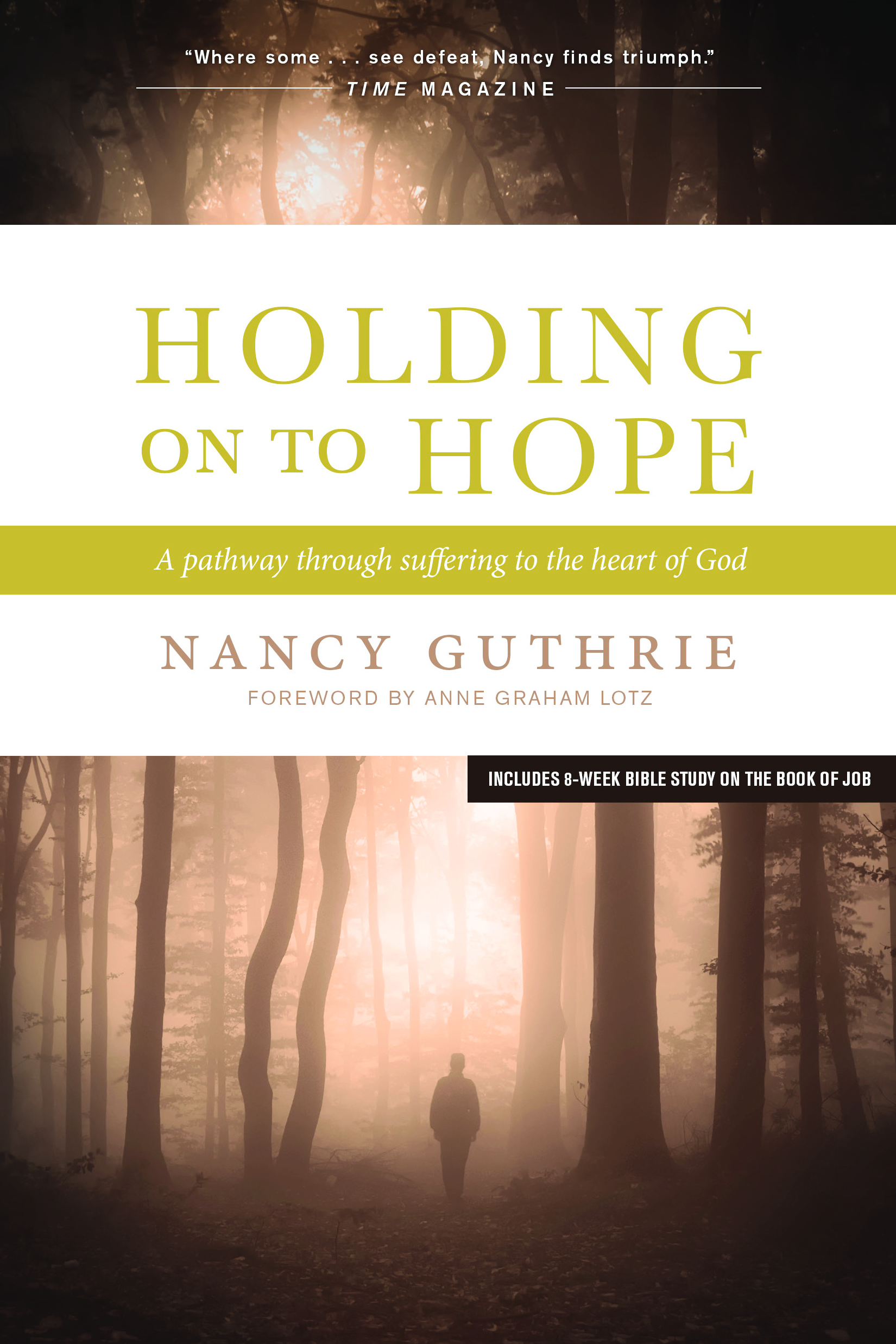
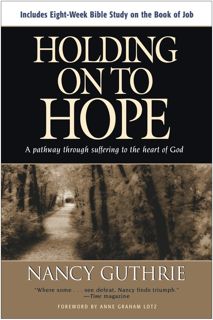
**An 8-Week Study of the Book of Job**

**A Companion to the book, *Holding on to Hope***

**By Nancy Guthrie**

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Second Edition

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*This is the study guide that is in the second edition (2015) of the book,* Holding on to Hope *by Nancy Guthrie. It is significantly different than the study guide found in the first edition. It has been formatted to be copied onto 8½ × 11 paper and provides more space for writing answers than is provided in the book. It should be used only by those who have a copy of the first or second edition of the book.*

First Edition

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**An Introduction to This Study Guide**

Studying Job is a thrilling but daunting undertaking. Job’s story addresses some of the most profound questions of human experience and an all-powerful God. Perhaps the most important lesson of the book of Job is that there are no simplistic answers to these questions—that God, while knowable, is also mysterious.

Like the book of Job itself, this study does not nail down all of the answers to the questions that Job’s story raises. But it will help you and those you study with to dig deeply into Scripture to discover more about who God is and how he works in the universe and in us. While he remains a God whose ways are often unexplainable, he has chosen to reveal himself to us through the person and work of Jesus and through the pages of Scripture. He “rewards those who sincerely seek him” (Hebrews 11:6) like Job did—and the reward is himself.

This guide has been designed to be used by an individual or a group to study the book of Job and its themes. Note that this study guide has been revised significantly from the study guide in the first edition of *Holding On to Hope*. Participants who are using a first edition copy of *Holding On to Hope* will want to be sure to download this revised study guide from the website ([www.nancyguthrie.com](http://www.nancyguthrie.com)) so that they will be able to track with the group using this second edition.

**Using This Study Guide on Your Own**

For individual study, this guide provides eight weeks of daily Bible study questions that will encourage your own pursuit and understanding of God. You will study the entire book of Job as well as many other Scripture passages about issues that Job’s story raises. And you will be encouraged to apply what you learn to your life so that God might use it to make you more like his Son. And that’s a good thing, isn’t it? A commitment to the study will help you solidify the life-transforming habit of daily Bible study, as well as build your anticipation for all that God wants to say to you and show you through your reading of his Word. Don’t become discouraged if you fall behind or are unable to get to the study every day. Just work through the questions as you can, so you will be able to listen to all that God wants to say to you.

**Using This Study Guide with a Group**

For group study, this guide provides daily Bible study assignments as well as a weekly small group discussion guide. Each week, participants will have six days’ worth of Bible study questions to work through before the next time you meet. Of course, some participants may rather complete all of the questions in one or two sittings rather than doing them daily. Your group may choose instead to work through the daily study questions as a group rather than on your own prior to coming together. This can be especially helpful if some members have a hard time completing the questions in between meeting times. Working through the daily questions together can also be a real encouragement to group members who are unfamiliar with the Bible and feel a bit intimidated by the Bible study questions.

A discussion guide is provided at the end of each week’s questions to aid in discussing the truths revealed in the text you’ve studied that week. It will be up to your group to determine whether or not you will work through the specific answers to all of the daily study questions in addition to the discussion questions, or simply bring in those specific questions from the daily study members want to discuss. In fact, you may want to ask members to highlight particular questions from the daily study they want to be sure to discuss with the group.

**A Word to Leaders**

If you are leading the group, I encourage you to set a tone of openness, beginning with your first session together, so that everyone feels free to confront the difficult questions raised in Job’s story and to share about the hurts in his or her life. Your group should be a place where people feel accepted and cared for by others. However, you may find it necessary to clarify that the purpose of your group is to study and discuss the Scripture rather than to serve as a support group. You may want to plan carefully which discussion questions to cover, setting an approximate amount of time for each question so that you are sure to get through all of the topics in the time allotted. If time allows, you might also invite participants to bring in particular questions from the week’s daily study that they found especially interesting or challenging.

Many of the questions are open-ended and ask, “What do you think?” Encourage participants to recognize that these are opinion questions and that there may not be a “right” answer. Make your group a safe place to be open with individual thoughts and ideas. At the same time, lean on the revealed truth of God’s Word rather than personal opinions for answers. Encourage group members to support their views with Scripture.

I also encourage you to become as comfortable as possible with not needing to nail down every issue with a black-and-white answer, or to assume that you, as the leader, should have all of the answers. In truth, there is much we cannot understand about God and much we cannot control in this world. What we can control is how we respond to the circumstances God allows into our lives and how we choose to pursue God in the midst of our questions. Encourage your group members to keep pursuing God with their questions while committing to love, serve, and trust him even if their questions are never answered to their satisfaction.

**My Prayer**

My prayer in preparing this study has been that God will honor your desire for him, and that this study will be not merely an intellectual pursuit but one that transforms your heart and mind. If you are suffering or are touched deeply by the pain of this world, this study will have special meaning for you. I have tried to include many of the most difficult questions that have pressed in on me in dark places. May God honor the effort you put into this study so that he might fill the dark places in your life with the light of his very presence.

*Nancy Guthrie*

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**Week 1**

**Job: A Blameless God-Fearer**

**Job 1**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Getting Familiar with the Book of Job**

1. Spend some time getting familiar with the basic flow of the book of Job as a whole. As you skim through chapters and chapter headings, jot down brief answers to the following basic questions about Job:

Who are the three main characters of the story introduced in chapter 1?

What loss invades Job’s life in chapter 1?

What happens to Job in chapter 2?

In chapters 3–31, Job and his three friends make speeches to one another. Who are these three friends?

In chapters 32–37, a fourth friend speaks. What is his name?

Who begins to speak in chapter 38? What form does his speaking take?

How would you summarize what happens in the final chapter of Job (chapter 42)?

2. What questions do you have about Job before we begin our study that you hope to have answered over the course of our study?

3. What do you hope you will gain from investing your time and effort in the group sessions and in the daily Bible study involved with this study of Job?

**Day 2: The Righteous and the Wicked**

The book of Job is part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The wisdom books were a gift of God to his people helping them to know how to live wisely in a world that came under a curse because of Adam and Eve’s sin, even as they awaited the coming of the promised descendant of Eve who would set everything right. The wisdom book of Proverbs puts forth some general principles for the way things work in the world.

Read Proverbs 3. What do we learn in this chapter about what those who are righteous can expect?

What can those who are wicked expect according to Proverbs 3?

3. Read Psalm 1. What can the righteous expect based on this psalm?

4.What can the wicked expect based on Psalm 1?

We’re about to discover in the book of Job that Job and his friends have absorbed this wisdom but have, perhaps, become rigid and presumptuous in their application of it.

**Day 3: Meeting Job**

1.Read Job 1:1‑5. In the first verse, Job is characterized in what four ways? What do you think each means?

2. In the first verse we learn that Job was a great man morally and spiritually. Then in verses 2‑3, we learn he is a great man in what additional ways?

3. What do we learn about Job’s attitude and actions in regard to sin in verses 4‑5?

4. Considering what we know is about to happen to Job, and what we learned from Proverbs and Psalms in Day 1, why do you think the writer of the book wants us to know these things about Job up front?

**Day 4: Job’s Blessed Life before Loss**

In Job 1:1‑5 we learned about Job and his way of life. Let’s jump ahead to chapter 29, in which we get to hear Job himself describe what his life was like before his great loss and suffering.

1. What does Job long for in verses 1‑6?

2. What does he lament losing in verses 7‑11?

3. What does he miss doing according to verses 12‑17?

4. What did Job expect his life would be like according to verses 18‑20?

5. What does Job remember longingly in verses 21‑25?

**Day 5: Job’s Righteous Life before Loss**

Once again we’re jumping ahead to listen to Job, this time to hear him tell us about the righteousness of his life before his great loss and suffering.

1. Read Job 31. What sins does Job insist he is innocent of in each of the following verses?

31:1

31:5‑8

31:9‑10

31:13‑15

31:16‑23

31:24‑25

31:26‑28

31:29‑30

31:31‑32

31:33–34

2. Look back at verses 7, 27, and 29‑30 in chapter 31. Notice that Job is concerned not only with following the letter of God’s law in an outward way; he is also committed to God’s law being written on his heart. How does his understanding of righteousness remind you of what Jesus has to say in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7)?

**Day 6: The Suffering of a Righteous Man**

Job’s righteousness didn’t mean that he was without sin. To be blameless is not the same thing as being sinless or guiltless. To be blameless means that no matter how horrible the offense, all charges have been dropped. No blame has the power to stick or to condemn.

1. What does Philippians 3:9 tell us about where true righteousness comes from?

2. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, how was blamelessness available to Job even though he was a sinner?

In Job, a righteous man who suffered significantly, we see glimpses of One who would come, whose record of perfect righteousness is transferred to all who lived in the Old Testament era and put their faith in the coming of the Savior promised in Genesis 3:15, and to all who live on this side of the cross who put their faith in that same Savior. Jesus, the truly righteous man, took upon himself the punishment that you and I rightly deserve and transfers to us his perfect record of righteousness so that you and I might be deemed blameless before God.

3. Compare the suffering of a righteous man, Job, with the suffering of the only perfectly righteous man, Jesus, in the following verses.

Compare Job 10:1 to Mark 10:45

Compare Job 13:15 to John 10:15‑18

Compare Job 19:26 to Acts 13:34‑39

Compare Job 27:5 to Matthew 27:12

***Week 1 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. Based on your initial reading through the book, what would you say the book of Job is about?

2. On Day 1, you were asked what questions your initial reading and skimming in Job has raised for you that you hope to have answered and what you hope to gain over the course of this study. What are some of those questions and hopes?

3. Job is described as “a man of complete integrity” (Job 1:1). In what ways is his integrity evident?

4. Often when someone suffers, we say, “She doesn’t deserve that.” What does that statement reveal about our assumptions about goodness or godliness in relation to suffering?

5. If we look at the book of Job in context of the entire Bible, we know from Genesis 3 that the entire creation came under a curse because of Adam and Eve’s sin so that the perfect order in the world descended into disorder. How does this help us to begin to make sense of the suffering of the righteous?

6. How does the suffering of Jesus rid us of the false notion that if we are good and godly we won’t have to suffer?

7. What is the essence of what it means to be righteous, and how does a person become righteous?

**Week 2**

**The Challenge in Heaven**

**Job 1–2**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Job 1:6‑19**

In this section of Job, we get to overhear a conversation taking place in the heavenly courts between God and the Accuser, Satan.

1. Notice that Satan has come to present himself before God in the heavenly court and has to answer for where he has been and what he has been doing. What does that tell us about him?

2. What does God’s response in verse 8 indicate about what Satan may have been looking for as he patrolled the earth?

3. Put into your own words what Satan is saying to God in verses 9‑11.

4. What specifically does God give Satan permission to do?

5.What does this granting of permission tell us about God and about Satan?

**Day 2: Job 2:1‑6**

1. We’ve seen that Satan wants to prove that Job loves God only because God has given him a comfortable life. What do we learn about how his plans are being frustrated in 2:3?

2. How does Satan continue his effort to prove God is worthy of being loved only for what he can do for us in verse 4‑5?

3. How does God shift the boundaries in 2:6 that he set in 1:12 in regard to how Satan can inflict Job?

4. What are your thoughts at this point about God giving permission to Satan to bring so much suffering into Job’s life?

**Day 3: Satan’s Goals and Methods**

1. What do the following verses tell you about Satan’s goals?

Mark 4:14‑15

Luke 22:31‑32

1 Thessalonians 2:18

1 Peter 5:8

2.What do the following verses tell you about Satan’s methods of achieving those goals?

Genesis 3:13

2 Corinthians 11:14

2 Thessalonians 2:9

3. How has Satan deceived you in the past?

4. How has Satan tried to take away the seed of God’s Word that has been planted in your life?

**Day 4: God’s Power, Satan’s Power, and Your Power**

1. What do the following verses tell you about God’s power in relation to Satan’s power?

Luke 4:33‑36

Luke 8:27‑33

Romans 8:38‑39

1 John 3:8

2. What do the following verses tell you about your power over Satan?

Ephesians 4:27

Ephesians 6:11

James 4:7

3. In what day-to-day ways can a person give the devil a foothold in her life?

4. What is one change you could make to keep the devil from having power in your life?

**Day 5: Satan’s Ultimate Destiny**

1. What do these verses tell you about Satan’s ultimate destiny?

Genesis 3:14‑15

Matthew 25:41

Romans 16:20

Revelation 20:1‑3, 7‑10

2. From these verses, for whom was hell created?

3. Based on these verses as well as Revelation 21:27, how will life in the new heaven and new earth be even better than it was in Eden?

**Day 6: Protection from the Evil One**

1. Read Luke 22:31‑34. What similarities do you see to what you’ve read in Job 1 and 2?

2. What is the essence of Jesus’ prayer for Simon? How was it answered?

3. According to Matthew 6:9‑13, how does Jesus teach us to pray in regard to the devil’s schemes?

4. According to John 17:13‑19, how has Jesus prayed for his disciples and all of those who believe in Jesus through their message in regard to the devil’s desire to alienate us from God forever?

5. How is God answering this prayer of Jesus in the lives of believers now and into the future?

***Week 2 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. What do you think Satan really wants? How does God’s response to Satan (Job 1:12) reveal his knowledge of what Satan wants?

2. What accusation does Satan make against Job (1:9‑11)? Or is this really an accusation against God?

3. In this challenge, what would define a win for Satan? for God? for Job?

4. God gives Satan permission to harm Job. What does this reveal about God? about Satan? about Job?

5. How can this understanding about God’s power and Satan’s limitations help us in regard to difficulties and temptations we struggle with?

6. In 1:11 and again in 2:5, Satan tells God that if he withdraws his hand of protection and Job experiences great suffering, Job will curse God to his face. How is Job’s response to this the big question the whole book hangs on, and why does Job’s response to his suffering matter?

7. Satan seeks to use suffering as a wedge to alienate Job from God. Satan seeks to use this same tool today to alienate us from God forever. Perhaps he uses it because it is often very successful. How can we keep from allowing Satan to use the tool of suffering to alienate us from God?

**Week 3**

**Job’s Initial Response to Loss**

**Job 1–2**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Loss**

1. Read Job 1:13‑19. What do you notice when you compare these verses with Job 1:2‑3?

2. What are the “natural” causes of Job’s losses? And from what direction do each of the four disasters come?

3. Read Job 2:7‑8. What do each of the following verses add to our understanding of how Job is impacted?

Job 7:5

Job 16:8, 16

Job 17:7

4. Read Job 30 and note some phrases Job uses to describe how his life changed because of the loss of his possessions, children, and health.

**Day 2: Job’s Initial Response to Loss**

1. Read Job 1:20‑22. In what ways do we see Job respond to the loss of his property and children in these verses?

2. For each of the responses you listed, what does Job know about God that enables him to respond in that way?

3. Read Job 2:8‑10. In what ways do we see Job respond to the sores on his body in these verses?

4. What is Job’s wife getting at when she suggests he should not continue to claim he has integrity?

**Day 3: Sorrow**

1. Read Isaiah 53:3‑5 and Matthew 26:36‑38. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus understands what sorrow and grief feel like?

2. Read John 11:32‑35. Why do you think Jesus weeps even though he knows he is going to raise Lazarus from the dead?

3. Read Isaiah 25:7‑8 and Revelation 21:4. What promise for the future do you find in both of these passages?

4. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Paul says that he wants us to know what will happen to Christians who die so we will not be full of sorrow like people who have no hope. What do Christians and non-Christians have in common as they grieve? What is different about the way they grieve?

**Day 4: Worship**

1. Read John 4:23‑24. What kind of worshipers does God seek?

2. What are some ways that we go through the motions of worship rather than worship God “in spirit,” or with genuine devotion?

3. In our culture, many people practice a buffet-style religion—they choose which qualities their god possesses, often claiming he’s the God of the Bible. How is this different from worshiping God in “truth”?

4. In Romans 12:1 Paul instructs us to worship God, not by offering animals as sacrifices but by offering ourselves as a living sacrifice. What would it mean for you to offer yourself as a living sacrifice in worship to God?

**Day 5: Anger**

1. Read Psalm 4:4 and Ephesians 4:26. Are feelings of anger inherently sinful? Explain.

2. Read Proverbs 29:11. What do you think it means to “vent” one’s anger?

3. According to Proverbs 29:22, what are some results of giving in to anger and holding on to it?

4. What do you learn about acceptable anger from Mark 3:5 and John 2:13‑17?

5. According to James 1:19‑20, why should you seek to resist nurturing anger in your life?

**Day 6: Responding to Suffering**

1. Read 1 Peter 4. What would it look like for you to “arm [yourself] with the same attitude” (4:1) that Christ had toward suffering?

2. According to 1 Peter 4:19, what should you do if you suffer?

3. According to Romans 5:3‑5, how should we respond to suffering and why?

4. As you look back over the suffering you have experienced, how have you responded?

5. The next time suffering comes into your life, how would you like to respond?

***Week 3 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. In what ways does Job show his grief? What are some acceptable and unacceptable ways to show grief in today’s culture?

2. What personal experiences have you had with grieving or comforting someone who is grieving that reveal the awkwardness of expressing and consoling grief?

3. Do you find it amazing that Job is able to fall before God in worship at this point in his life? Why? Why do you think he is able to do that?

4. What does it mean to truly worship God? With your possessions? With your abilities? In private? In public? What does a lifestyle of worship look like?

5. Job said, “The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away” (1:21). How is it possible to be grateful to God when he has given *and* when he has taken away something or someone we love?

6. What does Job’s question to his wife, “Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?” (2:10) reveal about Job’s attitude toward suffering? What does it reveal about God?

7. What assumptions or expectations cause us to be surprised and offended by suffering in our lives?

8. While we want to respond to suffering in a way that is pleasing to the Lord, we have all failed at some point or another—all except One who suffered in perfect faithfulness. If you are joined to Christ by faith, what does this mean in regard to your record of response to suffering?

**Week 4**

**Who’s to Blame?**

**Job 3–21**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Read or Skim Job 3–7**

1. Select some of Job’s phrases in chapter 3 that best illustrate his state of mind, body, and faith.

2. Perhaps the gist of Eliphaz’s entire message can be summed up by his comment in 4:8. Put his message into your own words.

3. What do Eliphaz’s words in 5:1 reveal about his own faith and understanding of God?

4. Job summarizes his complaints against the attitudes and arguments of his friends in 6:26‑29. What are they?

5. As Job begins to cry out to God in 7:6‑21, how does his speech reveal that he does not agree with what Eliphaz said in 5:1?

**Day 2: Read or Skim Job 8–11**

1. Read Job 8:1‑7. What does Bildad indicate was the reason for the suffering of Job’s children?

2. What does Job long for in 9:32‑35 and again in 16:21? How has that longing been fulfilled for us according to 1 Timothy 2:5‑6?

3. Zophar is not just blunt but also insulting, and he offers simplistic answers. According to 11:6, what does Zophar imply is the reason for Job’s suffering?

4. Job’s friends say much that is right, good, and true, but it is wrongly applied. Which of their words ring true to you? And yet what is wrong with applying these principles to Job or this circumstance?

**Day 3: The Hand of God**

1. In Job 10:8, Job questions God, saying, “You formed me with your hands; you made me, and yet you completely destroy me.” What do the following verses in Psalms reveal about what God does for us with his hands?

Psalm 31:14‑15

Psalm 32:4‑5

Psalm 75:7‑8

Psalm 119:73

Psalm 139:9‑10

2. What did Jesus do with his hands, and what does each act mean to you personally?

Mark 8:22‑25

Mark 10:16

John 13:3‑5

John 20:24‑28

**Day 4: The Curse**

1. Read Genesis 3:1‑19. What aspect of the curse do you find in each of the following verses?

3:14

3:15

3:16

3:17

3:19

2. While this passage describes the Curse’s effect on the earth and humankind, it also gives us hope for salvation through the seed of the woman—Jesus. How did Satan “strike” or “bruise” Christ’s heel? How did Jesus “strike” or “crush” Satan’s head?

3. Read Romans 8:18‑25. What do you learn about the Curse from verses 20 and 21?

4. What does this passage indicate our waiting will be like during this time before the ultimate defeat of Satan and the end of the Curse?

5. How does Genesis 3:15 relate to Romans 16:20 and Revelation 12:9?

**Day 5: Is Suffering Punishment for Sin?**

1. Read Psalm 103:8‑12. What do we deserve and why? What do we receive from God instead?

2. According to Isaiah 53:5‑6 and 2 Corinthians 5:21, why did Christ suffer?

3. Read Romans 3:23‑26. How are we made right with God?

4. Read Romans 8:1‑3. What does it mean to not be condemned, and how is this made possible?

**Day 6: Read or Skim Job 12–21**

1. Job’s response to his friends seems to reject the simplistic view that people bear direct responsibility for everything bad or good that happens to them. What is the cause of suffering Job suggests in chapter 12? What phrases support your answer?

2. What does Job want to do in 13:3? What does this reveal about his faith?

3. Job calls his friends “worthless quacks” in 13:4 and proceeds to list their faults and failures. What criticisms does he name or imply in verses 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12?

4. What is the remedy for death that Job ponders in 14:13‑17 and that Jesus declares in John 5:25‑29?

5. As Job continues to probe death and beyond, his statements grow bolder. What confidence and hope does he reveal in 19:25‑27?

***Week 4 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. Beginning in chapter 3, Job is painfully, revealingly honest about his life and his faith, and this can’t help but make us uncomfortable. Why do you think we are more comfortable with “tidy” faith than we are with questioning, searching faith? Do you think after Job’s initial strong response that his faith has now failed?

2. Amazingly, in chapters 3–37 we don’t hear Job complain about losing his children, his servants, his livestock, his property, or his health. What is his essential complaint in 3:25‑26?

3. Why do you think we have a tendency to focus our complaints on the specifics of our loss rather than our loss of peace or seeming loss of relationship with God?

4. In what way does Eliphaz sound like a modern name-it-and-claim-it preacher or believer in 5:19‑27? How would you refute what he says, and what Scripture would you use?

5. Much of what Job’s friends say is right, good, and true, but wrongly applied. While Bildad’s words in 8:20 are generally correct, how is this truth misapplied in the case of Job? Can this be applied to Jesus?

6. Job expresses the central question of the book in 9:1‑2. What is it?

7. Job’s words in 13:15 are a direct answer to the wager between God and Satan that began this drama (Job 1:11). What was the wager, and how was it settled?

8. What good news announced in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 15:54) addresses Job’s fear and dread of the grave expressed in Job 17:13‑16?

9. How does Job’s prophetic description in 19:25‑27 relate to 1 Thessalonians 4:16‑17 and 1 Corinthians 15:52?

10. What difference does the promise of resurrection for the believer make in your heart and mind as you consider those you love who have died? What difference does it make as you consider your own coming death?

**Week 5**

**Why?**

**Job 22–37**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Read or Skim Job 22–28**

1. According to 22:2‑3, how does Eliphaz believe God feels about people?

2. What do Romans 5:8 and 1 Peter 3:18 reveal about the extent to which God cares about us and our righteousness?

3. Read Job’s words in 23:8‑10 and write your own paraphrase of what Job is expressing.

4. Read Job 23:10 with 1 Peter 1:7. What do these verses say about the trials we face?

5. What parts of Bildad’s brief reply do you agree with (chapter 25), and what parts do you disagree with?

6. Read Job 26:1‑4. Summarize Job’s challenge or question to Bildad.

**Day 2: Read or Skim Job 29–37**

1. What do you see in 31:33 that reveals the secret to Job’s blamelessness?

2. After Job’s three friends stop talking, the young Elihu begins. What word do you see repeated numerous times in 32:2‑5 that gives us a clue to Elihu’s disposition and gives context for his words?

3. While Elihu’s arguments are not very different from Job’s three friends, he suggests that God has a reason or purpose for suffering. What is that purpose in 33:19, 29‑30, and 34:10‑15?

4. Job’s plan to wait on God to testify on his behalf provides the foundation for the saying “the patience of Job.” In James 5:11 some translations say that Job “endured patiently” while others commend Job’s “perseverance.” What does Job show us about what it means to endure patiently or persevere in the face of suffering?

**Day 3: His Strength in Your Weakness**

1. Read 2 Corinthians 12:1‑10. Why does Paul say a thorn in the flesh was given to him?

2. Paul calls the thorn “a messenger from Satan” (12:7), yet he seems to indicate that God sent it to him to keep him from sin. What might this indicate about God’s sovereignty? How does this relate to Job’s experience?

3. What do you learn from Paul’s example in verse 8?

4. What similarities do you see between Paul’s prayer and Jesus’ prayer in Mark 14:32‑41?

5. What perspective enables Paul to say that he is glad and content in insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities (2 Corinthians 12:9‑10)?

6. What weaknesses in your life provide opportunities for God to display his strength? How can you allow him to do that?

**Day 4: Spiritual Maturity**

1. Read James 1:2‑4. What could cause a person to be joyful in the midst of suffering?

2. From verse 4, what response is required in our suffering, and what is the result or reward?

3. What is a mature believer like, according to James 2:22 and Ephesians 4:12‑16?

4. What is the process for developing spiritual maturity according to 2 Corinthians 3:12‑18 and Philippians 3:12‑16?

5. Read Hebrews 5:12–6:3. What is appropriate to expect of a mature believer (v. 12), and what are the evidences of a mature believer (v. 14)?

6. How will you need to adjust your attitude toward suffering to allow it to help you become more spiritually mature?

**Day 5: Genuine Faith Revealed**

1. Job 1:12 quotes God as saying to Satan: “All right, you may test him.” In what way is Job’s suffering a test? What is being tested? For whose benefit is the test?

2. Job seems to recognize that he is being tested, and he does not know about God’s statement of confidence in him. What does Job say in 23:10 that he believes is true but comes to know by experience through testing?

3. Jesus was put to the ultimate test of the Cross. What does Hebrews 5:7‑9 tell us about what was demonstrated in his life?

4. Read 1 Peter 1:6‑7. How does this correspond to Job 23:10‑12?

5. Has suffering allowed your faith to be proved genuine? Or has it revealed a lack of faith in your life?

**Day 6: Suffering As Discipline**

1. Read Hebrews 12:3‑11. Recognizing that the writer of Hebrews is speaking to believers who are suffering persecution, what does he say is the intent of God’s discipline, and who is it for (verses 5‑6)?

2. According to verse 5, what are two ways we can waste God’s efforts to discipline us? How should we respond instead, according to verses 9 and 11?

3. Because one of God’s attributes is perfection, we know he is the perfect parent. In what ways, then, is his discipline different from that of earthly parents?

4. According to verse 10, what is the goal of God’s discipline that assures us it is formative and not punitive?

5. In the same way that any worthy and lofty goal (like losing weight, earning an educational degree, etc.) requires that we endure hardship, submit, and be trained, becoming holy like Jesus will require that we submit to God’s discipline. What sacrifices or self-imposed limitations do you think may be required?

6. What will be the result or fruit of submitting to God’s discipline, according to 12:11?

***Week 5 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. For what purpose did God use suffering in the following passages? (You may want to ask various group members to read each of these verses and identify God’s purpose in suffering.)

Psalm 78:34 2 Corinthians 1:3‑5

Proverbs 17:3 2 Corinthians 4:8‑10

Jonah 1:17–2:1 2 Corinthians 12:7

John 9:1‑3 Philippians 1:12‑14

John 15:2 Hebrews 12:10‑11

Romans 5:3‑4 James 1:2‑4

2. Can you see how God has used suffering in your life or in the life of someone you know for one of these purposes?

3. In chapter 23, while Job expresses his trust in God and his confidence in God’s purposes (23:10‑14), he also seems to express terror and dread (23:15‑17). Can a person of faith have confidence in God and still feel terrorized in the midst of trouble?

4. In the middle of Job’s ranting, he shares an inspired praise offering in 26:5‑14. What does this tell you about his faith and his understanding of God? What does this show you about the relationship between his understanding of God and his questions?

5. Job’s three friends become frustrated and have nothing more to say. But beginning in chapter 32, Elihu has his turn. Elihu suggests that God has brought suffering into Job’s life to discipline him. Do you think he is correct?

6. What did you take away from your study on Day 6 of God’s discipline in Hebrews 12?

**Week 6**

**God Speaks, Job Responds**

**Job 38:1–42:4**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Read Job 38–41**

1. In 38:1‑7, which of his own attributes does God seem to be emphasizing through his questions?

2. Read 40:6‑14 and notice words like *justice*, *condemn*, and *imprison*.God seems to be responding to Job’s challenge to his justice. How does recognizing God as a perfect and righteous judge impact our tendency to complain that God has not treated us fairly?

3. What is the primary message about God in 41:11?

4. Think back about the conversations Job and his friends have been having about God and the questions they have been asking. How would you characterize God’s response to all they have said and asked?

**Day 2: Read Job 40:3‑5 and Job 42:1‑6**

1. Put Job’s first response to God’s revelation (40:3‑5) into your own words.

2. Put 42:1‑2 into your own words—the way you might say it to God if you were Job.

3. What does Job admit to in 42:3, and what character trait does this confession reflect?

4. What is the essence of Job’s response in 42:6?

5. What is your understanding of repentance? How is it done, and who needs to repent?

**Day 3: God’s Ways and Wisdom**

1. As we read Job’s story, we are privy to the cosmic confrontation going on between God and Satan, but Job has no such context for his experience. In what way do God’s words from the whirlwind in Job 38–41 reflect Zophar’s words in Job 11:7?

2. What does Isaiah 55:8‑9 mean, and how do you respond to that truth?

3. Read Romans 11:33‑36. Do you, like Paul, celebrate the impossibility of understanding God’s decisions and methods, or do you find them frustrating and defeating? How can you gain a perspective like Paul’s, enabling you to rejoice in God’s unknowable wisdom?

4. While our earthly knowledge and experience limit us, what does Ephesians 6:10‑12 reveal about happenings in the heavenly realms? How is that demonstrated in the story of Job?

5. In light of this spiritual dimension, how should you respond when you do not understand God’s plans, purposes, and methods?

**Day 4: Fearing God**

1. In Job 28:28, Job says, “The fear of the Lord is true wisdom.” In the following verses, what are some traits or experiences of those who fear God?

Job 1:1

Psalm 25:12‑15

Malachi 3:16‑18

Acts 9:31

Philippians 2:12‑13

2. According to the following verses, what are some traits or experiences of those who do not fear God?

Psalm 36:1‑4

Proverbs 1:7

Jeremiah 2:19

Romans 3:10‑18

3. Are there any areas of your life—perhaps your speech, your habits, your casual attitude toward the things of God—that reflect a lack of the fear of God in your life? What are they?

4. According to Proverbs 2:1‑9, how can you grow in your fear of the Lord?

**Day 5: Humility**

1. First Peter 5:5‑6 and Colossians 3:12‑13 tell us to clothe ourselves with humility. Read those verses and describe how your life would look different than it does now if you were clothed with humility.

2. How does God reward humility in the following verses?

Psalm 18:27

Psalm 25:9

Psalm 149:4

Proverbs 3:34

Proverbs 11:2

3. Read Matthew 23:11‑12. What does Jesus say will happen to the person who is a humble servant?

4. That truth is repeated in James 4:10. How do our pride and our pursuit of looking good in the eyes of others reveal a lack of faith in God’s Word?

**Day 6: Repentance**

1. Based on Acts 3:19 and Acts 26:20, what action is implied in repentance?

2. According to 2 Corinthians 7:8‑11, what is the good result of being made sorry for sin?

3. What is the result of godly sorrow that leads to repentance?

4. According to 2 Peter 3:9, who needs to repent?

5. Repentance is not a onetime experience for the believer, but a part of the process of becoming more pleasing to God as we give more of ourselves to him and are indwelt more fully by the Holy Spirit. What lingering sin do you need to turn away from? What concrete step can you take to begin to live out a heart of repentance?

***Week 6 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. Since God is creator of the universe and creator of everything—including you—what rights or freedoms does that give him?

2. God is a perfect, fair, and righteous judge. What does that mean to you if you are under his rule?

3. If everything under heaven is God’s—including you and me—what implications does that have for someone who thinks God should explain himself?

4. Why do you think God answers Job’s and his friends’ questions with his own set of questions rather than spelling out the causes and purposes of suffering in general and Job’s suffering in particular?

5. How does God’s revelation of himself—in the whirlwind to Job, through Jesus, and through Scripture—help us in our quest to make sense of and respond appropriately to suffering?

6. Do you find the idea of submitting to God’s sovereignty in your life demanding and scary or life-giving and calming? Why?

7. A typical reaction to suffering is a sense of *I don’t deserve this!* How would humility change that response?

8. Discuss your understanding of what repentance is, how it is done, and who needs to repent.

**Week 7**

**Restoration**

**Job 42:5‑17**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: Job’s Response to God’s Revelation**

1. Read Job 42:1‑10. What do you think Job means by his statement in verse 5?

2. How do you make sense of what we learned about Job in 1:1 with what we read in 42:5?

3. Thinking back to an earlier discussion about the ways God uses suffering in our lives, how do you think God uses suffering in Job’s life and in the lives of others?

4. In 42:7, God says that Job’s friends have not been right in what they said about God, like Job was. Do you think everything Job’s friends said about God was wrong? Do you think everything Job said about God was right? If not, why do you think God is still pleased with Job and not his friends?

5. Remember how Job longed for an advocate to mediate between himself and God? How did Job become a Christ-like mediator?

**Day 2: Job’s Restoration after Repentance**

1. Read Job 42:10‑17. List the ways in which Job experiences restoration.

2. How have things changed dramatically since he lamented his situation in 19:13‑19 and 30:15‑31?

3. What do you think is the significance of Job receiving double of nearly everything he lost? And why do you think he doesn’t receive double the number of children that he had before?

4. Do you think hearing the voice of God, enjoying a greater intimacy with God, restored relationships with his friends, and restoration of his prosperity and family make Job’s suffering worth all he has been through? Why or why not?

**Day 3: Knowing God**

1. Read Philippians 3:1‑14. What are some of the things Paul once considered to be advantages that he came to see as disadvantages?

2. If religious works or being a religious “insider” made you right with God, what would you include on your list of advantages? How have these “advantages” helped or hindered you in coming to know God?

3. What perspective and desire did Paul have that moved those advantages from the asset column to the liability column?

4. What does Paul want most (verses 10‑11)?

5. What do you think Paul means when he says he wants to “learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death” (v. 10)?

6. How has your suffering helped you to know a greater fellowship or intimacy with God? How has it caused you to become like him in his death?

**Day 4: Forgiveness**

1. According to each of the following verses, why should we choose to forgive those who hurt us and be reconciled with those we’ve hurt?

Matthew 5:23‑26

Matthew 6:12‑15

Colossians 3:12‑17

2. How does grasping the enormity of your own sin impact your ability or willingness to forgive others, even when they don’t “deserve” it?

3. Forgiveness does not mean making light of what people have done that hurt you. Instead, it means recognizing the weight of the hurt and refusing to make them pay. Who owes you a debt, and what would it look like for you to mark their debt paid?

4. Forgiveness is not a natural reaction but a supernatural one. It may seem like you just do not have the strength to forgive. According to Romans 8:1‑11, where can you find the power to forgive those who have hurt you?

**Day 5: Restoration and Resurrection**

1. In Luke 24 we read about Jesus walking on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection. He says to the disciples he is walking with, “Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” Perhaps one way it was “predicted” was by being foreshadowed in the story of the righteous sufferer, Job. How was Jesus’ suffering and glory, his death and resurrection, pictured in Job’s story?

2. What do the following verses reveal about what Jesus enjoyed in his resurrection that were foreshadowed in Job’s experience?

Matthew 8:11

Romans 8:34

1 Corinthians 15:53

Hebrews 1:2

James 1:18

Revelation 5:12

3. What do the following verses reveal about what we can expect on that day we are resurrected, similar to what Job enjoyed when he was restored?

Luke 12:33

Luke 22:29‑30

Romans 8:11

1 Peter 1:4

1 Peter 1:7

**Day 6: Getting Back to the Big Question**

1. Think back to the challenge in heaven in Job 1 and 2. Can you restate what the big question is at the heart of Job’s story?

2. How has that question been answered?

3. Consider that Job and his friends never knew about the challenge made in heaven by Satan or God’s permission and parameters given. In what ways is the book of Job more about God’s glory than it is about Job’s suffering?

4. In what way is the glory of God put on display when we trust God in the midst of great suffering, refusing to curse God?

***Week 7 Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. Throughout most of the book, Job has been full of despair and questions, wishing he had never been born. How does hearing from God change him?

2. Has Job’s desire to state his case before God and to be vindicated been fulfilled? At the end of the book, do you think he is left satisfied or unsatisfied?

3. Recognizing that we can never completely understand God’s purposes for suffering, in what way did God use Job’s suffering for good?

4. How has God used Job’s suffering in your life these centuries later? What does this tell you about how your response to suffering (good or bad) could influence those around you and future generations?

5. Just like Job, many of us discover in the midst of loss that our “friends” can often hurt more than help. How has that been true in your life?

6. Why is it so hard to forgive? What does it require? What are the benefits of forgiving those who have hurt us?

7. What are your thoughts about what happens to Job after his suffering—his personal prosperity, new family, and long life?

8. Can all people who stay faithful to God through their suffering assume that God will restore what they have lost in this lifetime? Why or why not?

9. Throughout this drama, Job never knows about the wager between God and Satan. Do you think Job is an unfortunate victim of this cosmic challenge?

**Week 8**

**God’s Sovereignty in Suffering**

**various passages**

***Daily Study***

**Day 1: The Suffering Servant**

1. In Genesis 3, in the midst of God announcing the curse after Adam and Eve’s sin, we read about One who will come to put an end to suffering. How will that be accomplished according to Genesis 3:15?

2. Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets wrote about this One who would come and suffer before being glorified. And just as Job, an innocent sufferer, prefigured the suffering of Jesus who was perfectly innocent, other people in the Old Testament prefigured and prophesied about Christ’s suffering. What are some things God’s people would have learned about Christ’s suffering and glory from David’s suffering described in Psalm 22?

3. Isaiah prophesied about a Suffering Servant who would come. How do you see the sovereignty of God over Christ’s suffering and glory in Isaiah 53?

**Day 2: The Source of Suffering**

1. What are the variations on who seems to be responsible for Job’s suffering in Job 2:3, 7 and 42:11? How can you reconcile these variations?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7. Once again we see that we cannot necessarily nail down a single source for our suffering and that God and Satan have very different purposes for the suffering in our lives. What was God’s purpose and what do you think Satan’s purpose was for the thorn in Paul’s life?

3. According to John 13:2, Acts 2:22‑24, and Acts 4:27‑28, what or who was the source of Jesus’ suffering?

4. What do these verses tell you about God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility?

5. How are both man’s responsibility and God’s sovereignty in Joseph’s suffering expressed in Genesis 50:20?

**Day 3: Suffering’s Purpose**

1. Read Romans 8:28. This is a verse that some of us who have suffered can come to resent as it is quoted “at” us in the midst of grief or loss, and yet its truth brings hope in the midst of despair. Put this verse into your own words.

2. Is this promise universal? If not, for whom is it intended?

3. Often we read Romans 8:28 and think it is our job to discover some good thing for which God is working all things together. But the specific good is actually revealed in Romans 8:29. What is it?

4. Have you experienced this good result from suffering in your life? Why or why not?

5. Does the truth that God causes all things to work together for good mean that all things that happen to us *are* good? What is the difference?

**Day 4: Perspective in Suffering**

1. Read Hebrews 5:7‑9. How does the fact that Jesus struggled with God’s plan—which included the pain of incurring God’s wrath on the cross—help you as you struggle with the fact that God’s plan for you has included suffering?

2. The book of Hebrews was written to people who were beginning to suffer under persecution for their allegiance to Jesus. What does Hebrews 12:1‑3 encourage us to do to gird ourselves for the suffering of this life?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16‑18 and try to put what these verses are communicating into your own words.

**Day 5: Suffering’s Certain Outcome**

When we look for the ultimate source of suffering that causes so much suffering in the world, we’ve seen that we have to look at Genesis 3:14‑19, where we read about the Curse. To long for suffering to end is to long for the curse to be eradicated. And one day it will be. Earlier we read in Romans 8:18‑25 that it is not just humans who have this longing. All creation longs to be free of the curse, which will happen on the day Christ returns and the bodies of those who are joined to Christ by faith are resurrected.

1. In Revelation 21 and 22, John records a vision of the new heavens and new earth that are free of the curse and where we will live forever with Christ in our resurrected bodies. What aspects of life on this restored earth do you find in the following verses?

21:3

21:4

21:5

21:27

22:3

22:4

22:5

2. Which of these aspects of the new heavens and new earth are especially meaningful to you and why?

**Day 6: Remembering Job**

Spend some time writing down some things you’ve learned in this study of Job that have challenged you and changed you. How have you grown in your grasp of the sovereignty of God in suffering? How will this study of Job lead you to worship God in a greater way?

***Small Group Discussion Questions***

1. If God does not willingly bring affliction or enjoy hurting people, why would he choose to allow suffering to come into our lives (Lamentations 3:22‑33)?

2. What difference does that truth make as you struggle with the question of why God would choose to allow hurt to come into your life?

3. Does the fact that God may have allowed a wicked person to hurt you or someone you love make what happened good? Is that the same thing as God using it for good in your life or the lives of others?

4. God was willing to allow wicked men to put Jesus on the cross to accomplish the work of salvation. How does this impact your ability to see that God could use something that could only be described as bad for good in your life?

5. After studying the book of Job, can you now explain exactly why bad things happen and why the innocent suffer? If not, can you be comfortable with that ambiguity?

6. In the daily questions you were asked to write down lessons from this study of Job that you want to be sure to remember. Would you be willing to share how this study has challenged and changed you?