

## Week 9 Devotional

### I. Prayer to enter the Lord's presence:

*Be still for a moment. "Lord, I give the day that is now past to you. It is yours. I give the day that is to come to you; help me to see where you are working and to join you there. Speak to me during these moments. I commit them and myself to you."*

### II. Prayer of Confession:

*"Lord, you are faithful to forgive me and cleanse me of my sin when I confess it to you. I confess my sin(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ . Thank you for forgiveness." (1 John 1:9)*

### III. Prayer of Thanksgiving:

*Choose to be thankful, speak out loud of what God has done.*

*"Thank you, Father, for \_\_\_\_\_ . Fill my heart and my mouth with gratitude throughout this day."*

## IV. Scripture Reflection

### DAY 1:

#### Read

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

#### Reflect

Do you see the contrasts here? The treasure of the Gospel in jars of clay. Hard pressed but not crushed. Confused but not in full despair. Falsely persecuted but not abandoned by God. Knocked to the ground but not down for the count. Then in verse 10, we are alive because Christ has died. Then in verse 11, we lay down our lives for him so his life will be revealed in us. This entire passage is confusing for those who believe that "good brings good and bad brings bad" into our lives. Do you believe directly or indirectly that if only you were good enough or had enough faith...then God would make sure that nothing you call bad would ever happen? Sure sin brings bad results and good choices bring good results. But God is not a vending machine. His purposes for you are ultimately good, but they do not always align with what we want him to do or think he should do.

#### Respond

Ask yourself, honestly, "Do I believe that if I am good enough then bad things will not happen to me?" Think of this question as a scale rather than a binary, either/or choice. Of course good choices matter but how much do you believe you can ensure no problems will come by your own choices? What needs to change in your thinking to become more fully biblical in the "pegs" that you hand life experiences on?

## **DAY 2:**

### **Read**

**Proverbs 1:1** The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: <sup>2</sup> for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; <sup>3</sup> for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; <sup>4</sup> for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young — <sup>5</sup> let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance — <sup>6</sup> for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. <sup>7</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. <sup>8</sup> Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. <sup>9</sup> They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. <sup>10</sup> My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. <sup>11</sup> If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul; <sup>12</sup> let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; <sup>13</sup> we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; <sup>14</sup> throw in your lot with us, and we will share a common purse" — <sup>15</sup> my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; <sup>16</sup> for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood. <sup>17</sup> How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds! <sup>18</sup> These men lie in wait for their own blood; they waylay only themselves! <sup>19</sup> Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the lives of those who get it. <sup>20</sup> Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; <sup>21</sup> at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech: <sup>22</sup> "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? <sup>23</sup> If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. <sup>24</sup> But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, <sup>25</sup> since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, <sup>26</sup> I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you — <sup>27</sup> when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. <sup>28</sup> "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. <sup>29</sup> Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, <sup>30</sup> since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, <sup>31</sup> they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. <sup>32</sup> For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; <sup>33</sup> but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

### **Reflect**

The first 9 chapters of Proverbs set out a World View. A set of "hooks" to hang life experiences on. Chapters 10-31 give a wide variety of life experiences that hang on these "hooks." The ongoing contrast of Proverbs is the way of wisdom versus the way of folly. Proverbs puts forth the case that our choices do matter. When we choose to live in line with God's will and ways then life goes much better. Life is not random and outcomes are not the result of pure chance. God has designed a world of cause and effect. His wisdom is built into the cosmos and wisdom calls out to us from every corner of the earth. Wisdom's essential message is "Fear God and keep his commands."

### **Respond**

"The Fear of the Lord" is an oft repeated phrase in Proverbs. It means "awesome respect." As you make choices today try to keep verse 7 in mind; "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." What are the practical ways an awesome respect and love for God could impact your choices today?

### DAY 3: READ

**Job 1:1** In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. <sup>2</sup> He had seven sons and three daughters, <sup>3</sup> and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

**Job 1:4** His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. <sup>5</sup> When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

**Job 1:6** One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

**Job 1:8** Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

**Job 1:9** "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. <sup>10</sup> "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. <sup>11</sup> But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

**Job 1:12** The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

**Job 1:13** One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, <sup>14</sup> a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, <sup>15</sup> and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

**Job 1:16** While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

**Job 1:17** While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

**Job 1:18** While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, <sup>19</sup> when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

**Job 1:20** At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship <sup>21</sup> and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

**Job 1:22** In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

### Reflect

In the narrative Job knows nothing of this conversation that takes place in heaven's command post. He is utterly devastated and completely confused. He has assumed and has been taught that if he does the right things then he will experience God's goodness in his life. So far all his experiences had borne this out. But now his entire view of the world has been turned upside down. All that he has believed to be true has been undone. He will now go searching for a new way of understanding his experience. When you read this does God seem "petty" to do this to Job just to prove a point? Of course this is not all that is going on. God is showing his "severe mercy" to Job. All people eventually lose all things, but not all people

experience God in the deep ways that Job did. God is allowing Job to experience him in ways that few ever do.

**Respond**

Ask God to help you to live with the realization that you will in fact lose all the temporary things you value most in this life **and** to help you not live with anxiety over this fact. He alone can empower this balance. As you are able to find this balance, you will be able to enjoy and be grateful for his gifts while not making them into idols that produce anxiety and fear.

## DAY 4: READ

**Job 38:1** Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: <sup>2</sup> “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? <sup>3</sup> Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. <sup>4</sup> “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. <sup>5</sup> Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? <sup>6</sup> On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone — <sup>7</sup> while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? <sup>8</sup> “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, <sup>9</sup> when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, <sup>10</sup> when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, <sup>11</sup> when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt’? <sup>12</sup> “Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, <sup>13</sup> that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? <sup>14</sup> The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. <sup>15</sup> The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken. <sup>16</sup> “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? <sup>17</sup> Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? <sup>18</sup> Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. <sup>19</sup> “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? <sup>20</sup> Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? <sup>21</sup> Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years! <sup>22</sup> “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, <sup>23</sup> which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle? <sup>24</sup> What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? <sup>25</sup> Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, <sup>26</sup> to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it, <sup>27</sup> to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? <sup>28</sup> Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? <sup>29</sup> From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens <sup>30</sup> when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen? <sup>31</sup> “Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you lose the cords of Orion? <sup>32</sup> Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? <sup>33</sup> Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up [God’s] dominion over the earth? <sup>34</sup> “Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? <sup>35</sup> Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, ‘Here we are’? <sup>36</sup> Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind? <sup>37</sup> Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens <sup>38</sup> when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together? <sup>39</sup> “Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions <sup>40</sup> when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? <sup>41</sup> Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?

### Reflect

Job tried to call God to the witness stand to accuse him of doing wrong. Job declares his own innocence and in so doing implies that God himself has sinned. God refuses to enter Job's courtroom instead he takes Job on a virtual tour of reality. Job has a very small view of God. It seems he did love the God who existed in his limited mind and experience but now God is going to show Job just how inadequate his view of reality is. God was seen to be a sort of "Sr. Partner" in Job's enterprises but now he is being shown that God is beyond Job's ability to comprehend. He is no partner, he is awesome in every way. Job has no grounds on which to question God. God has every right to question Job.

### Respond

Worship God. Sit up straight, or kneel down before him...make your physical posture match what is true of your status before God. Show him respect with your body. Then show him respect with your mind, consider his greatness. Billions of stars in our galaxy. Billions of galaxies in the universe. This is the God you serve. Think of him and be amazed. Then show him respect with your words. Speak to him of his

greatness. Now show him respect with your choices. Go love people today because of the greatness of God and for the glory of God.

## DAY 5: Read

**Job 42:1** Then Job replied to the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. <sup>3</sup> [You asked,] 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. <sup>4</sup> ["You said,] 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' <sup>5</sup> My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

**Job 42:7** After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. <sup>8</sup> So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." <sup>9</sup> So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

**Job 42:10** After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. <sup>11</sup> All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

**Job 42:12** The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. <sup>13</sup> And he also had seven sons and three daughters. <sup>14</sup> The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-happuch. <sup>15</sup> Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

**Job 42:16** After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. <sup>17</sup> And so he died, old and full of years.

## Reflect

What do you think it means when Job said "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you?" (verse 5). Have your "eyes seen him?" What would it be worth to you for that to happen to you? Job ended his life with more than he had lost but that did not remove the pain of all he had lost. Job lost everything even though he had not sinned. Job regained much but do you think this was because he had done good or because God decided it would happen? How does Job's story challenge the prevailing view of why "good and bad happen to people?" What other questions do you have of this chapter or book?

## Respond

Do you have the courage to ask God, "I want my eyes to see you, not merely for my ears to hear you. Please make this so." If you are afraid of what this might cost you and are unwilling to pray it today will you ask God to move in your heart such that you would be able to pray it willingly and joyfully? It is a fearful prayer. It is a powerful prayer. Will you trust God enough to pray it?

**V. Prayer for Others:**

*Pray specifically for the concerns of your life and the lives of others.*

**VI. Prayer of commitment:**

*“Lord God, I commit to love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and to love my neighbor as myself. Empower me today to love you and others with everything that I am.” (Luke 10:27)*

**This Month's Scripture Memory:**

Matthew 6:9-13

9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.