

Trusting God in Times of Adversity

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HOW TO GET STARTED...



Reading directions is sometimes difficult and hardly ever enjoyable! Most often you just want to get started. Only if all else fails will you read the instructions. We understand, but please don't approach this study that way. These brief instructions are a vital part of getting started on the right foot! These few pages will help you immensely.

FIRST

As you study Job, you will need four things in addition to this book:

1. A Bible that you are willing to mark in. The marking is essential. An ideal Bible for this purpose is *The New Inductive Study Bible (NISB)*. The *NISB* is in a single-column text format with large, easy-to-read type, which is ideal for marking. The margins of the text are wide and blank for note taking.

The *NISB* also has instructions for studying each book of the Bible, but it does not contain any commentary on the text, nor is it compiled from any theological stance. Its purpose is to teach you how to discern truth for yourself through the inductive method of study. (The various charts and maps that you will find in this study guide are taken from the *NISB*.)

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Whatever Bible you use, just know you will need to mark in it, which brings us to the second item you will need...

2. A fine-point, four-color ballpoint pen or various colored fine-point pens that you can use to write in your Bible. Office supply stores should have these.

3. Colored pencils or an eight-color leaded Pentel pencil.

4. A composition book or a notebook for working on your assignments or recording your insights.

SECOND

1. As you study Job, you will be given specific instructions for each day's study. These should take you between 20 and 30 minutes a day, but if you desire to spend more time than this, you will increase your intimacy with the Word of God and the God of the Word.

If you are doing this study within the framework of a class and you find the lessons too heavy, then simply do what you can. To do a little is better than to do nothing. Don't be an all-or-nothing person when it comes to Bible study.

Remember, any time you get into the Word of God, you enter into more intensive warfare with the devil (our enemy). Why? Every piece of the Christian's armor is related to the Word of God. And our one and only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The enemy wants you to have a dull sword. Don't cooperate! You don't have to!

2. As you read each chapter, train yourself to ask the "5 W's and an H": who, what, when, where, why, and how. Asking questions like these helps you see exactly what the Word of God is saying. When you interrogate the text with the 5 W's and an H, you ask questions like these:

- a. **What** is the chapter about?
- b. **Who** are the main characters?
- c. **When** does this event or teaching take place?
- d. **Where** does this happen?
- e. **Why** is this being done or said?
- f. **How** did it happen?

3. The “when” of events or teachings is very important and should be marked in an easily recognizable way in your Bible. You could mark it with a clock (like the one shown here)  in the margin of your Bible beside the verse where the time phrase occurs. You may want to underline or color the references to time in one specific color.

4. You will be given certain key words to mark throughout the book of Job. This is the purpose of the colored pencils and the colored pens. If you will develop the habit of marking your Bible in this way, you will find it will make a significant difference in the effectiveness of your study and in how much you remember.

A **key word** is an important word that is used by the author repeatedly in order to convey his message to his reader. Certain key words will show up throughout the book; others will be concentrated in specific chapters or segments of the book. When you mark a key word, you should also mark its synonyms (words that mean the same thing in the context) and any pronouns (*he, his, she, her, it, we, they, us, our, you, their, them*) in the same way you have marked the key word. We will give you suggestions for ways to mark key words in your daily assignments.

Marking words for easy identification can be done by colors or symbols or a combination of colors and symbols. However, colors are easier to distinguish than symbols. When

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we use symbols, we keep them very simple. For example, you could color *repent* yellow but put a red diagram like this over it ~~repent~~ because it indicates a change of mind.

When marking key words, mark them in a way that is easy for you to remember.

If you devise a color-coding system for marking key words throughout your Bible, then when you look at the pages of your Bible, you will see instantly where a key word is used.

You might want to make yourself a bookmark listing the words you want to mark along with their colors and/or symbols.

5. A chart called JOB AT A GLANCE is located at the end of your study guide. As you complete your study of each chapter, record the main theme of that chapter under the appropriate chapter number. The main theme of a chapter is what the chapter deals with the most. It may be an event or a particular subject or teaching. Usually in a historical or biographical book, the chapter themes center on events.

If you will fill out the JOB AT A GLANCE chart as you progress through the study, you will have a complete synopsis of the book when you are finished. If you have a *New Inductive Study Bible*, you will find the same chart in your Bible (pages 874–75). If you record your chapter themes there, you'll have them for a ready reference.

6. Always begin your study with prayer. As you do your part to handle the Word of God accurately, you must remember that the Bible is a divinely inspired book. The words that you are reading are truth, given to you by God so you can know Him and His ways more intimately. These truths are divinely revealed.

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit;
for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of

God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

Therefore ask God to reveal His truth to you as He leads and guides you into all truth. He will, if you will ask.

7. Each day when you finish your lesson, meditate on what you saw. Ask your heavenly Father how you should live in light of the truths you have just studied. At times, depending on how God has spoken to you through His Word, you might even want to record these “Lessons for Life” in the margin of your Bible next to the text you have studied. Simply put “LFL” in the margin of your Bible, and then, as briefly as possible, record the lesson for life that you want to remember.

THIRD

This study is set up so that you have an assignment for every day of the week—so that you are in the Word daily. If you work through your study in this way, you will find it more profitable than doing a week’s study in one sitting. Pacing yourself this way allows time for thinking through what you learn on a daily basis!

The seventh day of each week differs from the other six days. The seventh day is designed to aid group discussion; however, it’s also profitable if you are studying this book individually.

The “seventh” day is whatever day in the week you choose to finish your week’s study. On this day, you will find a verse or two for you to memorize and STORE IN YOUR HEART. Then there is a passage to READ AND DISCUSS. This will help you focus on a major truth or major truths covered in your study that week.

To assist those using the material in a Sunday school class or a group Bible study, there are QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY. Even if you are not doing this study with anyone else, it would be good for you to answer these questions.

If you are in a group, be sure every member of the class, including the teacher, supports his or her answers and insights from the Bible text itself. Then you will be handling the Word of God accurately. As you learn to see what the text says and compare Scripture with Scripture, the Bible explains itself.

Always examine your insights by carefully observing the text to see what it *says*. Then, before you decide what the passage of Scripture *means*, make sure that you interpret it in the light of its context. Scripture will never contradict Scripture. If it ever seems to contradict the rest of the Word of God, you can be certain that something is being taken out of context. If you come to a passage that is difficult to understand, reserve your interpretations for a time when you can study the passage in greater depth.

The purpose of the THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK is to share with you what we consider to be an important element in your week of study. We have included it for your evaluation and, hopefully, for your edification. This section will help you see how to walk in light of what you learned.

Books in The New Inductive Study Series are survey courses. If you want to do a more in-depth study of a particular book of the Bible, we suggest you do a Precept Upon Precept Bible study course on that book. You may obtain more information on these courses by contacting Precept Ministries International at 800-763-8280, visiting our website at www.precept.org, or filling out and mailing the response card in the back of this book.

JOB

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FINDING GOD IN THE DARKNESS



“Your children are dead!” These words pierce the heart with a pain that has no equal. “Your house has burned down!” The pain is less, but *What do I do now that I’ve lost everything I owned? Why did this happen? No, no...it can’t be true!* Anger, grief, denial—these are typical reactions. How do we handle such losses?

The book of Job can help us face life’s greatest pains and losses. As it begins, Job has everything he could ask for—family, friends, health, great material wealth, and a strong faith in God. Then in one day he lost his possessions, his servants, and even his children. Soon after that, he lost his health. Had God abandoned him? Was He punishing him for sin? Was He being fair, just, and righteous—or just cruel, toying with a man for His own pleasure? Did God really love Job? How could He, allowing such terrible circumstances as these?

Job’s friends and his wife attached the blame to Job. They could not fault God for any of the tragic disasters that occurred, nor could they see Job’s unwavering devotion, steadfast faith, and complete commitment. That left Job and Job alone to blame. Surely he was hiding something, some specific sin that brought these judgments on him.

But Job himself saw a sovereign God behind the scenes and believed, trusting Him in spite of what happened. He was quite alone in this faith because his family and friends, like many today, equated God's love and favor with physical prosperity. They could not see a gracious, sovereign God in the darkness Job was facing—only a disobedient man.

This is precisely what Satan wants to do—to blind us so we can't find God in the impossible experiences of life. He wants us to abandon faith and curse God—the only reasonable product of a *Why?* with no answer. But the book of Job teaches us to rise above excruciating trials by bowing before the Living God. If we can keep faith after we've lost everything else, God will ultimately bless us in ways that will bring praise to our lips and glory to Him.

HOLDING FAST YOUR INTEGRITY



When you squeeze olives in an olive press, what oozes out? Olive oil, of course! Why? Because you pressed olives. You can't get grape juice by pressing olives or olive oil by pressing grapes. What comes out under pressure reveals what we really are. What happens when the pressure is on in our lives? What oozes out? Whatever we are made of.

One of the first things we learn about Job is that he was a man under extreme pressure who experienced unparalleled personal disaster. His responses reveal what he really was.

DAY ONE

No one knows for sure when the book of Job was written or when the events took place. Some believe Job lived at the time of Abraham and that Moses either found or wrote the book. Others think it was written at the time of Solomon or later. Even *where* Job lived is uncertain. But dates, location, and even authorship are not crucial to our understanding of the timeless truths in this book. We need to focus only on Job's character—how he responds to overwhelming circumstances and what he believes about the character of God in the midst of these circumstances.

These are the things that will help us maintain integrity when life's pressures seem impossible to bear.

Read Job 1 today, marking every reference to *God*. You might want to use the color yellow because God is light, or a triangle, which reminds us that God is three in one.

On another sheet of paper, make a list of what you learn about God. You might want to get a spiral notebook to keep the notes you make from your studies. Or you could simply put a triangle in the margin of your Bible and there record anything you learn about God.

Seeking to understand all we can about God is essential when we study the Bible because the Bible is God's written revelation of Himself to us. Be sure to note God's character, ways, and sovereignty over history in general and over Satan, man, and nature in particular.



DAY TWO

Today read Job 1 again. As you do, mark every reference to *Satan* with a red pitchfork. Although there is no biblical basis for the color red or the pitchfork, it's an image that has stuck with Western culture since the Middle Ages.

The word *Satan* means adversary. As in war, learning in advance all you can about opponents can help you know how they operate and what offensive and defensive counter-measures to make to gain advantages. By the time the New Testament authors composed their writings, the church had a great deal of biblical information about the devil. Consequently, Paul could say that we're not ignorant of his tactics (2 Corinthians 2:11). So list in your notebook all you learn about Satan from this chapter. Be sure to note his character, tactics, and the limits God places on his power.

DAY THREE

Read Job 1 again today. This time, mark every reference to *Job* (you choose the symbol and color).

Make a list of what you learn about Job—how he is described and what happens to him.

DAY FOUR

Read through Job 1 again and mark the words *sin* and *sinned*. Though the word *sin* does not appear many times, it's central to the message of this book. In fact, the main controversy in Job is the relationship between sin and suffering.

In coming chapters, you will see *iniquity* and *transgression* used as synonyms for *sin*. Mark these words the same way.

Also mark *sons of God*¹ in a distinctive way. Note who is included in this class of creatures.

Make a bookmark with these words and the respective markings for each one. This will help you to be consistent throughout Job and also to remember what key term you're marking and how you will mark each one. Add to this bookmark as you go through Job, and refer to it in your daily study.

DAY FIVE

Perhaps the greatest conflict in Scripture is between God and Satan. Some references outside the book of Job will help us to understand this conflict better.

One of the first things to notice is that “the sons of God” came to present themselves before the Lord with Satan among them. Let’s look at some scriptures that help identify these “sons of God” and explain why Satan is among them. Read Job 38:4-7; Isaiah 14:12-14; and Ezekiel 28:12-17. Then read Genesis 3:1-15 and Revelation 20:2.

DAY SIX

Make a short outline of this chapter to help you see the flow of events.

When we study a book of the Bible, we need to identify the main theme of each chapter. As for historical books and this book of poetic narrative, recording the main events, profound statements from characters, and wonderful truths about God will help you remember what each chapter is about. Record the theme of Job chapter 1 on **JOB AT A GLANCE** on pages 97-98.

DAY SEVEN



Store in your heart: Job 1:21.

Read and discuss: Job 1; 38:4-7; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-17.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY

- ❖ Discuss Job’s situation at the beginning. What family did he have? What possessions? What was Job’s relationship to God with respect to his family?

- ❖ What did you learn about Satan and his relationship to God? Where can Satan go? What can he do? What can he not do?
- ❖ From what you observed, whose adversary is Satan? God's? Man's? Explain your answer using Job 1.
- ❖ Review what Satan did to Job. What did Job lose? How did he lose it?
- ❖ What do these events teach you about God's power over man, nature, and Satan? What did you learn about Satan's power over man and nature? How do they relate?
- ❖ What does Satan believe about why people obey God? Can you tell from Job's reaction in these first two chapters whether Satan is right or wrong?
- ❖ Why does God permit Satan to afflict Job? What is His purpose? How far will He let Satan go? Does God agree or does He disagree with Satan's accusation that Job's faith is based on his prosperity?
- ❖ Describe Job's relationship to God. How do Job's actions in this chapter reflect on God's opinion of Job?
- ❖ How has what you learned about Satan and God affected your understanding of their relationship to each other? What changes would this make in your attitude toward your circumstances?
- ❖ What questions come to mind that are not answered in this chapter? (Remember, we have 12 more weeks of study in Job to address questions we don't have answers for now.)

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Although most people have not read the book of Job, many know one thing about the main character because of a common idiom given as a compliment—"He has the patience of Job"—echoing James 5:11. The compliment, however, emphasizes only one of Job's spiritual qualities. Job was not only patient in his circumstances—but also faithful to God and God's revealed truth. The book focuses on *patient faith*, not a bare patience an unbeliever might have. True, he waited for God, but he *waited believing* in a sovereignty that would vindicate him "at the last" (Job 19:25). He did not relax this doctrine for a moment (see Week 7, Day 7).

In spite of the absolutely horrible set of calamities that occurred—the loss of possessions and children—Job did not sin or blame God. How many of us have this kind of faith? How do we react when we lose possessions or family members? Does our relationship to God include patient faith?

We might know how we *should* act and think, based on what God's Word says. But the burning question in circumstances like these remains: "Why? Why, God?" Job never gets an answer. The first two chapters show us the reason Job suffers, but *Job* knows nothing about Satan provoking God into testing his integrity and letting the devil do the affliction. Job doesn't know that this is God's way of proving to Satan that faith exists independent of worldly prosperity and endures in times of loss. Nor does Job know that God knows he will not fail the tests.

But we must learn a valuable lesson. The book of Job never answers the question, "Why do we suffer?" The way to cope with suffering is not to find out the immediate

cause but to find out who God is. A deep, personal knowledge of God, our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer is what we need to handle the stress of suffering. We need a relationship with God that enables us to endure suffering without losing faith, without cursing God, and without blaspheming God's name in actions and words.

We must learn that trials help us grow in faith. James wrote about this radical perspective:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).