



# EXPLORE THE BIBLE.®

## Leader Guide

Summer 2021 | CSB



758

...RD, and  
...ght?  
...edge about  
...d about all that  
...ou hast blessed  
...and his substance  
...d.  
...nine hand now, and  
...ath, and he will "curse  
...RD said unto Satan, Behold,  
...h is in thy power; only upon  
...not forth thine hand. So Satan  
...from the presence of the LORD.

### AFFLICTIONS

And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:  
 14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:  
 15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.  
 16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.  
 17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.  
 18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy

...ing of Job's name  
...ptuagint (LXX), the  
...of the OT. The Hebrew  
...ne that is common in the  
...east" could designate "virtually any place  
...from Damascus to Arabia and as far east as  
...Persia" (R. Alden, Job, 50).  
...15 To ensure his family's spiritual purity  
...1:9-11 Satan challenged Job's motives  
...for fearing God. He suggested that Job's  
...devotion to God depended on his life cir-  
...cumstances.

U N D E R S T A N D | E X P L O R E | A P P L Y

# Job; Ecclesiastes

בני ישראל  
לפני יהוה  
בעצם היום  
הוא לא  
זה ליהוה שמרים

זה ואהרן זאת חקק  
איש מקנת כסף ומל  
א יאכל בו בבית אחד יא  
חוצה ועצם לא תשברו בו  
אתו וכי יגור אתך גר ועשה פ  
כל זכר ואי יקרב לעשתו והיה כא  
ערל לא יאכל בו תורה אחת יהיה לא  
ויעשו כל בני ישראל כאשר צוה יהוה

# THE MEANING OF LIFE

Many people try to build their lives on success, wealth, power, or intellectual accomplishments. Such a way of life, however, is ultimately futile and meaningless. Everything in this life is fleeting and fading away; anything that does not have eternal value really has no value.

Jesus taught that a house built on the sand will collapse when the storms hit. But the one who builds his house on the rock—his house will stand (Matt. 7:24-27). This “rock” that provides a solid foundation for life is Jesus Himself. Jesus is the foundation for a life that is secure, satisfying, and meaningful.

The Old Testament character of Job learned that the answer to life’s mysteries and meaning lies in proper reverence for God. It’s been said that you don’t know God is all you need until God is all you have. In losing everything he had, Job discovered that God was all he really needed.

Solomon learned the meaning of life by gaining and acquiring everything life had to offer. Despite having everything, he found it was all futile and meaningless if God is not the central focus of life.

All of this points to our need of Jesus and the life He offers. He came so that we can have life that is abundant and eternal (John 3:16; 10:10). Right now, He is waiting for you.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord.  
In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

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After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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\*Evangelistic Emphasis

# MEET THE WRITERS

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**Liz Sherrer** wrote the teaching plans for this quarter. Liz is a retired teacher and educational consultant. She has had the privilege of providing staff development and consulting for schools across the nation to improve literacy skills. Liz holds degrees from Oklahoma State University and the University of Central Oklahoma. She is married to Dr. Joe Sherrer, a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. They are the proud parents of two grown sons and five grandchildren. Liz loves teaching her adult Bible study class each week at Southern Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma City using the *Explore the Bible* curriculum.

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit [LifeWay.com/doctrinalguideline](http://LifeWay.com/doctrinalguideline).

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# A WORD FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

Job and Ecclesiastes? Really!

Most two-year blocks of time are filled with ups and downs. The past two years seem to have had more than their fair share. Members of the team that create these resources and our associates have seen deaths of loved ones and births, a retirement and an addition to our team, surgeries and recoveries, and sickness and health. We felt the economic impact of quarantines and learned new ways of relating, working, and teaching. Our experience was not unique, having heard from many of you as well.

The challenges of the last two years set the background for what you have in your hands. As we and our writers worked through Job and Ecclesiastes, we did so when facing many of the same questions addressed by Job and Solomon. We rediscovered the joy of trusting God for each day, the promise of a sunrise, and the satisfaction of a sunset. Job and Solomon came to the same conclusion as they looked at life: trust God in all things. They discovered a hope that was based on the One who does not change. That trust and hope brought balance and perspective to their lives.

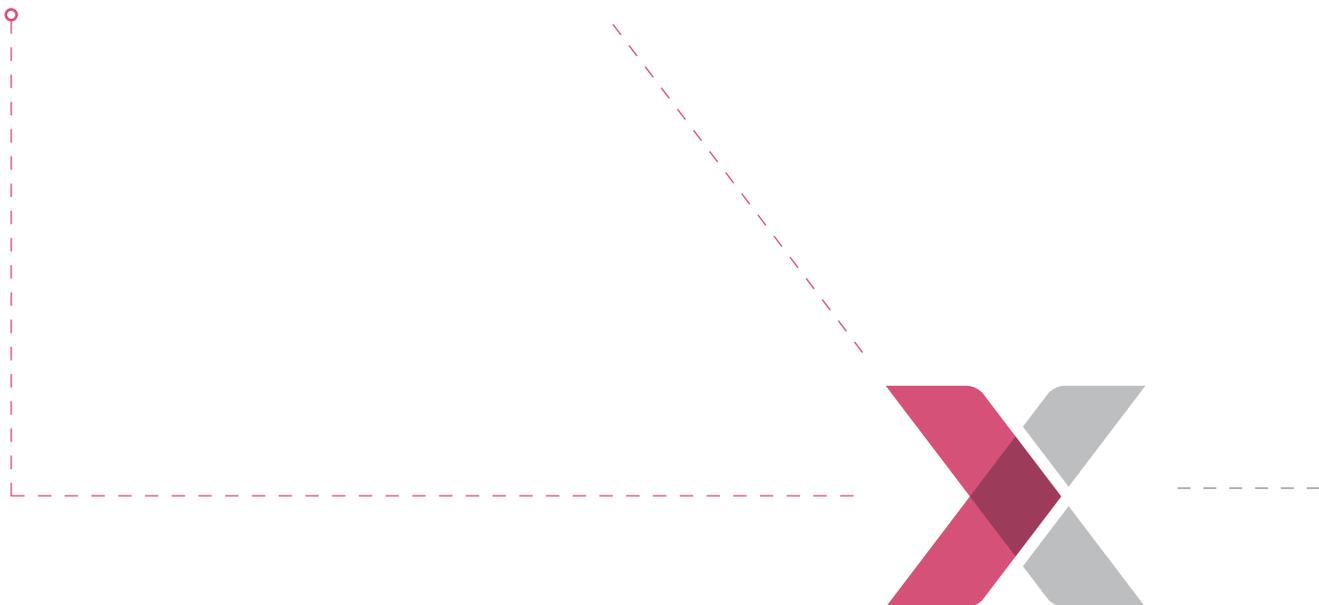
Job and Solomon learned some important lessons that can help us today. As we study these two Bible books, we will focus on these timeless truths and the hope found through faith in God and in His redemptive work. May God help us remain faithful to Him in all things.

In His service,

**G. Dwayne McCrary**

Team Leader

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# WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

**Abaddon** [uh BAD uhn]—Hebrew word that means “to perish,” parallel to death (Job 28:22) or Sheol (Job 26:6). It means the place of utter destruction. Destruction and death are personified—they speak—in Job 28:22.

**Chaldeans** [kal DEE uhns]—In the Old Testament, the terms *Chaldeans* and *Babylonians* may be used interchangeably. The geographic region of Chaldea lies in modern Iraq, near its border to Iran.

**Cush**—A nation south of Egypt in Old Testament times; the Hebrew word *Cush* is sometimes translated “Ethiopia,” as in the King James Version. The borders of ancient Cush, however, were not identical with the borders of modern-day Ethiopia.

**Naamathite** [NAY uh muh thight]—A Naamathite was a resident of Na’ameh. Although the exact location is uncertain, this may have been Djebel-el-Na’ameh in north-west Arabia.

**Ophir** [OH fuhr]—A place famous in the ancient Near East for its trade, especially in its highly-valued gold. Solomon’s ships brought sixteen tons of gold and other goods from Ophir (1 Kings 9:28; 10:11). The exact geographical region is unknown.

**Sabeans** [suh BEE uhns]—Sabeans were descendants of Sheba, the rich queen who visited Solomon (1 Kings 10). They came from the southern part of Arabia and were known as traveling merchants (Job 6:19). *Sebean* may also have been a general term for nomadic merchants of any origin. Sabeans destroyed Job’s flocks, herds, and servants (Job 1:15).

**Sheol** [SHEE ohl]—In Old Testament understanding, Sheol was the abode of the dead. It is described as a place of doom and darkness (Job 10:21).

**Shuhite** [SHOO hight]—A person from Shuah; Shuah was the home of Job’s friend Bildad (Job 2:11). Shuhites were possibly descendants of Shuah, son of Abraham (Gen. 25:2).

**Temanite** [TEE muhn ight]—A person from Teman, a town located in Edom between the southern border of Israel and the Gulf of Aqaba. Temanites were renowned for their wisdom (Jer. 49:7). Job’s friend Eliphaz was a Temanite (Job 2:11).

# BIBLE READING PLAN

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Job 1:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Job 17:11-18:4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Job 34:21-37
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Job 1:13-22	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Job 18:5-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Job 35:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Job 2:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Job 19:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Job 36:1-21
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Job 3:1-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Job 19:13-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Job 36:22-33
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Job 3:20-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Job 20:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Job 37:1-24
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<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Job 5:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Job 21:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Job 38:25-41
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Job 5:16-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Job 21:22-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Job 39:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Job 6:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Job 22:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Job 39:19-30
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<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Job 9:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Job 25:1-26:14	<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Ecclesiastes 1:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Job 9:21-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Job 27:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11
<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Job 10:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Job 27:13-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Ecclesiastes 2:12-26
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	<input type="checkbox"/> 31. Job 34:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 31. Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

# USING THIS GUIDE TO LEAD

## BEFORE THE GROUP TIME

### **1. Study the core passage.**

Start preparing early. Read the passage, listing people, places, key words, key phrases, and actions taken. Use the commentary included in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, and the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* to discover information about the items you listed. Write a summary of the main idea you discovered using the statement printed under the session title of each session as a starting place.

### **2. Create a group time plan.**

Craft a group plan that helps the group discover and respond to the main idea. Consult the Group Plans in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (includes ideas for using the *Personal Study Guide*). Identify ways to focus the group's attention, explore the text, summarize the lesson, and challenge the group.

For additional ideas or questions, consult *QuickSource* and *Explore the Bible Extra* (identifies a current event to introduce and conclude the lesson, found at [goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras](http://goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras)). Review the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* items. Look at the LifeWay Sunday School blog and Groups Ministry blog for helps on leading an ongoing Bible study group.

### **3. Gather and review.**

Use the list under Gather on the first page of each session. Make sure you have additional copies of the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* for anticipated guests.

## DURING THE GROUP TIME

### **4. Arrive early.**

Make sure you are the first person to arrive. Pray as you set up the area. Greet everyone as participants arrive and focus their attention on the Bible study.

### **5. Lead the group in a time of Bible study.**

Use the plan you created, recording notes of how the group responded. Remember, every group experience takes a few unexpected twists and turns; be flexible.

## AFTER THE GROUP TIME

### **6. Evaluate and Record.**

Review the Reinforce idea to encourage the group to put into practice the truths discovered. Record prayer requests and other insights you gained about the group and specific participants. Use these notes to help you be a better teacher in the future.

### **7. Start preparing to lead the next group time.**

# MEETING THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE FAMILY OF ADULT RESOURCES

## CORE RESOURCES

Use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* or *Personal Study Guide* and *Leader Guide* as the core resource for your group.



### Daily Discipleship Guide

Resource for both the group members and the group leader. An alternative to the Personal Study Guide/Leader Guide model. Includes key words, commentary and questions for the group, daily Bible readings for personal study after the group time, and ideas for smaller groups to discuss the study. Leader helps with targeted teaching plans included in back.



### Personal Study Guide

Resource for the group members to help them prepare for and study during the group time.



### Leader Guide

Resource for leaders of groups using the Personal Study Guide. Includes commentary and teaching plans.



## Additional Leader Helps

### Commentary

Provides additional insight into the passages studied.



### QuickSource

Resource for leaders, providing additional discussion questions, an object lesson, and dig deeper feature. Also provides a tool for an individual called on to step in to lead the group on short notice.



### Leader Pack

Resource filled with posters, masters for informative handouts, and access to a digital leader pack (includes DOC files of the Leader Guide commentary, group plans, the pack items in PDF format, and other helps for the leader).

Find out more or order at [goExploreTheBible.com](http://goExploreTheBible.com)

# INTRODUCTION TO JOB; ECCLESIASTES

Where can wisdom and understanding be found? This is one of the central questions that has consumed humanity from generation to generation. Human beings have always been interested in gathering and classifying knowledge in order to learn from experience, and in many cases it is wise to learn from the experiences of others. All this is done in the pursuit of wisdom.

As Christians, we can be thankful that there is a category of literature in the Bible classified as “wisdom literature.” In biblical scholarship there are several works that are categorized in this manner; these works often include Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and some might add Song of Solomon. There are also psalms that would fall into the category of wisdom literature. Because wisdom literature is also found in other sections of the Bible (parables of Jesus or sections of James), categorizing books this way is a little restrictive even if it is generally helpful. At the very least, one could argue that wisdom literature in the Bible is found in texts that are primarily concerned with living a godly life in light of God’s sovereign rule in creation. In some ways, this helps us understand exactly what wisdom is. Wisdom is what can be learned from experience or is the ability to make good choices in life. To put it another way, wisdom is the good application of knowledge in everyday situations. Take note; wisdom is not just abstract knowledge but applied knowledge in real life experiences. Wisdom is very practical.

In this study we will examine two books of wisdom, namely Job and Ecclesiastes. Job and Ecclesiastes offer a specific side of wisdom, namely, reflections on the perplexity of human life (or as Ecclesiastes frames it, life “under the sun”). In some ways, wisdom literature tends to resist a straightforward chronological setting or

even to follow a strictly thematic division (in most places). Job and Ecclesiastes both read as narratives for the most part, while utilizing forms similar to the Psalms or Proverbs in certain places.

While Ecclesiastes and Job are certainly unique, there are several themes we find in both books that are explored elsewhere in the Bible. First, there is the theme of “fearing God” which sets the orientation or framework within which life is lived. Second, both books express the limits of human wisdom and the distinction between Creator and creature. Both Ecclesiastes and Job contrast the righteous and wicked in the context of justice and God’s mysterious workings in the world. Finally, both books differentiate between two kinds of wisdom: the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man. The wisdom of man is gained through human thought, and experiences can often be helpful. Godly wisdom, however is ultimate, because it is wisdom revealed from God.

## JOB

Job is one of the most profound and transparent books of the Bible. The writer of the Book of Job is unknown. Some scholars have proposed Job himself was the writer. We can surmise that the writer or narrator of Job was a Hebrew well acquainted with Old Testament Scripture (Pss. 8:4; 107:40) and was a learned and well-traveled individual.

There are no historical indicators to determine the context of the book rather than the circumstances of Job’s life. The earliest reference to Job is found in Ezekiel 14:14, where the prophet listed Job as an example of virtue.

Job wrestled with the issues of human suffering and divine purposes, and ultimately teaches us to submit to the mysteries of God.

Even still, Job reminds us that we can find comfort in the presence of God even when we cannot discern His purposes. In Job, we understand that the mysterious order of the universe is not fully revealed to mankind, and we must learn to trust in the God who presides over the universe.

## **ECCLESIASTES**

The Book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Old Testament's wisdom literature. Its name literally means "one who addresses an assembly of people," "teacher," or "preacher." Given the book's instruction in wisdom, it is best to think of the title referring to its writer as "the Teacher."

The writer reveals he was a son of David who ruled in Jerusalem over Israel (1:1,12). This points to Solomon, since he was the only descendant of David to rule in Jerusalem over all of Israel. The language as well as the content and literary evidence in the book all support Solomon's authorship. That being the case, Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes sometime between 971-931 BC, the time of his reign. Given his tone, he most likely wrote the book closer to the end of his life.

The purpose of the Book of Ecclesiastes is to show the futility and meaninglessness of life when it is lived apart from God as its central focus and object of devotion. Anything that does not have eternal value has no value. Recognition of this truth should drive people to faith in God. Satisfaction in life comes when people trust God and His sovereign will for their lives, rejoice in His blessings, fear Him, and obey His commandments. Life is short, so people need to seize the opportunities God gives them when He gives them and prepare themselves for death and then the judgment, where they will give an account to God for how they lived their lives.

Both Ecclesiastes and Job teach us important lessons about life as the collected wisdom gathered by saints who have experienced things before us. While Ecclesiastes may be a little disturbing because of the themes explored, it presents the often harsh realities of living in a broken world. While Job may cause people to reconsider their assumptions about God's ways and the normative outworking of justice in the universe, in the end the majesty and sovereignty of God loom much larger than the questions we may ask. There are mysteries approached in these books that are not fully answered, and just like in our lives, these unresolved tensions force us to trust and depend on the wisdom of God.

These are complex books. However, the benefit of going deep into God's Word is that God's Word will go deep into our hearts. The honesty of these books provides insight into our limited perceptions and understandings of the world in which we live. The good news is that where we find our own wisdom lacking and our false perceptions confronted, we have an opportunity to repent and grow. Therefore, tread carefully and prayerfully. May God settle your hearts to be at peace with who His Word shows Him to be, and may His Word shape you into who He wants you to be.

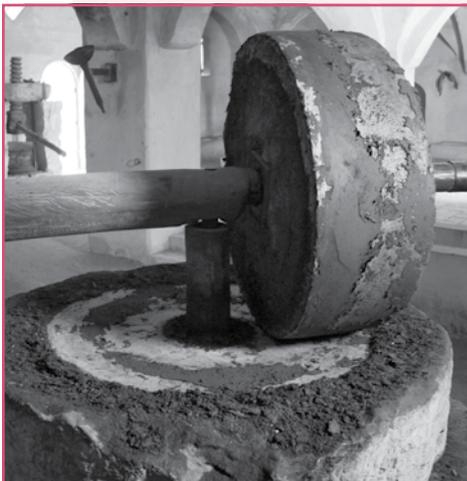
# OUTLINE OF JOB; ECCLESIASTES

## OUTLINE OF JOB

- I.** The Testing Begins (1:1–2:10)
- II.** First Round of Discourse (2:11–14:22)
- III.** Second Round of Discourse (15:1–21:34)
- IV.** Third Round of Discourse (22:1–31:40)
- V.** Elihu Speaks (32:1–37:24)
- VI.** God Speaks (38:1–42:6)
- VII.** Resolution (42:7-17)

## OUTLINE OF ECCLESIASTES

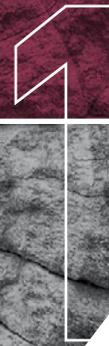
- I.** Introduction: The Search for Meaning (1:1-11)
- II.** The Search Described (1:12–6:12)
- III.** Wisdom Gained in the Search (7:1–10:20)
- IV.** Conclusion: Fear and Honor God (11:1–12:14)



### ON THE COVER

Stone olive press found at Tel Aviv, the ancient port city of Joppa. The beam through the round upright stone was pushed by an animal or human. The rolling stone crushed the olives, and the oil was collected in a vat. Olive oil was used for cooking, lamp fuel, medicinal ointments, and the anointing of kings. Oil also was a symbol of blessing and joy. (See session 12.)

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BRENT BRUCE/ ERETZ ISRAEL MUSEUM/ TEL AVIV, ISRAEL (60/9260)



# Faith Tested

Believers show the depth of their faith in adversity.

## JOB 1:8-22

**MEMORY VERSE:** JOB 1:21

**STUDY** Job 1:8–22, noting the interactions between God and Satan, as well as Job’s response. Use Explore the Text on pages 15–19 to gain insight into the depth of Job’s faith. Reflect on how challenging it can be to praise God in the midst of difficulties.

**CREATE** a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 20–22. Focus on helping the group recognize Job as a real man and Satan as a real being who is powerful but not equal to God. Look for ways to reinforce the understanding of God’s sovereignty.

**GATHER** the following items:

- Extra Personal Study Guides (PSGs)
- Chart paper or a white board and markers

### Prepare to Display:

- Pack Item 1** (*Map: Ancient Near East During Patriarchs*)
- Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*)

### Make Copies of:

- Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Job Time Line*)
- Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*)

**CONSULT** the weekly Explore the Bible adult podcast to gain insights on the go about this week’s study on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, LifeWay’s Digital Pass, or at [goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training](http://goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training).

**REINFORCE** the session by reminding the group that a new study is beginning that will help them deal with some of life’s most difficult questions about suffering and pain in this world.

**KEY DOCTRINE**

*The Kingdom*

The kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King (Rom. 5:17).

# FIRST THOUGHTS

Most of us hold to an idea that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. But how do we explain bad things happening to good people? Adversity can blindside us and leave us reeling in shock and dismay. We struggle to look for answers, yet answers are not always found, just more questions. Job experienced unexpected tragedies in his life and demonstrated the depth of his faith as he faced them.

(In PSG, p. 10) **What is the most difficult challenge you have faced? What did you learn about what you trusted during that challenge?**

**BIBLE SKILL**

*Use a Bible dictionary.*

Read an article on “suffering” in a Bible dictionary. Make a list of the faithful men and women of the Bible who suffered unimaginable circumstances. How do these examples help you properly frame your expectations of the Christian life? How does their faith teach you and shape your response to suffering?

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# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

**JOB 1:1–2:10**

The first few chapters of Job serve as a prologue, introducing us to some of the main characters and setting up the storyline of the book. We are introduced to Job in 1:1-5. He lived in Uz, which was outside of Israel. He was a man of complete integrity, he feared God, and he turned away from evil (1:1). Much could be said of the first verse alone. In many ways, this first verse puts forth an excellent epitaph for the headstone of a faithful follower of God. The text also notes that Job was a faithful leader of his family (1:2-5). Job’s fear of God led him to advocate for his children’s forgiveness of potential sin, concerned that they may have cursed God in their week-long parties (1:5).

Looking at 1:6–2:10, the introduction of Satan, the accuser, sets the plot of the book in motion. The setting is heaven. While the “sons of God” (angelic associates) gather around their King, the dialogue with the accuser takes center stage. The term *accuser* refers to one who acts like a prosecuting attorney (Ps. 109:6; Zech. 3:1-2) or a political foe who attempts to overthrow the king (2 Sam. 19:22). In the Old and New Testaments, the words used in reference to Satan carry the ideas of “slanderer, accuser, adversary, or opponent.” The adversary slanders and accuses believers (Rev. 12:10). Satan lures and tempts people to sinful actions (1 Thess. 3:5; Matt. 4:3). In Scripture, we also see that he inflicts physical suffering (Job 2:1-10; 2 Cor. 12:7) and schemes evil (2 Cor. 2:11; 2 Tim. 2:26). All of these descriptions are congruent with the happenings in the Book of Job.

During this conversation between God and the accuser, we are introduced to the two-stage test of Job’s integrity through suffering. Job’s wife asked a question in 2:9 that frames the tension of the first few chapters. Would Job maintain his integrity throughout this ordeal? Job 1:8 and 2:3

make it undoubtedly clear that Job was an innocent man. Would he accept only good from God and not adversity? (See 1:10.) The accuser believed that if God removed Job's blessings, then Job would curse God (1:11; 2:5). In the end, we will see that Job did not curse God but in fact blessed God's name (1:21-22).

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### PERMISSION GRANTED (JOB 1:8-12)

#### Verses 8-11

When God learned the accuser had been roaming the earth, He asked if he had come across His **servant Job**. The description of Job as God's *servant* is important for the plot of this narrative. We know from verse 1 that Job was innocent and had integrity. The title *servant* indicates that God Himself acknowledged Job's humble service. As readers, we are not in a place to question Job's godliness. In fact, God said that ***no one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil***. This three-part epitaph of Job's virtuousness is grounded in the fact that Job feared God, which is paramount in wisdom literature as true wisdom.

The accuser was quick to land an adversarial question, namely: Why did Job fear God? Satan did not question Job's ethical character; he questioned the motivation behind his ethical character. Did Job obey God as a means to prosperity? In other words, was Job more interested in the gifts or the Giver of those good gifts? As the beginning of chapter 1 made clear, Job was wealthy and enjoyed a large family that surrounded him in love. With all of these blessings, was Job protected from the harsh realities of the world? If these blessings were removed, would Job's character crumble? The accusation was not without grounds. As the text makes clear, God had blessed the work of Job's hands. Even more, everything Job touched multiplied with rapid increase.

Scripture does motivate godly behavior with rewards for the faithful. At the same time, isn't godly behavior instructed regardless of the situation in which people might find themselves? In most cases in Scripture, faithful men and women did not enjoy the benefits of material wealth like Job. Nonetheless, they were faithful.

The test proposed by the accuser in verse 11 was cunning and would reveal the sort of man Job was. It is important at this point to address the nature of Job's innocence before God. We are only in the first chapter of this complicated book but already deep into the complexities of Job. The story of Job does not negate the words of Paul in Romans 3:10 ("There is no one righteous, not even one") or render the saving work of Christ unnecessary. Paul was clear that no one is righteous, not one. Therefore, the innocence of Job does not mean that he lived a life of absolute perfection. In fact, Job admitted his shortcomings in the dialogues to come. A key to sorting out

#### VERSES 8-11

<sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil." <sup>9</sup> Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" <sup>10</sup> Haven't you placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face."

the question of Job's innocence is found early in the first chapter, namely, in the accuser's question: ***Does Job fear God for nothing?***

Job passed the test of innocence because of his response in the face of loss of his wealth and health. His response revealed no flawed motive for his love of God. Job was innocent in the sense that he did not deserve the tragedies that had befallen him. Job is not portrayed as sinless but as one who demonstrated his innocent motives in response to the tragedies.

We know there is only one truly innocent and righteous Person to ever walk the earth. In many ways, the temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:4-13) serves as a reverse picture of what happened here in Job. The accuser tested Job by taking away all of Job's blessings; Jesus was tested by being offered all the earthly blessings. Job was faced with involuntary suffering to test his innocence. Jesus voluntarily faced suffering so that all could be declared righteous through Him. The court case that we first hear about in Job 1-2 ended with Jesus. Satan was defeated in both encounters.

For the accuser, Job was presumed to love God as a means to an end, the end being material prosperity. It's almost as if the accuser painted God as some sort of cosmic vending machine, if one inserted tokens of obedience, then he or she could expect a reward. Thus, the accuser was willing to bet that when all of Job's material blessings were taken away, Job would curse God. However, there are no bets with God. God has no equal and does not wager.

## VERSE 12

<sup>12</sup> "Very well," the LORD told Satan, "everything he owns is in your power. However, do not lay a hand on Job himself." So Satan left the LORD's presence.

## Verse 12

It is rather surprising that Satan was allowed into the presence of God. He came as the adversary of the righteous man of God. In this case, God allowed Satan to follow through with his proposal but with one condition. In verse 12, the accuser was granted permission to attack all of Job's possessions but could not ***lay a hand on Job himself***. Thus, Satan set out to destroy those close to Job and the possessions Job held close. Again, one must remember that the accuser is powerful but not equal to God. The full reasons for God's permission to carry out this test are hidden in His mysterious providential will. Isaiah 55:9 reminds us: "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

We know from the entirety of Scripture that God is intrinsically good. One might read this passage and question the goodness of God based on how these events played out. Regardless of the changing circumstances, God's goodness does not change. Even when the evil one seeks opportunities to attack God's faithful followers, we can hold fast knowing that God is good and faithful to us. The process of sanctification is a journey. At this point in the narrative, we have just set out on our journey with God's suffering servant. What God will providentially work in Job is yet to be seen.

**Many health, wealth and prosperity teachers equate earthly blessings with heavenly favor. How does this passage counter that claim?**

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## ATTACK EXECUTED (JOB 1:13-19)

### Verses 13-19

At this point the accuser has left God's presence with permission to execute the test on Job. On a day his children were celebrating in their oldest brother's house, Job began to receive the reports of tragedy. All of these things happened in one day.

Job 1:4-5 indicates that Job's seven sons took turns having banquets in their homes, and their three sisters would come to join them in the festivities. In ancient Near Eastern culture it would have been understood the oldest son would have begun the seven-banquet cycle. The cycle would have proceeded to the next oldest and so on to the youngest, who would have entertained everyone in the final seventh banquet of the cycle. Verse 5 indicates that after the seventh banquet and before the next round of banquets commenced at the oldest son's home, Job sent for his children to purify them and to offer burnt offerings on their behalf. There is no hint that what his children were doing was sinful, but like any godly parent, Job was concerned for the spiritual well-being of his children. As the priest of his family, Job wanted to make sure all was well for his children in relationship to God. By regularly rising early in the morning to offer burnt sacrifices for his children, Job demonstrated he understood the necessity and power of an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. He did not want his children to fall into the sin that Satan hoped Job himself would commit. It was immediately after Job demonstrated his devotion and faith in God by offering sacrifices that this succession of catastrophes occurred.

The first (1:14-15) and third (1:17) tragedies were executed by the hands of men, the second (1:16) and fourth (1:18-19) tragedies were caused by natural disasters. We also know that Satan was the one at work behind the scenes. It is important for our understanding of the dialogue to come that in the worldview of Job's day such events were interpreted not as random tragedies but as signs of divine wrath.

Note the repetition that each messenger was ***still speaking when another messenger came and reported***. The reader is meant to see that each successive wave of tragic news came swiftly. The rapid sequence of hearing these things must have been overwhelmingly devastating to Job.

The size of Job's herds was enormous compared to what was common in the ancient Near East. (See 1:3.) Without warning, his ***oxen, donkeys, sheep, and camels*** were all taken away. Job's household had also fallen, for all of his servants were slaughtered by sword or disseminated by fire.

As if all that was not enough, a ***powerful wind*** swept through the desert and collapsed the house on his children who were celebrating with one another. Can you imagine the trauma of this moment? It is one thing to lose earthly possessions. Wealth can always be reacquired. But Job's ***sons and daughters***? Even the thought of such tragedy is enough to bring someone psychological anguish. The reality of such things is enough to bring someone to absolute despair. Remember that the challenge Satan proposed was that none of God's people love Him more than they love themselves. Their love for God was self-centered.

### VERSES 13-17

<sup>13</sup> One day when Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, <sup>14</sup> a messenger came to Job and reported, "While the oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing nearby, <sup>15</sup> the Sabians swooped down and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!" <sup>16</sup> He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported, "God's fire fell from heaven. It burned the sheep and the servants and devoured them, and I alone have escaped to tell you!" <sup>17</sup> That messenger was still speaking when yet another came and reported, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, made a raid on the camels, and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

## VERSES 18-19

<sup>18</sup> He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house. <sup>19</sup> Suddenly a powerful wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on the young people so that they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

## VERSES 20-22

<sup>20</sup> Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, <sup>21</sup> saying: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life. The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. Blessed be the name of the LORD. <sup>22</sup> Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything.

This is one of the central issues of Job: the integrity of faith in spite of suffering. Within minutes, Job was hit from all sides with the most devastating news, and each announcement was worse than the one before, until the news reached a devastating climax. These four tragedies appeared to Job that all the forces of heaven and earth had turned hostile toward him. The readers have the sense of a man whose world was demolished.

It is important to note that Job was not aware of the exchange between God and Satan and had no explanation for his losses. Believers are not immune from experiencing calamity and loss. Suffering is no respecter of persons.

**Can you imagine what might have gone through Job’s thoughts in these moments of tragedy? What are several characteristic responses we might have when tragedy strikes?**

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## TRUST MAINTAINED (JOB 1:20-22)

### Verses 20-22

In verses 13-19 Job was brought to his knees in despair as the successive wave of tragic news crashed against him unrelentingly. His children were gone. The earthly wealth he had accumulated had vanished. All he had left at this point was his own health and his wife. As readers, we can imagine the possible reactions one might have to such tragedy. Would he blame God? Would he blame his children, potentially thinking they had done something to warrant such judgment? Would he seek retaliation on the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans? Would he spend the rest of his life blaming himself? Against all of these possible responses, we wait to hear from Job. When he opened his mouth, it was somewhat shocking in comparison to what we might naturally think would come forth.

In verse 20 **Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head.** Tearing one’s clothes and shaving one’s head was a sign of grief, mourning, and self-humiliation. (See Gen. 37:34; Deut. 21:12; Jer. 36:24; 2 Kings 2:12.) However, when Job spoke he did not lament. Instead, he accepted his fate and acknowledged that God had brought all of this on him. In fact, he **worshiped** the Lord who had taken all these things from him. It was much like the Teacher in Ecclesiastes who proclaimed, “As he came from his mother’s womb, so he will go again, naked as he came; he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands” (Eccl. 5:15).

The statement in verse 21 is a simple and powerful reflection on the transient nature of the blessings of this life. Everything we have is a gift from the hand of God. All of us, including Job, come into this world with nothing and leave with nothing. What God **gives** and what God **takes away**

is up to His sovereign will. Job understood this, and as harsh as it may seem, had a proper perspective on life. One of the things this text teaches us is that believers can worship God even in the midst of life's challenges, knowing He is sovereign. Job did not do as the accuser had predicted (v. 11). He did not curse God, in fact, he blessed His name!

The most striking reality of this account is that Job demonstrated his devotion to God. He did not love God as a means to an end. He did not elevate the gifts above the Giver. He did not sin or blame God for anything. In circumstances like these, it might be tempting to raise our fists at God and rail against His sovereign work. But Job worshiped and did not ascribe any wrongdoing to God. The text reminds us: ***The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.*** What we learn from this text is that believers show the depth of their faith in adversity.

Most believers do not experience the level of suffering Job did. In this sense, Job is not like every person. However, we can learn from Job's response to suffering. If we love God only for what He gives us and not for Himself, then we are serving ourselves, not Him. Regardless of what we as believers might suffer, we are always in the hands of a loving God. The Giver of our earthly gifts is much greater than the gifts. The Book of Job teaches us that even our experiences of suffering are temporary. Sometimes, in His wise providence, God allows us to face suffering to strengthen our trust in Him.

More importantly, this narrative points us forward to Jesus. We can see how Job's deep piety in suffering prefigures that greater Man, Jesus, who innocently suffered the wrath of God in order to refute the accusations of the accuser. Jesus, the truly innocent and righteous Servant of God suffered so that we would not have to face the greater tragedy of being vanquished from God's presence for all of eternity. Jesus took on the curse of death for our sin, so that we, like Job, could rise and bless His name.

**What does Job's response to tragedy teach us? What are a few biblical truths that serve as the foundations for Job's response?**

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# LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

## FOCUS ATTENTION

**PREPARE:** Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Ancient Near East During The Patriarchs*) and **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*) to be referenced during the session. On a white board or chart paper write the words “Unexpected Tragedies.”

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to the words on the board and ask: **When you see these words, what comes to your mind?** (Examples: natural disasters, world crisis, personal or family loss). Record the group responses on the chart as they are shared.

**ASK:** **What is the most difficult challenge you have faced? What did you learn about what you trusted during that challenge?** (PSG p. 10)

**TRANSITION:** *Today we begin a study of the Book of Job. Job, a real man, experienced unexpected tragedies in his life and revealed the depth of his faith as he faced those challenges. Job is sometimes viewed as a difficult book to understand because it addresses questions that all people grapple with as they cope with unexpected tragedies.*

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

**CONTEXT:** Distribute copies of **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Job Time Line*). Note the time frame of Job—about two thousand years before Christ—and how many other cultures developed parallel stories to Job. Using *Understand the Context* (PSG, p. 11) and **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Ancient Near East During The Patriarchs*), point out that “Jeremiah the prophet mentioned the land of Uz being in proximity to Edom, south of the land of Canaan (Jer. 25:20; Lam. 4:21)” (PSG, p. 11). Utilize **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*) to provide an overview of the study of Job.

**MINI-LECTURE:** Highlight that Job is based on the actual experiences of a particular person named Job who lived in the country of Uz. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 14:14,20) revealed that Job was a historical figure as real as Noah and Daniel. In the New Testament, James, the half-brother of Jesus, indicated that Job was a real person (Jas. 5:11). Paul also quoted two times from the Book of Job, providing even more authenticity.

**TRANSITION:** *We learn in Job 1:1-5 that Job was viewed by his family and others as a man of integrity. He was blessed with a large family and wealth. Yet the Bible also tells us that Job was a faithful follower of God.*

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**READ:** **Invite a volunteer to read Job 1:8-12** as the group listens for the attitudes displayed by God and Satan.

**DRAW:** At the top of a white board or chart paper write the word *characters* and then construct a three-column chart with the headings *God*, *Satan*, and *Job* above each column.

**IDENTIFY:** Lead the group to identify the attitudes and actions they heard displayed in these verses, and record their responses under the appropriate column.

**ASK:** **Why is it important for believers to remember that while we may be surprised and shocked by sudden calamities, God is not and He is in complete control?** (PSG, p. 13)

**EXPLAIN:** *In these verses Satan questioned Job’s motives for worshipping God. The Personal Study Guide (PSG) shares that the heart of the matter is the question, “Can a person truly love God for who He is and not just for what he or she can get from God?” (PSG, p. 14). God, more powerful than Satan, granted permission for Job’s faith to be tested.*

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**READ:** Call on a volunteer to read aloud **Job 1:13-19**, directing the group to listen for the specific actions Satan took against Job.

**GUIDE:** Refer to pages 15–16 of the PSG to help the group understand the passage.

**ASK:** Direct the group to turn to a neighbor and address the following question: ***What can believers learn about the timing, suddenness, and severity of Satan’s attacks from these verses?*** (PSG, p. 16)

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**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read **Job 1:20-22**, as the group listens for Job’s response.

**IDENTIFY:** Guide the group to share Job’s responses to the unexpected tragedies he faced, recording their answers on the third column of the chart.

**DISCUSS:** ***How does viewing God as sovereign over all His creation impact how a person responds to losses in this life?*** (PSG, p. 17)

**STUDY:** Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 17 of the PSG. Then discuss: ***How do these examples help you properly frame your expectations of the Christian life? How does their faith teach you and shape your response to suffering?***

**TRANSITION:** *Job remained confident in the Lord in the midst of extreme difficulties and continued to offer praise to his sovereign Lord.*

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**REFLECT:** Guide the group to consider how they would respond to the following question: ***How should knowing that Satan seeks opportunities to attack those who are faithful followers of God affect how they think and live?*** (PSG, p. 14)

**EVALUATE:** Now change the question from “how they think and live” to how “I think and live,” directing each individual to personalize the question in their own context.

**SHARE:** Relate one insight that you as a leader gained from these verses.

**REREAD:** Read Job 1:21 together as a group. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). Encourage each person to memorize the verse to provide encouragement when faced with unexpected tragedies.

**SUMMARIZE:** Referencing Apply the Text (p. 18), summarize the points gained from the session.

**ASK:** Lead the group to complete the first question set on page 18 of the PSG: ***Who do you know who is going through a challenging time? What insights from this passage can you share with them as encouragement?***

**PRAY:** Thank God for His sovereignty over all things. Thank Him for the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers in the face of challenging times.

## OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

### MUSIC

Lead the group to sing or listen to the lyrics of “The Solid Rock,” by Edward Mote. Highlight the second verse and invite the group to share how this hymn could be connected to Job 1:8-22. Emphasize how important it is to cling to Christ during difficult times. Conclude the session by reading chorally or by singing the chorus.

### DRAMA

Pre-enlist two people to present the conversation between God and Satan in a dialogue format. Divide the dramatic reading into two scenes (Job 1:6-12; 2:2-6) to be used at the appropriate time during the group time.

### VISUAL

#### *Gather paper and pencils.*

Distribute one 8½ x 11 piece of paper to a team of two to four people. Guide the team to fold the paper into four sections by folding the paper in half twice. As you move through the session, stop after each scene presented in Job 1:8-22 to allow time for the group to sketch the scene described using stick figures. Lead the groups to add a bubble comment for each scene. Scenes might include the two conversations between God and Satan, the response of Job’s wife, and Job’s response. Stress to the group that a quick sketch and comment is all that is needed, not a detailed drawing.

### RESEARCH

#### *Collect Bible concordances or commentaries.*

Pre-enlist a volunteer to prepare a brief overview of the background of the Book of Job. Direct the volunteer to a Bible dictionary or commentary for assistance. Encourage the person to address authorship, timing, and geography related to Uz, the Sabeans, and the Chaldeans during the time of Job. Be certain that Job is presented as a real person and Satan as a real being who is less powerful than the sovereign God.

### CASE STUDY

Place the group into teams of two to four persons. Direct each team to develop a case study of an unexpected tragedy, followed by a question related to the person’s response to their circumstances. Guide each team to present their case study and follow up with a discussion of the difficulty of remaining faithful and praising God in difficult circumstances.