one understands you, your friends reproach; but your Maker draws nigh, and gives you a song—the song of hope, the song which is harmonious with the strong, deep music of His providence. Be ready to sing the songs that your Maker gives.

“What then? Shall we sit idly down and say ‘The night hath come; it is no longer day’? ... Yet as the evening twilight fades away, The sky is filled with stars, invisible to day.”

Job 35:10 Singing At Night

READ: Psalm 20:1-9

God my Maker ... gives songs in the night. --Job 35:10

There are two little birds that are beautiful pictures of the spirit of song. The one is the skylark. It awakens early in the morning and greets the rising monarch of the day with music. Its whole being seems to burst forth in song.

The other bird is the nightingale. This dark-colored little bird hides away in the bushes and doesn't sing much in the daytime. But when evening comes, it trills forth with its beautiful, tender, moving night song.

In the spiritual realm, as in the world of nature, the singers of the day are more numerous than the singers of the night. But surely we can glorify God the most by singing in spite of the dark.

It is not hard to praise the Lord when everything is going well, when we have our health, when the family is happy, and when we have a good job. But what happens when trials come? When our health is gone, our money is spent, relationships are broken, or tragedy strikes, the reality of our faith is tested. Only those who are wholeheartedly committed to Christ can have a song in the night.

Some of the sweetest Christians I have ever met were God's patient sufferers on their beds or in their wheelchairs who had learned to sing in the dark. — M.R. De Haan

When the shadows are long He will give me a song
As when skies are blue and bright;
For each step of the way, each hour of the day,
And songs in the deepest night. --Grimes

**If you keep in tune with Christ,
you can sing even in the dark.**

Job 35:10 Midnight Melodies

READ: Psalm 42:1-11

God my Maker ... gives songs in the night. --Job 35:10

For most of his adult life, German composer Ludwig van Beethoven lived in fear of deafness. You can imagine how he felt when his fear became a reality. His hearing gradually faded to the point where he could communicate only by means of writing.

To everyone's amazement, it was after Beethoven lost his hearing that he wrote some of his greatest masterpieces. Shut out from the distractions of the world, new melodies and harmonies flooded in upon him as fast as his pen could write. His deafness had become a blessing.

So too, children of God often find new joy in their night of sorrow and unexpected grace in their time of need. When God shuts us away from the things of this world, we may expect to hear more perfectly the matchless harmonies of heaven.

Even if all were shrouded in darkness, by His grace we would find that we could still rejoice in the God of our salvation. We need not despair, for He is "a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). The psalmist also wrote, "In the night His song shall be with me" (Ps 42:8).

It is our Maker who "gives songs in the night" (Job 35:10). If we wait on Him for the music, we'll find there is never a song so sweet as His "midnight melodies." — Henry G. Bosch

When the clouds of affliction have gathered
And hidden each star from my sight,
I know if I turn to my Father,
Sweetest songs He will give in the night. --Montgomery

**When you turn your care into prayer,
God turns midnight into music.**

Job 36:5

Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any.

What entrancing assurances are contained in this and the preceding sentence! To think that in all our wayfarings through this world One that is perfect in knowledge is always with us, and One that is mighty is pledged to bring us through! Nothing could be desired beside. This makes prayer new. It is a child's confidential whisper to the One who is attent to the lowest murmur, who cannot forget, who will not relinquish a purpose which He has formed though years pass, and who is able to do exceeding abundantly.

It is because God is so great that He despises none. If He were less than infinite, He might overlook. The boundlessness of His being has no ebb, fails of no soul He has made, and is as much at any one point as if He had no care or thought beside. In fact, those that man despises stand the best chance with God. Just because no one else cares for them, He must; just because no one else will help them, He will. This is necessary to His nature.

When a philanthropist adopts a certain lapsed section of the community, he does so because no one else will. It becomes a matter of honor with him that none of these, outcast by all else, should miss his help. And God has constituted Himself Champion, Guardian, and Savior, of all who have no help from their fellows. Friendless, forlorn, helpless, despised, He recognizes and meets the claim of their urgent necessity. Bruised reeds, bits of smoking tow, half-consumed firebrands, lost sheep, prodigal sons, waifs and strays, homeless, destitute, neglected-these have a first claim on the Almightiness of the living God.

Job 36:26 The Wonder Of Nature

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. —Job 42:5

Growing up around the woods and waters of Midwest America, I've been fascinated with natural wildlife native to our region. But on a recent trip to the California coast, I found myself staring in breathtaking wonder at snorting elephant seals, barking sea lions, and a forest of silent redwoods. I watched pelicans soar in formation, and I saw migrating whales spouting in the distance. Together they are just a sampling of the millions of species that make up the intricate and delicate balance of nature.

According to the Bible, the variety of the natural world is designed to do far more than inspire childlike wonder. The mysteries of nature can help us come to terms with a God who allows inexpressible, unexplainable pain and suffering.

We see this in the epic story of Job. While he was suffering, Job didn't know that God had such a high regard for him that he allowed Satan to test his faith with a series of losses.

What emerges is this eventual, unavoidable conclusion: A Creator who has the wisdom and power to design the wonders of nature is great enough to be trusted with pain and suffering that are beyond our ability to understand. In awe, Job proclaimed, "I know that You can do everything" (Job 42:2). We can trust that kind of God—no matter what.

If God's creation helps us see

What wonders He can do,

Then we can trust His promises

For they are always true. —D. De Haan

It's good to worship God in nature if it leads us to worship the God of nature.

Job 37:1-16 Consider the Clouds

One day many years ago my boys and I were lying on our backs in the yard watching the clouds drift by. "Dad," one asked, "why do clouds float?" "Well, son," I began, intending to give him the benefit of my vast knowledge, but then I lapsed into silence. "I don't know," I admitted, "but I'll find out for you."

The answer, I discovered, is that condensed moisture, descending by gravity, meets warmer temperatures rising from the land. That

moisture then changes into vapor and ascends back into the air. That's a natural explanation for the phenomenon.

But natural explanations are not final answers. Clouds float because God in His wisdom has ordered the natural laws in such a way that they reveal the "wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16). Clouds then can be thought of as a symbol—an outward and visible sign of God's goodness and grace in creation.

So someday when you're taking some time to see what images you can imagine in the clouds, remember this: The One who made all things beautiful makes the clouds float through the air. He does so to call us to wonder and adoration. The heavens—even the cumulus, stratus, and cirrus clouds—declare the glory of God.—September 7, 2012 — by David H. Roper

The Lord's creation you'll adore
As you observe each day unfold;
Let your imagination soar
As you His handiwork behold.
—Branon

**Creation is filled with signs
that point to the Creator.**

Job 37:14-19 Earthworms And Fruit

READ: Job 37:14-19

Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused. —1 Timothy 4:4

Have you ever wondered why God made a particular creature, like mosquitos or snakes? I've often wondered about earthworms. Why did God form such creepy crawlers?

Actually, worms have an indispensable function to fulfill. Amy Stuart, in her book *The Earth Moved: On The Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms* tells us that in an average acre of ground there are countless earthworms continually breaking up the soil. Their silent and invisible activity is absolutely essential—no worms, no vegetation.

What, then, can we learn from earthworms? Not only in nature but also in our lives there are invisible forces at work. There is the silent and unseen work of prayer by those who are concerned about our well-being. There is the work of our own spiritual discipline, as we pray and meditate on God's Word. And there is the vital work of the Holy Spirit, breaking up the clogged soil of our souls and producing in us the Christlike fruit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering ..." (Galatians 5:22-23).

In our lives and in our world, God has ordained unseen influences that bear fruit. Whether it's the lowly earthworm or the crown of God's creation—the human race—there is so much more at work than meets the eye. — Vernon C. Grounds

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all. —Alexander

God's unseen work in our hearts produces fruit in our lives.

Job 37:21

Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds.

The world owes much of its beauty to cloudland. The unchanging blue of the Italian sky hardly compensates for the changefulness and glory of the clouds. Clouds also are the cisterns of the rain. Earth would become a wilderness apart from their ministry. There are clouds in human life, shadowing, refreshing, and sometimes draping it in blackness of night; but there is never a cloud without its bright light. "I do set my bow in the cloud!"

If only we could see the clouds from the other side where they lie in billowy glory, bathed in the light they intercept, like heaped ranges of Alps, we should be amazed at their splendid magnificence. We look at their under side; but who shall describe the bright light that bathes their summits, and searches their valleys, and is reflected from every pinnacle of their expanse? Is not every drop drinking in health-giving qualities, which it will carry to the earth?

O child of God! If you could see your sorrows and troubles from the other side; if instead of looking up at them from earth, you would look down on them from the heavenly places where you sit with Christ; if you knew how they are reflecting in prismatic beauty before

the gaze of heaven, the bright light of Christ's face — you would be content that they should cast their deep shadows over the mountain slopes of existence. Only remember that clouds are always moving, and passing before God's cleansing wind.

"Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen; Bright skies will soon be o'er me, where the dark clouds have been: My hope I cannot measure, my path of life is free; My Savior hath my treasure, and He will walk with me."

Job 37:1-18 "Light" Of Creation

[God] does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. —Job 5:9

Among the wonders of Jamaica is a body of water called Luminous Lagoon. By day, it is a nondescript bay on the country's northern coast. By night, it is a marvel of nature.

If you visit there after dark, you notice that the water is filled with millions of phosphorescent organisms. Whenever there is movement, the water and the creatures in the bay glow. When fish swim past your boat, for example, they light up like waterborne fireflies. As the boat glides through the water, the wake shines brightly.

The wonder of God's creation leaves us speechless, and this is just a small part of the total mystery package of God's awesome handiwork as spelled out in Job 37 and 38. Listen to what the Lord's role is in nature's majesty: "Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes His lightning flash?" (37:15 niv); "What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?" (38:19 niv). God's majestic creations—whether dazzling lightning or glowing fish—are mysteries to us. But as God reminded Job, all of the wonders of our world are His creative handiwork.

When we observe God's amazing creation, our only response can be that of Job: These are "things too wonderful for me" (42:3).

All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small, All things wise and wonderful; The Lord God made them all. — Alexander

When we cease to wonder, we cease to worship.

Job 37:23 God In The Storm

He is excellent in power. —Job 37:23

Early one morning the wind began to blow and raindrops hit my house like small stones. I peered outside at the yellow-gray sky and watched as trees thrashed in the wind. Veins of lightning lit the sky accompanied by bone-rattling thunder. The power blinked on and off, and I wondered how long the bad weather would continue.

After the storm passed, I opened my Bible to begin my day with reading Scripture. I read a passage in Job that compared the Lord's power to the atmospheric muscle of a storm. Job's friend, Elihu said, "God thunders marvelously with His voice" (37:5). And, "He covers His hands with lightning, and commands it to strike" (36:32). Indeed, God is "excellent in power" (37:23).

Compared to God, we humans are feeble. We're unable to help ourselves spiritually, heal our hearts, or fix the injustice we often endure. Fortunately, the God of the storm cares about weaklings like us; He "remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). What's more, God "gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength" (Isa. 40:29). Because God is strong, He can help us in our weakness.

I sing the mighty power of God

That made the mountains rise,

That spread the flowing seas abroad

And built the lofty skies. —Watts

God is the source of our strength.

Job 37:23–24 No Partiality

Woodrow Kroll

James 2:1-4 Job 36:18-19 Job 37:23-24

"As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, in judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress. Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart."

Gandhi says in his autobiography that in his student days he was truly interested in the Bible. Deeply touched by reading the Gospels, he seriously considered becoming a convert, since Christianity seemed to offer the real solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India. One Sunday he went to a nearby church. He decided to see the minister and ask for instruction in the way of salvation and enlightenment on other doctrines. But when he entered the sanctuary, the ushers refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go worship with his own people. Gandhi left and never came back. If Christians have caste differences also, he said to himself, I might as well remain a Hindu. The partiality showed by those Christians had a devastating effect on India and the world.

Elihu implied that Job may have set himself apart as something special because of his wealth, perhaps even thinking he could buy his way out of affliction (Job 36:18–19). While this was not a correct assessment of Job's character, Elihu made a valid point: God shows no partiality. God doesn't care about a person's wealth, social status or skin color, but only about his heart. God accepts all those who are "wise in heart."

Christians have fallen into the trap of partiality almost from the beginning. James warned his readers about showing favoritism to the wealthy (James 2:1–4). Other Christians have shown partiality based on language, nationality or ethnicity. None of these things, however, are important to God. He looks beneath such surface issues and considers what a person is on the inside.

If you find yourself hung up on a person's economic status or skin color, ask God to help you see past these superficial matters. Seek to know others as God does—by their heart.

Have no part in partiality.

Job 38:31

Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades? (r. v.)

The seven stars of the Pleiades always stand for the sweet influences of spring; Orion for the storm and tempest. In this sublime catechism, Jehovah asks Job if he has any control over the one or the other. As it is with the year, so with our life.

There are times when the Pleiades are in the ascendant. The winter is over and gone, the time of the singing of birds is come. Doves coo their love notes in the trees, and the flowers gem the soil. Days of hope, of radiant light, of ecstatic joy! Days in which God seems to be making a new heaven and a new earth within us! Days when our Beloved shows Himself through the lattice-work, and says, "Come, my beloved!" Oh, tender influences of the Pleiades, we would that ye might ever stay, filling us with immortal youth! When God bids them shine, no one can bind them. When He gives joy, none can give sorrow. No mortal man can restrain the outburst of Nature's spring. You might as well stay the resurrection of the Son of God and His saints!

But Orion has his work as well. Storms come; the drenching rain veils the landscape; the mighty billows are lashed to fury. But all works for good. The blast in the forest snaps off dead wood. The rain fills up the wells. Frost pulverizes the earth. When God binds Orion, man cannot unloose him; "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But when the Almighty Unlooses Orion, like another Samson, he does his work of devastation, before which we must find refuge in the cleft of the Rock.

"God sendeth sun,

He sendeth shower,

Alike they're needful for the flower."

Job 38:1 Out of the Whirlwind

Woodrow Kroll

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind."

Scripture: 100:78 Job 42:3 Job 38:1

Violent storms are one of the most destructive forces that nature can unleash upon mankind. Living in Nebraska, I've noticed that there is rarely a spring night during which some part of the state isn't pounded by tornadoes or torrential rainfalls. Unfortunately, these outbreaks of nature are usually accompanied by a great deal of property damage, sometimes even loss of life. Whirlwinds are definitely forces to be reckoned with.

But the whirlwind that Job encountered was more than a product of nature. It was a divine messenger from the Lord. God used one of nature's most awesome expressions of power to confront Job with his own frailty and weakness. The whirlwind brought Job face to face with his lack of understanding of God. Obviously his friends had misunderstood the nature of God as well, but Job was not

entirely innocent either. After he experienced the violence of this whirling windstorm, he was brought to a fresh realization that God was far greater than he could comprehend. With his ignorance revealed, Job confessed, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3).

In the midst of our distress, it is common to find fault with God. We think, Surely God must have made a mistake for this to be happening to me. But such thinking is foolishness. With our limited understanding of what is truly happening both on earth and in heaven, we are arrogant to think that we are in a position to judge God's actions. We are dealing with issues that are far beyond our understanding. In fact, even if God were to explain them, we wouldn't be able to fully grasp them.

God is not committed to give you answers, but He is committed to bring you comfort. Avail yourself of what God offers—His presence in the midst of tribulation—and leave the rest up to someone far wiser than yourself.

Answers don't always comfort, but God does.

Job 38:1-11,31-33 Star Power

Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth? —Job 38:33

For all of us who, like Job, have suffered through tragedy and then dared to aim our questions at God, chapter 38 of Job's book should give us plenty to think about. Imagine what it must have felt like for the great man of the East when "out of the whirlwind" he heard God say, "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me" (vv.1-3). Gulp!

Job must have felt as puny as an ant. As God unveiled His questions in the verses that follow, what He said was as unexpected as it was powerful. He didn't really answer Job's "why" questions. Instead, God seemed to be telling him to notice the power and might with which He created this world and to observe His ability to control every element of it. Isn't that reason enough to trust God? Job should have been asking himself.

As one example of His awesome power, God pointed to the sky and told Job to observe two of His awe-inspiring creations: Pleiades and Orion (v.31). Highlighting His grandeur and man's relative insignificance, God mentioned two constellations that demonstrate power beyond our understanding.

This is Someone we can trust. If He has the stars in His hands, surely He can take care of us as well.

Creator of the universe

Who reigns in awesome majesty:

How can it be You love and care

For such a one as me? —Sper

He who holds the stars in space holds His people in His hands.

Job 38:1-7 Space Music

Who laid [earth's] cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? —Job 38:6-7

One of NASA's observatories has discovered a giant black hole that hums. Located in the Perseus cluster of galaxies about 250 million light years from Earth, the black hole vibrates at the frequency of a B flat. But it is too low a pitch to be picked up by the human ear. Scientific instruments have placed the note at 57 octaves below middle C on a piano.

The idea of music and heavenly bodies is not new. In fact, when God revealed Himself to Job, He asked: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4,7). We are told that at the creation of our marvelous universe, songs of praise and shouts of joy resounded to God's glory.

A wonderful hymn by St. Francis of Assisi captures the awe and worship we feel when beholding the radiant sun by day or the star-studded sky at night.

All creatures of our God and King,

Lift up your voice and with us sing Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam,

Thou silver moon with softer gleam:

O praise Him, O praise Him!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

(trans. by William H. Draper. © 1968 Singspiration)

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

Let's praise the One who made such beauty for us to enjoy!

The beauty of creation gives us reasons to sing God's praise.

Job 38:4

April 12 - GOD'S CHALLENGE TO MAN

Our Daily Walk

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding."-- Job 38:4.

IN This mighty chapter, God seems to draw near to the perplexed and stricken soul, who sits brooding over the problems of human life, and points out that mysteries equally insoluble are above his head and under his feet; that he lives and moves amongst them. Man frets and despairs over a mystery forced upon him by sorrow and loss. He cannot interpret it, and is shaken to the heart; but the whole universe teems with mystery. Man cannot explain the creation of the world, the separation of sky and earth, the reflex influences of the one on the other. Light and darkness, wind and rain, snow and ice, storm and sunshine; the instincts of the animal creation these defy man's absolute understanding.

But who frets at the inscrutable mystery which enshrouds these natural phenomena! We use all of them, and make them serve our purpose.

We cannot be surprised, therefore, if we discover similar mysteries in God's dealings with ourselves. He does not answer our questions by always telling us His secret reasonings. His thoughts and ways are as much higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, and we could not more understand His reasons than tiny children can the mysteries of human life. But behind all mystery the Father's heart is beating, and a Father's voice is pleading, that we should trust Him. Little children, you cannot understand, but you are infinitely dear to Me; I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; "what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Trust me, and "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER- O God, there are so many mysteries in the world, and in human life, and our eyes grow tired with straining into the darkness. Help us to believe in Thy unchanging love, and to trust where we cannot see or understand. AMEN.

Job 38:1-11 WHEN GOD SPEAKS

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

God spoke to Job out of a whirlwind at this point, and what He said had an immediate effect. God's voice made Job conscious of the presence of God, whom he had not seen and said he could not find.

Before this the discussion had been about God as if He were absent. Now Job was suddenly made aware of His nearness.

When a person suddenly realizes he is in God's presence, his life can be profoundly affected. At one time Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

He realized that since he was in the presence of the Lord Jesus, he was in the presence of God.

God did not immediately restore Job's health or possessions. He did not even argue with Job. Why should He? Instead, He asked Job a series of questions that were designed to bring him to proper thinking and believing.

Job had shown some arrogance; he needed to be humbled. In this God used irony to good effect. He did not use sarcasm, for His purpose was not to humiliate Job but to humble him.

It is one thing to be brought to the place where we recognize we are nothing; it is quite another to be humiliated--so bullied or made fun of or made to look cheap that we inwardly cringe at the treatment we receive.

People can easily humiliate each other, but that is not the way God works.

"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1,2, NASB).

Job 38:1-11 Asking Different Questions

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? —Job 38:4

When tragedy strikes, questions follow. Our loss of a loved one may lead us to ask God any number of pointed questions: "Why did You let this happen?" "Whose fault was this?" "Don't You care about my pain?" Believe me, as the grieving father of a teenager who died tragically I have asked these very questions.

The book of Job records the questions Job asks as he sits down with friends to lament his suffering. He had lost his family as well as his health and possessions. At one point, he asks, "Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul?" (3:20). Later, he asks, "What strength do I have, that I should hope?" (6:11). And, "Does it seem good to You that You should oppress?" (10:3). Many have stood near a headstone placed too early and asked similar questions.

But when you read all the way to the end of the book, you get a surprise. When God responds to Job (chs. 38–41), He does it in an unexpected way. He turns the tables and asks Job questions—different questions that show His wisdom and sovereignty. Questions about His magnificent creation—the earth, stars, and sea. And the questions all point to this: God is sovereign. God is all-powerful. God is love. And God knows what He is doing.

We comprehend Him not,

Yet earth and heaven tell,

God sits as sovereign on the throne,

And ruleth all things well. —Gerhardt

Our greatest comfort in sorrow is to know that God is in control.

Job 38:1-11 Wonders Of The Heart

By You I have been upheld from birth. —Psalm 71:6

Our heart beats about 100,000 times every day, pumping blood to every cell in our bodies. This adds up to about 35 million beats a year and 2.5 billion beats in an average lifetime. Medical science tells us that every contraction is similar to the effort it would take for us to hold a tennis ball in our palm and give it a good hard squeeze.

Yet as amazing as our heart is, it is only one example of a natural world that is designed to tell us something about our Creator. This is the idea behind the story of a man named Job.

Broken by a series of mounting troubles, Job felt abandoned. When God finally spoke, He didn't tell Job why he was suffering. Nor did the Creator tell him that someday He would suffer for Job. Instead, He drew Job's attention to a series of natural wonders that are always whispering to us—and sometimes shouting—about a wisdom and power far greater than our own (Job 38:1-11).

So what can we learn from the complexity of this hardworking muscle, the heart? The message may be similar to the sound of waves coming to shore and stars quietly shining in the night sky. The power and wisdom of our Creator give us reason to trust Him.

Lord, we are Yours, You are our God;

We have been made so wondrously;

This human frame in every part

Your wisdom, power, and love we see. —Anon.

When we reflect on the power of God's creation, we see the power of His care for us.

Job 38:4-11 The God Of The Cosmos

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. —Hebrews 11:3

A group of distinguished scientists and theologians gathered in Washington, DC, to participate in the Cosmic Questions Conference.

They discussed issues such as these: "Is there a God?" and "Can we believe that there is purpose and design in the universe?"

Some of the participants answered those questions emphatically, "No!" No God, no design, no purpose. But others, like John Polkinghorne, a British scholar and former president of Queens College at Cambridge, held staunchly to the opposite opinion. A noted physicist, Polkinghorne argued that the answers lie "beyond physics."

Without the Bible, scientists are baffled. They can guess and they can speak dogmatically, but they have no authoritative answers to the cosmic questions. The Bible alone tells us where everything came from, why everything exists, and what lies ahead. As Job learned, it was God who "laid the foundations of the earth" (Job 38:4).

We don't need to listen to the speculations of world-famous thinkers to find answers to the big questions of life. We just need to humbly and reverently study the Word of God. There we will find rest for our mind and peace for our soul.

For Further Study

Where did everything come from? (Gen. 1-2; Job 38:4).

For what purpose does it exist? (Ps. 19:1; 66:1-4).

What lies ahead? (1 Th. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:11-21:4).

When you open your Bible, ask the Author to open your heart.

Job 38:1-7 Celebration Of Creation

READ: Job 38:1-7

By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth. —Colossians 1:16

In *The Magician's Nephew*, one of the books in C. S. Lewis' *Narnia Chronicles*, Digory and Polly use special rings to go into other universes. In one instance, they are transported to a place where they witness the creation of a new world. In the darkness, a beautiful voice sings stars into existence, followed by a newly created sunrise. In the morning light, they see that a mysterious lion is the singer. In response to his voice, grass spreads out like carpet, and trees grow in moments. Then animals begin to form out of the ground. When Narnia's creation is complete, Aslan, its creator, gives the gift of speech to animals and celebrates with his creatures.

Lewis' skillful use of Christian symbolism provides a fresh perspective on the wonder of our own world's beginning. There was a time when our universe did not exist. There was no matter, no energy, and no time. Then the Son of God spoke into being what we now see (John 1:1-3). In response, angelic worship resounded from the heavenly places. The book of Job tells us that at the foundations of the earth "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:4,7).

On a starry night, worship that began with angels should resonate in our own hearts to God's glory. — Dennis Fisher

The God who made the firmament,
Who made the deepest sea,
The God who put the stars in place
Is the God who cares for me. —Berg

**God's work of creating is done;
our work of praising has only begun.**

Job 38:4-13 'Were You There?'

READ: Job 38:4-13

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth. --Job 38:4

What you do with the Bible depends on what you do with the first sentence of Genesis. The Bible opens with a simple statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). If you believe that, you can believe everything else that follows. If you reject that statement, you will also deny every other cardinal truth in the Scriptures.

Joe and Charlie were arguing about Genesis 1:1. Joe said he believed the record of creation just as it was written. Charlie was an unbeliever, and went to great lengths in giving his own theory of how the world began and then how life developed from a primordial cell through reptiles, monkeys, and up to man. When he was all through, Joe looked at him and said, "Were you there, Charlie?" It was a good question. "Of course I wasn't there," he replied. Joe said, "Well, God was. He was the only one there and I'll take the word of the Eyewitness rather than the guesses of those who rely on their own imagination."

In a court of law, eyewitness testimony carries the most weight. Hearsay testimony is thrown out. The same is true of creation. God asked Job the question, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4). God was there, and His Word can be trusted. — M. R. De Haan

I'll trust my all to God alone,
Whose Word is truth and light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight. —Anon.

**You will be able to trust the Bible
when you have come to trust its Author.**

Job 38:4-18 From Mars?

Microbes from Mars fell on the very early Earth ... , and the offspring of those microbes are still here—and they are us." That's how one astronomer speculated about how life originated on Mars and then came to Earth.

Some men and women of science are looking to outer space for the origins of life on earth, not believing the Bible's explanation that God placed mankind, animals, and plant life on earth through special creation. But how did that supposed microbial life start on a hostile planet? The bigger question is this: Why is it so difficult to accept that the earth, uniquely and singularly fitted for life to exist, is where God created and placed living creatures?

As humans struggle to accept a miraculous beginning of life from the breath of God (Gen. 2:7), they choose to trust a miracle of a far different sort—the miracle of life originating from no first cause at all. Perhaps they could follow the advice Job received: "Listen to this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14). And maybe they should try to answer God's question: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (38:4).

Praise God for creating such a wonderful place for us to live! We stand in awe of His marvelous creation. July 28, 2012 — by Dave Branon

Dear Heavenly Father, what an awesome and powerful
God You are! You created life by Your very breath.
We praise You and stand in awe of You.
Thank You for Your creation.

**Only God could create the cosmos
out of nothing.**

Job 38:4-18 I Invented It

Willard S. Boyle, Nobel Prize winner in physics, was the co-inventor of the "electronic eye" behind the digital camera and the Hubble telescope. He was in the market for a new digital camera and visited a store in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The salesman tried to explain the complexity of the camera to Boyle, but stopped because he felt it was too complicated for him to understand. Boyle then bluntly said to the salesman: "No need to explain. I invented it."

After God allowed Satan to test Job by taking away his family, his health, and his possessions (Job 1–2), Job lamented the day of his birth (ch. 3). In the following chapters, Job questioned why God would allow him to endure so much suffering. Then with divine bluntness, God reminded Job that He "invented" life and created the world (chs. 38–41). God invited him to rethink what he had said. In drawing attention to His sovereign power and the depth of His wisdom displayed everywhere on earth (38:4-41), God exposed the immensity of Job's ignorance.

If we're tempted to tell God how life should work, let's remember He invented it! May He help us to humbly acknowledge our ignorance and to rely on Him—the Creator of the universe. December 14, 2012 — by Marvin Williams

Lord, You are so awesome and great. But sometimes in
ignorance and arrogance I attempt to take Your place.
I humbly submit my life to You anew and acknowledge
that all glory and praise belongs to You. Amen.

**To understand God is impossible,
but to worship Him is imperative.**

Job 38:1-15 Why Are We Here?

READ: Job 38:1-15

All things were created by Him and for Him. --Colossians 1:16

Why are we here? Listen to the opinion of Stephen Jay Gould, a Harvard paleontologist who is regarded as an eminent authority on how life began.

Gould says, "We [exist] because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a 'higher' answer--but none exists."

Contrast that godless guesswork with the majestic affirmation of the opening verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

Yes, that's the higher answer! We're here because the Lord Almighty has brought everything into existence by His will and power (Col. 1:16). We're here because a wise, loving Creator wanted us and fashioned us as beings who are able to obey Him, serve Him, trust Him, and love Him.

Which answer do you accept? The answer that we're here because of a series of mindless accidents--the answer that leads to despair? Or do you accept the biblical answer that brings the hope of everlasting love and life? — Vernon C. Grounds

I sing the mighty power of God
That made the mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad
And built the lofty skies. --Watts

The design of creation points to the Master Designer.

Job 38:29 Dangerous Beauty

From whose womb comes the ice? And the frost of heaven, who gives it birth? —Job 38:29

Loud creaking and snapping broke the stillness of the icy morning. Freezing rain had silenced every man-made noisemaker. Power lines were down; homes and businesses had no electricity. Roads were impassable, keeping thousands from daily routines. Nature was calling attention to herself, and she got it. As the sun rose, her stunning beauty was indescribable, her destructive power undeniable.

Ice glistened like crystal against a brilliant blue sky. But the ice that made the branches sparkle in the sunlight also weighed them down, causing them to break under the burden.

The same can happen to those who have glittering lives. They call attention to themselves with stunning beauty, talent, or intelligence. People notice and admire them. But eventually the weight of pride causes people to crack and break. The reality is that God alone is worthy of all praise.

Job's friends called attention to themselves by speaking as if they were experts on suffering. When God had heard enough, He pointed out to Job that no one has knowledge, power, or importance apart from Him. Later, He sharply rebuked Job's friends, and said, "You have not spoken of Me what is right" (Job 42:8).

True worth is in exalting God, not ourselves.— Julie Ackerman Link

Lord, pride, that fearful enemy,
So quickly takes control;
I plead this day Your pardoning grace
Will cleanse my heart and soul. —D. De Haan

The fly that buzzes loudest usually gets swatted first.

Job 38:31-41;42:5-6 How Great Is Our God!

Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion? —Job 38:31

A team of astronomers from the University of Minnesota say they have found a giant hole in the universe. The void they've

discovered is in a region of sky southwest of Orion. The mysterious empty place has no galaxies, stars, or even dark matter. One of the astronomers said that the hole in the heavens is a billion light-years across.

When I try to capture the meaning of such immensity, something happens to me. The fight goes out of me. I don't know what to do with my thoughts. Who can relate to the magnitude of such emptiness?

Then I remember what the Lord did with Job. He drew His suffering servant's attention to the same part of the night sky. Using the region of the constellation Orion along with the wonders of the weather and the natural world, the Lord brought Job to the end of his reasonings and arguments (Job 38:31; 42:5-6).

In the presence of such wonder, I want to join Job in collapsing before the Lord in surrender to His inexpressible power and wisdom. I want to let go of my anxiety, my anger, and my resistance to the mysterious leading of God. I want to claim my only confidence as being in the immeasurable greatness of our God.

For Further Study

To increase your appreciation for the Creator,

read the online resource Celebrating The Wonder

Of Creation at discoveryseries.org/q1108

The wonders of the universe compel us to worship our wonderful God.

Job 39:1 Knowest thou?

The catechism of this chapter is designed to convince man of his ignorance. How little he knows of nature! Even though centuries of investigation and research have passed, there are still many questions which baffle us. And if we know so little of the Creator's handiwork, how much less do we know of Himself, or the principles on which He acts!

The knowledge of God is not intellectual, but moral and spiritual. Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, are made known to Love and Obedience. Let the Love of God be shed through the heart, and the will of God be the ruling principle of life, and there will be given a knowledge of God which the research of the investigator could never gain. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God ... they are spiritually discerned." Knowest thou?

Dost thou know the exceeding greatness of His power, which He wrought in the Resurrection of thy Lord — that it is all around thee waiting to do as much for thee also; lifting thee, dead weight as thou art, to sit in the heavenlies?

Dost thou know the hope of His calling to a life within the veil, with the veil behind thee, and the light of the Shekinah ever on thy face?

Dost thou know the riches of His glorious indwelling, that He is prepared so to infill thee, that thou shalt partake of the very life wherewith He liveth and reigneth evermore?

Dost thou know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the love that passeth knowledge; and Christ Jesus the Lord?

Job 39:19-25 Horse Power

Think for a moment of the power, beauty, and majesty of a galloping horse—his head held high, his mane flying in the wind, and his legs working in unison to provide speed, power, and abandon.

What a wonderful example of God's magnificent creation is the horse! God created it not just for our amazement and enjoyment but also as a complement to the human race (Job 39). Properly trained, the horse is fearless when we need a courageous companion. The horse was used to carry the soldier faithfully into conflict with speed (v.24) and anticipation (v.25).

Although God was using creation to teach Job about His sovereignty, we can also be reminded through this passage about our own value in God's world. We are created not simply as a beautiful creature with a job to do but also as a creature made in God's image. The power of the horse is amazing, but the value of each human transcends all other creatures.

God created us uniquely to have a relationship with Him and to live with Him forever. While we praise God for the magnificence of the creatures of nature, we also stand in awe that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14).

Thank You, our Almighty God and Father, for Your

creation. You have provided so many majestic
creatures for us to enjoy, but help us to recognize
with thankfulness the special place we have in creation.

Of all God's creation, only humans can experience re-creation.

Job 40:2 Who Calls The Game?

Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? —Job 40:2

During an afternoon baseball game when American League umpire Bill Guthrie was working behind home plate, the catcher for the visiting team repeatedly protested his calls.

According to a story in the St. Louis Post Dispatch, Guthrie endured this for three innings. But in the fourth inning, when the catcher started to complain again, Guthrie stopped him. "Son," he said gently, "you've been a big help to me calling balls and strikes, and I appreciate it. But I think I've got the hang of it now. So I'm going to ask you to go to the clubhouse and show them how to take a shower."

Job also had been complaining about calls he didn't think were fair. In his case, the umpire was God. After listening to Job's objections, the Lord finally spoke out of a violent storm. Suddenly things came into perspective for Job. God was gentle, but He was also firm and direct. The Lord asked him the kind of questions that bring finite man back down to size. Job listened, gave up his complaining, and found peace in surrendering to God.

Father, we don't make sense when we complain about Your fairness. Help us to be like Your Son Jesus, who trusted You without complaining, even to the point of dying on the cross.— Mart De Haan

When troubles come and we complain
Because we do not understand,
The problem is our narrow view
That fails to see God's loving hand. —K. De Haan

**When you feel like complaining,
think of all that Jesus endured.**

Job 40:4

I am of small account, what shalt I answer Thee? I lay mine hand upon my mouth.

What a different tone is here! This is he who so vehemently protested his innocence, and defended himself against the attacks of his accusers. The Master is come, and the servant who had contended with his fellows takes a lowly place of humility and silence.

The first step in the noblest life, possible to any of us, is to learn and say that we are of small account. We may learn it by successive and perpetual failures which abash and confound us. It is better to learn it by seeing the light of God rise in majesty above the loftiest of earth's mountains. "When I was young," said Gounod to a friend, "I used to talk of 'I and Mozart.' Later I said, 'Mozart and I.' But now I only say Mozart." Substitute God, and you have the true story of many a soul.

The next step is to choke back words, and lay the hand on the mouth. Silence and meditation! Not arguing or contending! Not complaining or murmuring! Not caviling or criticizing! But just being still — still, that you may feel God near; still, that you may hear Him speak. "Take heed of many words," said George Fox; "keep down, keep low, that nothing may reign in you but life itself."

The greatest saints avoided, when they could, the society of men, and did rather choose to live to God, in secret. A certain one said, "As oft as I have been among men I returned home less a man than I was before. Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto Jesus, thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy closet; for thou shalt not find elsewhere so great peace." How good it would be to lay our hands on our mouths rather oftener, whether in silence with our fellows, or in the hour of secret prayer!

Job 40:1-8 Judge Rightly

After a national news magazine posted an online story listing my community as one of the top-10 dying cities in the nation, local citizens were outraged. They registered their indignation, pointing out evidence to the contrary. One resident went to great lengths to disprove the harsh judgment. He recruited local citizens to show up downtown and appear in a video that showcased the vibrancy of our community. The video received international attention, and the news magazine admitted it was wrong. But the organization that

had done the “research” stood by the conclusion, even though it was based on limited criteria.

Their self-defense surprised me because their careless conclusion seemed indefensible. But then I thought of how common it is to make faulty judgments based on minimal information. One of the classic biblical examples is that of Job's friends. They wrongly concluded that because a series of tragedies happened to him, Job had sinned.

In the end, God defended Job and offered a startling conclusion. He didn't rebuke his friends for judging Job but for speaking falsely about Himself (Job 42:7). This is a humbling reminder that when we make careless judgments about others, we are sinning against God. - June 19, 2012 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Lord, please restrain my lips when I'm tempted to say
what I shouldn't say about people made in
Your image. Use my words to bless and not harm.
May I reflect Your heart.

If you are a Christian, remember that people judge your Lord by you.

Job 40:1-5 NOTHING MORE TO SAY

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Job had contended with God. He had argued against God's dealing with him, which was the root of his problem. He, the creature, had sat in judgment against God, the Creator. He had even accused God of doing the wrong thing.

Now God had spoken to Job and made His presence known. From nature He had emphasized very obvious lessons so that Job could not fail to catch the moral principles involved. No wonder Job replied that he was vile.

How could Job really answer God after this revelation of God's care for His creatures? Job realized how contemptible he had been in speaking as he did of the Lord.

He had thought the Lord cruel and unjust; in reality God had shown His love to Job. Job decided all he could do was put his hand on his mouth, say nothing more and just listen to God.

How do we face times of suffering? Do we wonder after a long period of testing if God really cares?

We seek for love and care, and God in His grace is ready and willing to love us and care for us; but above all we must remember that God has permitted this testing and has a purpose in it. God is both sovereign and righteous; therefore, He always does what is right.

When a believer does wrong, he may suffer for the wrong done. On the other hand, much suffering in the life of a believer is for discipline, not punishment. Through such suffering God molds him into the image of His Son (see Rom. 8:28,29).

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

Job 41:10

Who then is he that can stand before Me? (r. v.)

The first catechism had been on Job's knowledge; now it turns on his power. The pivot of the one was, Knowest thou? of the other, Canst thou? If a man cannot stand before one of God's creatures, how much less before the Creator! If we dread the wrath of the enraged crocodile, what should not be our dread before the wrath of the Eternal? Canst thou stand before Him? Canst thou strive against Him, with any hope of success? Canst thou force thyself, unbidden and unfit, into the presence of the Most Holy? Thou couldst not intrude on an earthly sovereign; how much less on Him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean?

Eternal light! eternal light! How pure the soul must be, When placed within thy searching light, It shrinks not, but with calm delight Can live, and look on Thee!

But Jesus can make it possible. Through Him we draw nigh to God. We have boldness to enter into the Holiest of All by His Blood. We may, through Him, be able to say, with Elijah, "Thus saith Jehovah, before whom I stand." Jesus is the minister of the heavenly

sanctuary, and in virtue of His office He is able to bring us into, and maintain us within, the Most Holy Place. He comes out to take us by the hand; and then, having fulfilled in us the good pleasure of His will, He brings us in and places us before the face of God forever. Like Solomon's servants, we evermore stand before the king, see His face and hear His words.

The sons of ignorance and night May dwell in the Eternal Light, Through the Eternal Love.

Job 41:1-11 Giants Of The Deep

READ: Job 41:1-11

God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves. —Genesis 1:21

The blue whale is the largest animal that has ever lived. Some are 100 feet long and can weigh over 175 tons. The biggest one ever measured had a heart the size of a Volkswagen!

In Genesis we are told, "God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind" (1:21).

When the Creator revealed Himself to Job in his time of suffering, He used the giants of the deep, including the mysterious Leviathan, to illustrate His divine power, His unsearchable nature and incomparable character.

"Shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of [Leviathan]? No one is so fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who then is able to stand against Me? ... Everything under heaven is Mine" (Job 41:9-11).

God uses the whale, the Leviathan, and all the giants of the deep to remind us of how awesome He is as Creator of the universe (Romans 1:20). The One who made creatures that cannot be controlled is Himself beyond our control and understanding.

Just as a frightening thunderstorm makes us stand in awe of the Creator, so should the blue whale. All of God's creation points to His eternal power. — Dennis Fisher

Great is the Lord, He is holy and just;
By His power we trust in His love.
Great is the Lord, He is faithful and true;
By His mercy He proves He is love. —Smith
© 1982 by Meadowgreen Music Co.

Creation is filled with signs that point to the Creator.

Job 41:1 3-D Under The Sea

READ: Job 41:1-11

God created ... every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded. —Genesis 1:21

My wife and I went to see a large-screen 3-D documentary on life in the sea. We put on plastic eyeglasses that created a 3-dimensional effect and then marveled as one surprise after another jumped out at us from the screen.

Predatory sharks swam dangerously close to us. Giant turtles tumbled and swirled so close we felt we could reach out and touch them. One exotic sea creature dangled what looked like a lure in front of its mouth to attract smaller fish. The narrator marveled that the life-forms that produce coral reefs inexplicably spawn on only one night out of the whole year. Their offspring then catch currents that carry them to other parts of the ocean.

As I sat there, I thought, How can anyone think all of this happened by chance? The fingerprints of a Designer are on every sea creature we've seen! As Christians we know that time and random chance could never result in such perfectly designed sea creatures. Instead, we accept the witness of God's Word that "God created ... every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded" (Gen. 1:21).

The more we learn about life in our world, the more we recognize God's eternal power and worship Him as Lord of creation (Rom. 1:20). — Dennis Fisher

The greatness of our God is seen
In sky and sea and forest green;
And living creatures great and small
Reveal the God who made them all. —D. De Haan

All creation sings God's praise.

Job 41:21 Leviathan

"In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isaiah 27:1).

There is a remarkable animal called a "leviathan," described in the direct words of God in the 41st chapter of Job. It is surprising that most modern expositors call this animal merely a crocodile. Our text plainly calls it a "piercing serpent... the dragon that is in the sea." He is also said to "play" in the "great and wide sea" (Psalm 104:25,26). God's description, in Job 41, says "a flame goeth out of his mouth" (v. 21) and "he maketh the deep to boil like a pot" (v. 31). The entire description is awesome! Whatever a leviathan might have been, it was not a crocodile!

In fact, there is no animal living today which fits the description. Therefore, it is an extinct animal, almost certainly a great marine reptile, still surviving in the oceans of Job's day, evidently one of the fearsome reptiles that gave rise to the worldwide tales of great sea dragons, before they became extinct.

But that is not all. In ending His discourse, God called leviathan "a king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34), so the animal is also symbolic of Satan, whose challenge to God instigated Job's strange trials. He is "the great dragon... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). Perhaps, therefore, the mysterious and notorious extinction of the dinosaurs is a secular prophecy of the coming Day of Judgment when God "shall punish leviathan" (Isaiah 27:1) and the "devil that deceived them" will be "cast into the lake of fire... and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).
HMM

Job 42:6

Now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

This is the clue to the entire book. Here is a man, who was universally known as perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil; who abounded in beneficent and loving ministries to all who were in need; to whom respect and love flowed in a full tide. He was not conscious of any failure in perfect obedience, or of secret sin; indeed, when his friends endeavored to account for his unparalleled calamities by suggesting that there was some discrepancy between his outward reputation and inward consistency, he indignantly repelled the charge, and repudiated the impeachment.

But there were inconsistencies and failures in him that needed to be exposed and put away before he could attain to perfect blessedness and enjoy unbroken peace. If man could not discover them, and if Job were unconscious of them, they were, nevertheless, present, poisoning the fountain of his being; as a hidden cesspool, whose presence is undetected, may be doing a deadly work of undermining the health of an entire household. So God let the man into His presence; and, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, and many others, he at once confessed himself vile. The light of the great white throne exposes all unsuspected blemishes. Have you ever seen God! Oh, ask for that vision, that you may know yourself! In proportion as we know God, we abhor ourselves. Then Jesus becomes unspeakably precious. Through His death we pass into the true life, and begin to intercede for others. We never have such power for the blessing of the world as when we lie most humbly at the feet of God.

Job 42:1-6 A Dream Of Answers Forgotten

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. —Job 42:5

A friend quit two jobs to become a full-time caregiver when his adult son was seriously hurt in a car accident. That same year his wife of over 30 years contracted a terminal illness and died.

Since then, he says he has no answers when his son asks "why" this happened to them. But he told me of a reassuring dream he had along the way. He dreamed that he was in a place that was awash with sunlight. There were crowds of people around him, and a man was answering all of his "why" questions. Each answer made so much sense that he clearly understood why he was not to know the answers now. Then he was with his son in the dream. But when he tried to help him with his questions, he couldn't remember the answers. But even that seemed okay. And then he woke up.

My friend's experience reminds me of another friend of God who suffered with unanswered questions (Job 7:20-21). Only when God finally broke His silence and gave Job a vision of Himself in the wonder of creation did Job find something that was better than answers (42:1-6). Only then did Job find peace in knowing that our God has good and even wonderful reasons to trust Him.

What God is doing you may not know now,

But someday you'll understand why;

Questions that taunt you and trouble your mind

Will one day have heaven's reply. —Hess

What's better than answers to our why questions? Trusting a good God who has His reasons.

Job 42:5–6 Seeing is Believing

Woodrow Kroll

Scripture: Luke 19:10 Job 42:5-6

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

All of his life, John Wesley had been very pious. He got up at 4 A.M. and prayed for two hours. He would then read the Bible for an hour before going to the jails and hospitals to minister to all kinds of people. He would teach, pray for and help others until late at night. A turning point for Wesley came, however, when he found his way to a chapel on Aldersgate Street in London. He heard a man reading a sermon that described a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Wesley suddenly realized that he was trusting his good works. That night he wrote in his journal: "About a quarter before nine, while he described the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Job also had been a pious man. Even God pointed him out as an extraordinarily righteous individual. But apparently something was lacking. He had heard about God and had been obedient to the degree that he knew how. But when he met God in the whirlwind, a new dimension was added to his life. God was no longer simply what he had heard about; He was now someone Job had personally experienced.

Those who grow up in the church often spend their early years hearing about God. Based on what they hear, they may lead a moral life and feel they know Jesus Christ. Yet they have had no personal encounter with Him. He is the God of their heads but not their hearts.

Make sure that your faith is not based merely on what you've heard. Seek a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through His Word. Allow God to become a real person in your life, not just someone you've heard about. Jesus came seeking you (Luke 19:10); now it's your turn to seek Him.

Hearing is no substitute for experiencing.

Job 42:1-6 Wonderful!

I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. —Job 42:3

As our plane began its descent, the flight attendant read the long list of arrival information as if she were reading it for the thousandth time that day—no emotion or interest as she droned on about our impending arrival. Then, with the same tired, disinterested voice, she finished by saying, "Have a wonderful day." The dryness of her tone contrasted with her words. She said "wonderful" but in a manner completely absent of any sense of wonder.

Sometimes I fear that we approach our relationship with God in the same way: Routine. Bored. Apathetic. Disinterested. Through Christ, we have the privilege of being adopted into the family of the living God, yet often there seems to be little of the sense of wonder that should accompany that remarkable reality.

Job questioned God about his suffering, but when challenged by Him, Job was humbled by the wonder of his Creator and His creation. Job replied, "You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3).

I long for the wonder of God to take hold of my heart. Adopted by God—what a wonderful reality!

How marvelous! How wonderful!

And my song shall ever be:

How marvelous! How wonderful

Is my Savior's love for me! —Gabriel

Nothing can fill our hearts more than the wonder of our God and His love.

Job 42 When Friends Fail You

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word. —John 17:20

With friends like his, Job didn't need enemies. His three would-be comforters failed miserably in their efforts to ease his pain. Instead of bringing sympathy, they delivered accusations that only compounded his anguish.

Yet Job was able to emerge triumphantly from his cave of pain and confusion. A significant step toward that victory was his willingness to pray for the very friends who had criticized and accused him. God honored his prayers, and Job had the delight of seeing his friends turn to God for forgiveness (Job 42:7-10).

Jesus also prayed for His friends (John 17:6-19), despite their frequent failings. With the agony of the cross approaching, Jesus prayed for Peter even though He knew Peter would deny Him within hours (Luke 22:31-34).

Jesus prayed for you and me too (John 17:20-26). His work of prayer, which began before His death and resurrection, continues to this day. Although we sometimes act more like His enemies than His friends, Jesus is in the Father's presence interceding for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

Following Christ's example, we are to pray for our friends and acquaintances—even when they hurt us. Is there someone you can pray for today?

Putting It Into Practice

Take a few minutes right now to pray for someone.

To learn how to pray, read

Jesus' Blueprint For Prayer

To love more, pray more.

Job 42:1-8 Judge Rightly

You have not spoken of Me what is right. —Job 42:7

After a national news magazine posted an online story listing my community as one of the top-10 dying cities in the nation, local citizens were outraged. They registered their indignation, pointing out evidence to the contrary. One resident went to great lengths to disprove the harsh judgment. He recruited local citizens to show up downtown and appear in a video that showcased the vibrancy of our community. The video received international attention, and the news magazine admitted it was wrong. But the organization that had done the "research" stood by the conclusion, even though it was based on limited criteria.

Their self-defense surprised me because their careless conclusion seemed indefensible. But then I thought of how common it is to make faulty judgments based on minimal information. One of the classic biblical examples is that of Job's friends. They wrongly concluded that because a series of tragedies happened to him, Job had sinned.

In the end, God defended Job and offered a startling conclusion. He didn't rebuke his friends for judging Job but for speaking falsely about Himself (Job 42:7). This is a humbling reminder that when we make careless judgments about others, we are sinning against God.

Lord, please restrain my lips when I'm tempted to say

what I shouldn't say about people made in

Your image. Use my words to bless and not harm.

May I reflect Your heart.

If you are a Christian, remember that people judge your Lord by you.

Job 42:10 Have You Come to "When" Yet?

The Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. —Job 42:10

A pitiful, sickly, and self-centered kind of prayer and a determined effort and selfish desire to be right with God are never found in the

New Testament. The fact that I am trying to be right with God is actually a sign that I am rebelling against the atonement by the Cross of Christ. I pray, "Lord, I will purify my heart if You will answer my prayer— I will walk rightly before You if You will help me." But I cannot make myself right with God; I cannot make my life perfect. I can only be right with God if I accept the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ as an absolute gift. Am I humble enough to accept it? I have to surrender all my rights and demands, and cease from every self-effort. I must leave myself completely alone in His hands, and then I can begin to pour my life out in the priestly work of intercession. There is a great deal of prayer that comes from actual disbelief in the atonement. Jesus is not just beginning to save us— He has already saved us completely. It is an accomplished fact, and it is an insult to Him for us to ask Him to do what He has already done.

If you are not now receiving the "hundredfold" which Jesus promised (see Matthew 19:29), and not getting insight into God's Word, then start praying for your friends— enter into the ministry of the inner life. "The Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends." As a saved soul, the real business of your life is intercessory prayer. Whatever circumstances God may place you in, always pray immediately that His atonement may be recognized and as fully understood in the lives of others as it has been in yours. Pray for your friends now, and pray for those with whom you come in contact now.

Job 42:10 Boomerang Prayer

Woodrow Kroll

And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Scripture: Matthew 5:44 Job 42:10 Job 42:7

In my office in Lincoln, Nebraska, I have on my desk two boomerangs from Australia. One is the genuine article, the other is a tourist version, but they both do what boomerangs are suppose to do. If you hold them the right way and throw them with that special flick of the wrist, they will fly out from your hand, circle back around and return to you. With a boomerang, what you send out also comes back.

Job experienced the same thing with prayer. Job's three friends found themselves in deep trouble with God. The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right" (Job 42:7). Having been on the receiving end of these misguided barbs, Job might have been tempted to rejoice that God was setting these men straight. But instead, at God's request, he prayed for them. And as he prayed for their forgiveness and restoration, God turned these prayers for blessing back onto Job and restored twice as much as Job had before.

When people have hurt and offended us, we often pray that God will help them see the error of their ways. And should God choose to extract a bit of vengeance, we wouldn't be opposed to that either. But the real joy comes if we can put our pain behind us and pray for God's blessing on them. Jesus says, "Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). We are to pray for their good, not for their harm.

If you have been the object of someone's misunderstanding, pray for that person. Ask God to richly bless him. You will be surprised to find that the blessings may boomerang back to you as well.

Praying for others is the best thing we can do for ourselves.

Job 42 Praying Like Christ

"I do not pray for these alone, but for those who will believe in Me through their word." -- John 17:20

With friends like his, Job didn't need enemies. His three would-be comforters failed miserably in their efforts to ease his pain. Instead of bringing sympathy, they recited a creed of iron and ice that only compounded his anguish.

Yet Job was able to emerge from his cave of pain and confusion in triumph. A significant step toward

that victory was his willingness to pray for the very friends who had criticized and accused him. God honored his prayers, and Job had the delight of witnessing his friends' forgiveness and restoration.

Jesus also prayed for His friends (Jn. 17:9-19), despite their constant failings. With the shadow of the cross falling darkly on Him, Jesus prayed for Peter even though He knew Peter would deny Him within hours (Lk. 22:32-34).

Jesus prayed for you and me also (Jn. 17:20-24). His work of prayer, which began before his death and resurrection, continues to this day. Although we sometimes act more like His enemies than His friends, Jesus died for us, reigns in power for us, and still prays for us (Ro 8:34).

Following Christ's example, we are to pray for our friends and acquaintances -- even when they hurt us. Is there someone you can

pray for today? -- Haddon W Robinson

As we attempt to live like Christ
In actions, words, and deeds,
We'll follow His design for prayer,
And pray for others' needs. -- J. David Branon
[Jesus' Blueprint For Prayer](#)

Nothing makes us love a person so much as praying for him.

Job 42:1-6 No Answers

Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? —Job 40:2

Just before Christmas 2003, Lydia came home from work to the sight of flames shooting out of her house. She was devastated by more than the loss of her home—seven of her family members died in the flames. When news about the tragedy spread that morning, a deacon from her church rushed to comfort her. She had some deep questions for him, but he had no answers.

Lydia could relate to Job's story. He lost all 10 of his children (Job 1:18-19), yet he continued to worship God (v.21). Then his health was affected, and his wife urged him to curse God and die (2:9). Job's friends thought they had the answer—he must have sinned and deserved his troubles.

Job complained bitterly to the Lord and pleaded for an explanation and relief, but God didn't give him any answers. He didn't even tell him about Satan's request to test him (1:6-12; 2:1-6). Instead, He reminded Job that He was the all-wise God and that Job was not. Job was humbled, and he repented for having questioned God's authority (42:1-6).

This side of heaven, we may not find answers for our desperate questions of "Why did this happen?" and "Why me?" But we can rest in the truth that God is in control and that He loves us.— Anne Cetas

Though darker, rougher, grows the way
And cares press harder day by day,
With patience in His love I'll rest,
And whisper that He knoweth best. —Pentecost

**God does not have to answer our questions,
but He will always keep His promises.**

Job 42:7 Misquote

READ: Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar. —Proverbs 30:6

Imagine the frustration of a mother as she tries to gather her family for supper. Her 8-year-old son comes through the door smuggling a dead bird behind his back. "Call Ann for dinner," says his mother. "Then wash your hands and come to the table."

A minute later the 4-year-old daughter comes running into the kitchen, sobbing uncontrollably. Her brother had just waved the stiff bird under her nose and told her that if she wasn't at the table in 17 seconds, Mom wouldn't let her go out and play for a whole week.

This story about a misquoted mother doesn't begin to capture the confusion that follows when we misquote the heavenly Father. Often we become preoccupied with our own ideas of how things should be, like Job's friends, who didn't speak rightly about the Lord (Job 42:7). The result is that we say more, or less, than God actually said in His Word (Deuteronomy 4:2). We need to make sure we know exactly where His words stop and our opinions begin. If we don't, we may misrepresent Him, and Proverbs 30:6 warns that we are then in danger of being found liars before God.

Let's take care that we don't express our opinions as if they were God's words. — Mart De Haan

Lord, grant us wisdom to discern
The truth that You've made known,
And may we never teach one word
Beyond what You have shown. —D. De Haan

**We must adjust our lives to the Bible—
never the Bible to our lives.**

Job 42:1-17 No Explanation Required

READ: Job 42:1-17

I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. --Job 42:3

A Christian who believed God had led him to take a daring step of faith remarked, "If God doesn't give me success in this matter, He'll certainly have a lot of explaining to do!"

It's easy to judge this man's words, but have you ever said, "When I get to heaven, I certainly expect God to explain why some of my prayers were not answered and why tragedies were not always prevented!"

In Romans 8:28, Paul didn't promise that all circumstances and events would be explained—if, indeed, we could comprehend the explanation! Instead, he promised that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

The story of Job reassures us that questioning God is common to human experience. Yet, when Job demanded that God justify His lack of intervention in his trials, He didn't comply. Instead, He bombarded Job with His own searching questions (Job 38-41). The Almighty does not have to explain Himself, nor is He required to reveal His grand design. He reveals Himself and His plans, in His way and in His time.

Thoroughly humbled, Job admitted, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things... which I did not know." Like Job, will you now trust God—no explanation required? — Joanie Yoder

What God is doing you may not know now,
Hereafter He may tell you why;
Questions that taunt you and trouble your mind
Will someday have heaven's reply. —Hess

**When we trust God's promises,
we won't demand explanations.**

Job 42:5-6 Goodness And Grace

I have heard of You ... but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. —Job 42:5-6

A teenager whose father is abusive said to me, "I want to be a good man like my Sunday school teacher and like you, not like my dad."

Knowing his Sunday school teacher, I could certainly agree that he was a "good man," and I was grateful that he also saw me as "good." I do want to be reverent, kind, forgiving, pure in my lifestyle, and obedient to God. But I also know the sinfulness of my own heart and how dependent I am on God's goodness and grace.

The Lord spoke of Job as "a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). Yet after all his trials, Job said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Even after reflecting on his own goodness (Job 29:1-25), he knew the condition of his heart.

From a human perspective, many people may be described as "good." But God sees the disobedience, selfishness, and hate that lie deep within all of us. He also knows that we have spiritual blind spots. And when He opens our eyes to see ourselves as He does, we understand why a "good man" like Job said he abhorred himself.

Lord, help us to be good but never to lose sight of our sinfulness and unworthiness. Thank You for the forgiveness You offer us in Christ.— Herbert Vander Lugt

Teach me, Lord, my true condition,
Bring me, childlike, to Your side;
May I never trust my goodness—
Only in Your grace abide. —Anon.

Even the best people have nothing to boast about.

Job 42:5 The Upside Of Sorrow

Sorrow can be good for the soul. It can uncover hidden depths in ourselves and in God.

Sorrow causes us to think earnestly about ourselves. It makes us ponder our motives, our intentions, our interests. We get to know ourselves as never before.

Sorrow also helps us to see God as we've never seen Him. Job said, out of his terrible grief, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5).

Jesus, the perfect man, is described as "a man of sorrows," intimately acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). It is hard to fathom, but even the incarnate Son of God learned and grew through the heartaches He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). As we think about His sorrow and His concern for our sorrow, we gain a better appreciation for what God is trying to accomplish in us through the grief we bear.

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote, "Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better" (7:3). Those who don't let sorrow do its work, who deny it, trivialize it, or try to explain it away, remain shallow and indifferent. They never understand themselves or others very well. In fact, I think that before God can use us very much, we must first learn to mourn. — David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When God leads through valleys of trouble,
His omnipotent hand we can trace;
For the trials and sorrows He sends us
Are valuable lessons of grace. —Anon.

We can learn more from sorrow than from laughter.

Job 42:10-17 From Bleak to Beautiful

Spring is the time of year when God reminds us that things are not always as they seem. Over the course of a few short weeks, what appears hopelessly dead comes to life. Bleak woodlands are transformed into colorful landscapes. Trees whose naked arms reached to heaven all winter, as if pleading to be clothed, suddenly are adorned with lacy green gowns. Flowers that faded and fell to the ground in surrender to the cold rise slowly from the earth in defiance of death.

In Scripture, we read about some apparently hopeless situations. One example is that of a wealthy man named Job whom God described as having integrity (Job 2:3). Disaster struck and Job lost everything important to him. In misery, he said, "My days are ... spent without hope" (7:6). What appeared to Job and his friends as evidence that God had turned against him was just the opposite. God was so confident of Job's integrity that He trusted him in this battle with Satan. Later, Job's hope and life were renewed.

The faithful arrival of spring every year comforts me when I'm in a situation that seems hopeless. With God, there is no such thing. No matter how bleak the landscape of life may look, God can transform it into a glorious garden of color and fragrance. - April 18, 2013 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Dear God, we pray for faith anew,
For greater trust in all we do,
For hope that never knows defeat,
For victory at Thy mercy seat.
—Brandt

**With God, there is hope
even in the most hopeless situation.**

Job 42:1-6 TWO INSEPARABLE TRUTHS

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

Job had a new comprehension of God, which brought a new comprehension of himself. He acknowledged that he was vile.

Many believers think they have reached the end of themselves when they give mental assent to the doctrine of human depravity and say we are all depraved.

But it is one thing to speak of vileness and depravity in general; it is quite another for us to know deep within that we are vile. To say

before the Lord, "I am the one," is the place Job came to and the place we need to come to.

This is a personal, intimate thing--a private matter between ourselves and God. It is not something that one believer can reveal to another. It comes as the result of the work of the Spirit in our hearts.

These two things always go together: "Mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5) and "I abhor myself" (v. 6). To catch a new vision of God and His righteousness is to bring us to the place where we hate what we are in ourselves.

When God's light shines into our hearts, we cannot help but abhor ourselves.

Self-abhorrence is expressed by a humble spirit and a gracious attitude. It is of little use to profess humility if we are quick to resent any injury we may suffer or to feel insulted when someone has slighted us or discouraged us.

The true secret of a broken and contrite heart is to abide in the presence of Almighty God and then to maintain a correct attitude toward those around us.

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

Job 42:7-17 VINDICATED BY GOD

THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

The vindication of Job was a vindication before his "friends." God called him "my servant" and had him act in the capacity of a priest for the three who had so cruelly slandered him.

We not only need to see what God was able to do with Job, we also need to see the God of Job for ourselves.

We learn from Job, and this is part of the vindication, that the suffering of the godly always includes a compensation, or a reward.

It may not come in this present life. It did in Job's life, and we can be assured that it will eventually come for us. The Bible says so, and that settles it.

Job's reward had to come during his lifetime in order to complete the object lesson the Lord was presenting through him.

Life for the believer does not end with his life on earth; it continues on into heaven. All believers have an inheritance reserved in heaven.

The Bible tells us in many places that we cannot avoid suffering here on earth. The suffering will not endure forever, though, and we must look beyond it to the rewards God will give for faithfulness.

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5: 11).

God does not delight in our being afflicted, yet through these afflictions His very gracious purposes are realized. This is what James called "the end of the Lord"; the outcome of the Lord's dealings with us includes vindication.

"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Ps. 37:6).

Brief Exposition: Making a Covenant With My Eyes

Job 31:1-4

I dictated a covenant (an agreement) to my eyes; how then could I look [lustfully] upon a girl? (Amplified)

I made a covenant with mine eyes; and how should I fix my regard upon a maid? (Darby)

But I made an agreement with my eyes not to look with desire at a girl. (ICB)

I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? (KJV)

I made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I ogle at a girl? (MLB)

I made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I entertain thoughts against a virgin? (NET)

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. (NIV)

I had made an agreement with my eyes not to linger on any virgin. (NJB)

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman. (NLT)

I have made a solemn promise never to look with lust at a woman. (TEV)

A covenant I made for mine eyes, And what--do I attend to a virgin? (YLT)

A glance is unavoidable.

A gaze is avoidable.

HOW THEN COULD I GAZE AT A WOMAN: "Gaze" is the Hebrew word *biyn* (in the hithpoel or reflexive perfect) and signifies to consider carefully, diligently consider, discern, get understanding, look carefully, observe, paid close attention, pay heed. Show oneself attentive, consider diligently:

Do you get the picture that Job is trying to convey? He's not talking about a casual glance (cp Achan's look which turned to lust which ultimately cost him his life in Joshua 7:21ff) or an accidental viewing of a sensual woman (that would be virtually impossible in America... but it is possible to make certain provisions, enabled by the Spirit Ro 8:13-note and such provisions include not going to PG-13 movies or even PG ratings... they have all become too sensual as the moral compass of Americans, especially the media moguls goes due south, heading straight toward the abyss. We can chose not to watch talk shows that bring up "lust" subjects so commonly these days. So Job is saying don't stare at her because if you do Jesus says you've already committed adultery in your heart! Mt 5:28-note... Pluck out your eye (do whatever you need to do is the idea) before you do this! That is how enslaving this sin can be... it requires radical surgery and complete extirpation! Don't just biopsy it! Cut it out completely!. (cp Col 3:5-note, Pr 5:22-note; [note](#)) The combination of these words, "**discern between**" is used in 1Ki 3:9, "That I may discern between good and evil." The Hebrew word *biyn* includes the concept of distinguishing that leads to understanding. The verb refers to knowledge which is superior to the mere gathering of data.

Mark it down dear reader - When the wrong images are allowed in through the eyes, it will not be long until they find their way to the heart. It will not be long from there until you find yourself tempted and falling into sin. That is why we must guard our eyes at all times. Live, therefore, Coram Deo (as before the face of God) and await the benediction of God upon your life and words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into your rest."

Job wisely recognized that the eye is the main avenue for temptation (see Job 31:7, 9, 26, 27).

He who would not fall down

ought not to walk in slippery places.

Job deliberately refused to allow any thoughts of lust to enter his mind when he chanced to see an attractive young woman. Dearly beloved, be careful here. Don't try to do this in your own strength or power! That is tantamount to placing a heavy burden on your back! Another word is legalism. "If I just try harder." "If I do this or do that or don't do this or don't do that!" Notice the little pronoun "I"! Yes, we ultimately have to make the choice to turn our eyes, but we can only do so in the liberty and freedom provided by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells every believer (Ro 8:13-note). The Spirit is in us, continually giving us the "desire" (the will) and the power to walk in a manner pleasing to our Father. See Php 2:12-note = our responsibility and Php 2:13-note = the Spirit's provision - in Php 2:12 we "work out what God has worked in." It is not just "Let go and let God." That is misleading and will end in failure.

Adrian Rogers writes making his covenant is "One big decision - wholehearted - will make an incredible difference. Do you have such a wholehearted desire for purity? God does business with those that mean business."

Job comes from the dawn of civilization, and yet Job in the world of his day knows that in order to keep clean (holy) before God he has to be careful about what he sees (cp 2Cor 7:1). He makes a covenant with his eyes. In order to properly handle his sexual drives. He has to watch his thought life, and he goes on to tell us he realizes that if he does not, "Calamity will befall the unrighteous, and disaster the workers of iniquity." (Job 31:3)

Kent Hughes - You may not be able to avoid the first look, but you can avoid the second. Develop the discipline of never taking that second look. Women will know if you do. They know where your eyes go. Develop modest eyes.

Jerry Bridges - We need not only a commitment to holiness as a total way of life, but frequently a commitment regarding specific areas of temptation. Job made a personal covenant not to look lustfully at young women (Job 31:1). Daniel resolved not to defile

himself with forbidden food, even though from the king's table (Da 1:8). These two Old Testament saints are commended by God Himself as among the most righteous who ever lived (Ezekiel 14:14); yet both found it necessary to make a commitment regarding some specific area of temptation. Job found his temptation in his own breast; Daniel found his in his particular circumstances. Both responded with a commitment to obey God. They lived up to their convictions. A lustful look quickly becomes an impure thought. If acts of immorality are becoming a problem among Christians, the thoughts of immorality are a much greater problem. Sexual lust lies latent in the heart of every Christian. Even righteous Job found it necessary to deal decisively with this temptation; he made a covenant with his eyes not to look lustfully at a girl (Job 31:1). If Job found it necessary to make this kind of commitment in the day in which he lived, how much more do we need it in today's society—where sexual lust is exploited even to advertise spark plugs! Job was acknowledged by God Himself as a man who was “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). Yet Job found it helpful to single out this specific area of temptation and make a commitment regarding it!

June Hunt - God would never tell you to stop lusting without giving you the power to stop. The starting point for victory is realizing that when a sexual thought flashes into your mind, you must redirect that thought or replace it. Years ago, Martin Luther painted a graphic picture with words to this effect, “You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair.” You are the only one who controls how long you will entertain a thought—how long you will dwell on it. Make a commitment—a covenant with your eyes—that you will not maintain a gaze that leads to an immoral thought. And make a covenant with your mind that you will not allow an immoral thought to reside in your heart. How many times have you found yourself in a situation where you should have determined ahead of time how you would respond? Yet in the heat of the moment, you acted and later realized with regret that you had made the wrong decision? **Many of your decisions need to be made prior to when they are needed.** This involves knowing the end result you desire and then committing yourself to a plan to achieve that desire. In the Bible, Job had such a plan in order to maintain his purity. (Biblical Counseling Keys on Sexual Addiction: The Way Out of the Web)

Matthew Poole on Job 31:1 - So far have I been from wallowing in the mire of uncleanness, or any gross wickedness, wherewith you charge me, that I have abstained even from the least occasions and appearances of evil, having made a solemn resolution within myself, and a solemn covenant and promise to God, that I would not wantonly or lustfully fix mine eyes or gaze upon a maid, lest mine eyes should affect my heart, and stir me up to further filthiness. Hereby we plainly see that that command of Christ. Mat 5:29, was no new command peculiar to the gospel, as some would have it, but the very same which the law of God revealed in his word, and written in men's hearts by nature, imposed upon men in the times of the Old Testament. See also 2Pe 2:14 1Jo 2:16. Should I think upon, i.e. indulge myself in filthy and lustful thoughts? Seeing I was obliged, and accordingly took care, to guard mine eyes, I was upon the same reason obliged to restrain my imagination. Or, why then should I consider, or contemplate, or look curiously, or thoughtfully, or diligently? Since I had made such a covenant, why should I not keep it? A maid; which is emphatically added, to show that that circumstance which provokes the lust of others had no such power over him, and that he restrained himself from the very thoughts and desires of filthiness with such persons, wherewith the generality of men allowed themselves to commit gross fornication, as deeming it to be either none, or but a very little sin. Withal he insinuates with how much more caution he kept himself from uncleanness with any married person.

The eyes are so powerful that the Job had to pray; pray for power outside himself (the Holy Spirit) to turn his eyes from worthless things (as did the Psalmist - Ps 101:3). Does Job have no eyelids? No muscles in his neck to turn the head? Yet all of us (especially us men) sympathize with this covenant -- Our eyes are so small – yet they can lead the whole person, and this in turn often leads to destruction. Why? Because the eyes lead the heart and the mind, and these in turn lead the whole person. Job vowed to make a covenant prayed this, **“Lest looking cause liking and lusting.”** (Trapp)

Trapp adds that “When one seemed to pity a one-eyed man, he told him he had lost one of his enemies, a very thief, that would have stolen away his heart.”

J. Simmons - Keep a strict watch over your eyes at all times, especially when you are in duty. The eyes are the portholes that sin and Satan creep in at. It is accounted a great piece of charity to a man's body to close his eyes when he is dead: I am sure it is more charity to our souls to close our own eyes whilst we are living (Job 31:1).

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS:

WHAT FAITHFUL MET WITH IN THE WAY

“CHRISTIAN. Well, neighbour Faithful, tell me now, what have you met with in the way as you came; for I know you have met with some things, or else it may be writ for a wonder.

“FAITHFUL. I escaped the Slough that I perceived you fell into, and got up to the gate without that danger; only I met with one whose name was Wanton, who had like to have done me a mischief.

“CHR. It was well you escaped her net; Joseph was hard put to it by her, and he escaped her as you did; but it had like to have cost

him his life. But what did she do to you?

“FAITH. You cannot think, but that you know something, what a flattering tongue she had; she lay at me hard to turn aside with her, promising me all manner of content.

“CHR. Nay, she did not promise you the content of a good conscience.

“FAITH. You know what I mean; all carnal and fleshly content.

“CHR. Thank God you have escaped her: ‘The abhorred of the Lord shall fall into her ditch.’ (Prov. 22:14.)

“FAITH. Nay, I know not whether I did wholly escape her or no.

“CHR. Why, I trow you did not consent to her desires.

“FAITH. No, not to defile myself; for I remembered an old writing that I had seen, which said, ‘Her steps take hold on hell.’ (Prov. 5:5.) So I shut mine eyes, because I would not be bewitched with her looks. (Job 31:1.) Then she railed on me, and I went my way.”

Spurgeon comments: THE first of Faithful’s temptations was very gross. It is, indeed, almost a shame to speak of it; yet the purest and most heavenly-minded, being still in the body, have to confess that this temptation has crossed their path. It matters not how near we live to God, nor how we may have cleansed our way by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word, to us all, and I have sometimes thought especially to the young and to the aged, this temptation will surely come. It is a blessing if, by God’s grace, we use Joseph’s way of conquering it, namely, by running away from it, for there is no other. Fly, for this foe is not to be parleyed with. While you tarry, you are taken prisoner. While you look, the fruit is plucked. While you think how to resist the attack of the serpent, you are caught in its folds. He that hesitates is lost. “Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain,” is the only direction to every man who would come out of Sodom. There is no way of escape from this sin save by flight. “Flee youthful lusts,” wrote Paul to Timothy. Observe that, although Faithful did not yield to Wanton’s tempting, he says, “I know not whether I did wholly escape her or no.” The probability is, that the temptations of the flesh, even when resisted, do us an injury. If the coals do not burn us, they blacken us. The very thought of evil, and especially of such evil, is sin. We can hardly read a newspaper report of anything of this kind without having our minds in some degree defiled. There are certain flowers which perfume the air as they bloom, and I may say of these matters that they scatter an ill savour as they are repeated in our ears. So much for Wanton’s assault on Faithful. From her net, and her ditch, may every pilgrim be preserved! (Pictures from Pilgrim’s Progress: A Commentary on Portions of John Bunyan’s Immortal Allegory)

BILLY GRAHAM’S SECRETARY SAYS - I have always appreciated, from a moral point of view, how the men have been in their attitude toward the secretaries. The doors are always left open. There is a high regard for the lack of any kind of privacy where a boss and his secretary are involved. At times, I thought they were going a little too far, that it wasn’t necessary, but I’m glad they did it, especially today. They have kept everything above reproach. When you are working on a long-term basis with the same person, constantly, in hotels, where the wife is not there and the secretary is, that is a highly explosive situation. You have to take precautions. I have always respected the way they have handled that. It has been beautifully done. --- Millie Dienert has worked with the Billy Graham team for forty years. Her comments on the ethics of Mr. Graham, Cliff Barrows, George Beverly Shea, and the rest of the male members of the team make the point.

John Newton - Great reason we have to make David’s prayer (Psalm 119:17) and with Job to make a covenant with our eyes [Job 31:1], for they are the inlet of many temptations. In many countries there are still pleasant trees that bear poisonous fruit.

Joseph Caryl - The eye is apt to make a stand, or fix itself, when we come in view of an ensnaring object; therefore it is our duty to hasten it away, or to pray that God would make it pass off from it... He that feareth burning must take heed of playing with fire: he that feareth drowning must keep out of deep waters. He that feareth the plague must not go into an infected house. Would they avoid sin who present themselves to the opportunities of it?

Alexander Maclaren: It is far easier to cut off the hand, which after all is not me, than to sacrifice passions and desires which, though they be my worst self, are myself.

Kent Hughes - Of course, this great principle of mortification has universal application to all areas of life, but here Jesus specifically applies it to sensuality. So we will do the same. If the application seems negative, so be it, for the ultimate result is positive. Jesus tells us there must be a mortification of the eyes, that we must control our eyes. This advice may be more needful for men than women because they are more apt to be visually stimulated, but it does apply to both. In simplest terms, this forbids a second look. At the risk of sounding super-pious and goody-goody, I have tried to make this one of the canons of my own life. A godly man (one

who is trying to be so) must not take a second look. When talking with the opposite sex, one should always maintain eye contact. Wandering eyes are sensual eyes and ultimately adulterous eyes. Job's reflections in chapter 31 of his book contain lifesaving wisdom (Job 31:1) A wise man or woman will make a covenant with his or her eyes as to what they will look upon. Certainly this involves television and movies. There is probably no area in which Christians fail more than in what they allow to enter their minds through the media. There are times when we need to walk away from the screen. There are times to turn the dial. We are easily desensitized, and those impure things at which we laugh do not seem so bad the next time, and the last laugh will be on us. Certainly this also applies to books, magazines, and newspapers. We need to make a covenant with our eyes. We need to take extreme measures if necessary. Am I suggesting a new legalism with a list of yeses and nos? In no way! Jesus says, "If your right eye causes you to sin ..." Not anyone else's eye, but your eye. We are all different. We stumble over different things. One thing may arouse one and leave another unmoved. One must cut something out, but another may be under no such obligation... we must recognize the absolute necessity of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We cannot mortify our flesh alone. Willpower will not do it! Paul is careful to tell us, "but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). Likewise, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you" (Philippians 2:12, 13). We can do this only by the power of Jesus. We live in an age of extreme sensuality. Many say (and I think they are right) that never in the history of the western world, since the time of Greek and Roman paganism, has the state of marriage and sexual morality been so low. And even more tragic, immorality has invaded the church at every level, from teenage to mid-life, so that no age group is untouched. Moreover, the havoc this has wrought goes far beyond the relational horrors of divorce, illegitimacy, and abortion to the very perversion of faith. I know of one former church leader and theologian who after continuous adultery and finally dissolution of his marriage began to discard the essentials of his Christian faith. Why? When one's willful conduct contradicts one's theology, either the conduct or the theology must change. We must understand that much of the heresy we observe today has roots that are moral rather than intellectual. Therefore we must realize that what people do with their eyes and limbs can affect the eternal destiny of their souls. (The sermon on the mount: the message of the kingdom)

John Armstrong - I urge pastors to consider an 'eye covenant' (Job 31:1) to protect themselves from sexual impurity. Keep your eyes from wandering to images and even to dwelling on passing women that can entice you with fantasies. As Alcorn notes, 'A battering ram may hit a fortress a thousand times, and no one time seems to have an effect, yet finally the gate caves in.' For most men, our thoughts are readily influenced by images, for we are visually oriented. When our thoughts are assailed visually time after time, we are more vulnerable, for 'immorality is the cumulative product of small mental indulgences and minuscule compromises, the immediate consequences of which were, at the time, indiscernible,' according to Alcorn. 'Our thoughts are the fabric with which we weave our character and destiny.' (The Stain that Stays: The Church's Response to Sexual Misconduct of Its Leaders)

The thoughts of our heart

are the real litmus test

of our character

John MacArthur - Avoid evil attractions. Don't expose yourself to activities, images, or conversation that provoke evil thoughts. Like Job, make a covenant with your eyes (Job 31:1)—or with your ears, or with whatever sensations lead you into evil thoughts. Refuse to feed any tendencies that draw your imagination into wickedness. An awareness of God's presence will help you not only flee from sin, but also endure suffering.

Warren Wiersbe on Job 31 - This chapter helps you take inventory of your spiritual life. Do you have eyes that wander lustfully (Job 31:1–4) or feet that move deceitfully (Job 31:5–8)? Has lust been fulfilled in overt sin (Job 31:9–12)? Have you treated others as God wants them treated (Job 31:13–23)? Have you coveted wealth or been proud of what you possess (Job 31:24–28)? How do you respond to the suffering of an enemy (Job 31:29–30) or the needs of a stranger (Job 31:31–34)? Are you a faithful steward of the natural resources God gives (Job 31:38–40)? Job has seen himself and is satisfied, but he has not yet seen God. When he does, he will change his opinion of himself and get started on the road to victory. Lust is the first step toward sin, and sin is the first step toward death (James 1:13–16). It is one thing to see and admire an attractive person, but it is quite something else to look for the purpose of lusting in the heart. Jesus said, "Everyone who is looking at a woman in order to indulge his sexual passion for her, already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28, WUEST). While sin in the heart is not as destructive as sin actually committed, it is the first step toward the act; and you never know where a polluted imagination will lead you. Furthermore, God above looks down and sees both our actions and "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12–13); and He will judge both. "Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong?" (Job 31:3, NIV) During more than forty years of ministry, I've listened to many sad stories from people who have indulged in sexual sin and suffered greatly; in almost every instance, the people deliberately put themselves into the place of temptation and danger. Unlike Job, they didn't make "a covenant with [their] eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1, NIV), nor did they follow the example of Joseph and flee from temptation (Gen. 39:7ff; 2 Tim. 2:22). We can't help being tempted, but we can certainly help tempting ourselves.

The marriage covenant is not to be broken and the thought or act which breaks it is sexual immorality. (cp Heb 13:4^{note}; Job 31:9 =“If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway 10 May my wife grind for another, And let others kneel down over her.”).

Job openly acknowledged the power of sexual appetites. He catalogued the steps of lust from “looking upon a virgin” (Job 31:1), to allowing one’s heart to follow one’s eyes (Job 31:7), to finally allowing oneself to be enticed by a woman and then scheming to have her (Job 31:9). Some may see this progression as normal, natural, or unavoidable. But Job viewed lust as a serious moral failure (Job 31:11). (Word in life study Bible)

"Great Alexander called the Persian maids" oculorum dolores (eye pain). (John Trapp)

Job focuses on his eyes, because they let in the objects of lust into the heart (Mt 5:28, Joshua 7:21), and because the signs of lust in the heart appear especially in the eyes (Ge 39:7 Pr 6:25).

Steven Cole - To be morally pure, you’ve got to commit yourself to God’s standard and fight to maintain it. To fight for purity, you must guard your thought life and restrict the kinds of media that you expose yourself to. You must be accountable in your use of the computer. Guys, you must make a covenant with your eyes (Job 31:1), so that you stop checking out every attractive girl who walks by. It is a battle and it won’t happen automatically. You must actively fight against it. Cut off your hand! Pluck out your eye if you need to (Matt. 5:27-30)! If you want to obey God and win the war against lust, you must make a prior commitment to guard what you look at. That means that certain magazines, TV shows, and movies must be off limits. It means that when you come across seductive pictures of women, you must turn the page quickly without scrutinizing the details. It means that you must break the habit of checking out the nice looking women. I’m not saying you don’t notice them (that is impossible); I am saying you don’t gaze at their finer points. Thus, there is a difference between temptation and lust. Men are aroused primarily by sight. If you do not flee, you will fall. If you linger, you will lust. The Bible never says that you should stand and fight sexual passion. It never says to stay and pray about it.

If you linger,

You will lust!

Hippolytus wrote "He who looks upon a woman, even though he escape the temptation, does not come away pure of all lust. And why should one have trouble, if he can be chaste and free of trouble? See what Job says: 'I made a covenant with mine eyes, that I should not think of another's wife.' Thus well does he know the power of abuse. And Paul for this reason kept 'under his body, and brought it into subjection' 1Co 9:27-note"

Some cross references to ponder as you meditate on Job 31:1...

Ge 6:1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. **3 THEN** the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

2 Sa 11:1 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem (**Note:** David has no one to whom he is accountable and secondly is not doing what he should be doing which would have kept him out of harm's way!). **2** Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"⁴ And David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. **5** And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

Psalm 119:37-[note](#) Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Thy ways.

Spurgeon - He had prayed about his **heart**, and one would have thought that the **eyes** would so surely have been influenced by the heart that there was no need to make them the objects of a special petition; but our author is resolved to **make assurance doubly sure**. If the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart may not desire: at any rate, one door of temptation is closed when we do not even look at the painted bauble. Sin first entered man's mind by the eye, and it is still a favourite gate for the incoming of Satan's allurements: hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as "turned away"; for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. Perhaps we are now gazing upon folly, we need to have our eyes turned away; and if we are beholding heavenly things we shall be wise to beg that our eyes may

be kept away from vanity. Why should we look on vanity? — it melts away as a vapour. Why not look upon things eternal? Sin is vanity, unjust gain is vanity, self conceit is vanity, and, indeed, all that is not of God comes under the same head. From all this we must turn away. It is a proof of the sense of weakness felt by the Psalmist and of his entire dependence upon God that he even asks to have his eyes turned for him; he meant not to make himself passive, but he intended to set forth his own utter helplessness apart from the grace of God. For fear he should forget himself and gaze with a lingering longing upon forbidden objects, he entreats the Lord speedily to make him turn away his eyes, hurrying him off from so dangerous a parley with iniquity. If we are kept from looking on vanity we shall be preserved from loving iniquity.

Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. The prayer indicates our greatest need, — more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it, also, tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. Vitality is the cure of vanity. When the heart is full of grace the eyes will be cleansed from impurity. On the other hand, if we would be full of life as to the things of God we must keep ourselves apart from sin and folly, or the eyes will soon captivate the mind, and, like Samson, who could slay his thousands, we may ourselves be overcome through the lusts which enter by the eye.

Comment: Did you note the association of prayer and revival and prayer for our eyes!

Pr 4:25-[note](#) Let your eyes look directly ahead, And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

Pr 6:25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, Nor let her catch you with her eyelids. James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Eccl 2:10 And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

Matthew Poole comments: Whatsoever mine eyes desired; whatsoever was grateful to my senses, or my heart desired. He ascribes **desire** to the **eyes**, because the **sight of the eyes** is the usual and powerful incentive of desires

Mt 5:28-note but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.29 "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.30 "And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

TASSELS:

CORDS OF BLUE

In Jehovah's exhortation regarding tassels in Numbers 15, there is a powerful principle that relates to where we focus our eyes, our attention -

The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, 38 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves **tassels on the corners of their garments** throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the **tassel** of each corner a **cord of blue**. 39 "And it shall be a **tassel** for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes (Note juxtaposition of our heart and our eyes! Be careful what you look at!), after which you played the harlot (KJV = "go a whoring"! Main idea of this Hebrew word is commit illicit sexual intercourse, especially with prostitutes), 40 in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God. 41 "I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD your God." (Nu 15:37-41)

COMMENT: The Israelites were to add tassels to their garments as a reminder to obey the commandments of God and to live holy lives before Him, and as a reminder of God's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. According to Jewish tradition, there were eight threads and five knots in each tassel, suggesting the number thirteen. The numerical value of the Hebrew word for tassels, *sisit*, is 600. In this way they were reminded of the 613 laws of the Hebrew legal code. This passage is the origin of the Jewish tallit (Heb.) or prayer shawl (cf. Deut. 22:12).

HOW TO TRAP AN ERMINE - The ermine is a little animal that is used to make fur coats, because they have a coat that is snow white. Trappers find the ermine's hole (home) knowing he would run there to hide. The hunters would smear something vile, dirty, defiling around the entrance of his hole. As the dogs drove the ermine to his hole to get away, the snow white animal would see the filth and, realize it would have to defile its coat in order to enter his hole. So rather than defile itself, the ermine refused to enter and instead would turn around and face the dogs, in effect giving its life, rather than suffering defilement! Does holiness and moral purity mean that much to you? If not, you are destined to succumb to moral temptation, because you are half-hearted. Enabled by the Holy Spirit, you must determine to remain morally pure, to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:14, 15, 16-note) And remember, the Spirit of the Living God does business with those that mean business. Don't get trapped!

ADULTERY

I. ITS NATURE. It is a vice opposed to chastity, and may be committed--

1. In the heart (Mat 5:28); and therefore
 - (1) look not on yourselves as innocent because not actual idolaters.
 - (2) Repent of unchaste thoughts.
 - (3) Labour against them.
2. In the act.

II. its greatness as a sin.

1. It is frequently forbidden.
2. It is destructive to self and others.
3. It is the occasion of many sins.
4. It is a punishment as well as a sin (Pro 22:14; Rom 1:24).
5. It consumes a man's estate (Pro 5:10; Pro 6:26; Job 31:12).
6. The body also (Pro 5:11).
7. It defiles the body (1Co 6:18).
8. It darkens a man's judgment and understanding (Hos 4:11).
9. It destroys the whole soul (Pro 6:32).
10. It brings irreparable loss of grace (Pro 6:33).
11. Ordinarily it is punished in this life (Num 25:6; 1Co 10:8).
12. Certainly in the life to come (Heb 13:4; 1Co 6:9-10).

III. Its prevention.

1. Avoid the occasions.
 - (1) Idleness (Eze 16:49; 2Sa 11:2);
 - (2) Bad company (Pr 7:25);
 - (3) All other sins (Pr 1:25).
2. Make a covenant with thine eyes (Job 31:1).
3. Watch over thy thoughts (Mal 2:16),
4. Keep in with God (Pro 22:14).
5. Delight in the Word of God (Pr 2:10-16).
6. Be much in prayer and meditation (Ps 119:37). (Bishop Beveridge)