

SUMMARY

We're inviting our Life Groups Leaders to play an integral role in our Year in the Bible by aligning their weekly gatherings with our church-wide reading plan. This alignment will not only increase engagement with the plan, but—more importantly—deepen biblical literacy across our church. To support our leaders in this effort, we've created weekly Leader Guides that include discussion questions, commentary insights, and practical teaching tips. Whether your group is Community, Discussion, or Traditional in format, these guides are designed to serve as a helpful and flexible resource.

Format of the Year in the Bible Leader Guides

Our Leader Guides will be sent to Life Group Leaders in monthly packets by the twentieth of the preceding month. Each weekly guide contains five sections, outlined below. Leaders are welcome to walk their group through the guide step by step or to pick and choose the sections that will be most helpful for their group, as we trust that our leaders know their groups best. We've also provided recommendations later on based on group type to serve as a helpful starting point.

1. Create Interest

We'll kick off each guide with a thoughtful opening question designed to help your group engage and generate interest in the Scripture passage being covered. We've found that beginning with simple, personal questions—ones everyone can answer—helps build participation, comfort, and momentum for deeper discussion.

2. Study the Bible

The core of the Leader Guide is the weekly Scripture reading, broken into smaller sections with discussion questions and a few simple activities. Community Group leaders may choose to dive deeply into one section, while Discussion Group leaders may be able to cover the entire passage. Traditional Life Group leaders can use this section to help structure their teaching time.

3. Connect to Christ (Apply God's Word)

Every story in the Bible points to Jesus Christ, and as leaders, it is our responsibility to help our members discover how. We also have the opportunity to show how each passage of Scripture applies to our lives today. Because of its importance, we're asking every group to integrate this section in some way each week.

4. Pray Together

Prayer draws our hearts to God and to one another, so regardless of group type, size, age, or stage, we're asking that every group set aside time each week to pray together.

5. Commentary

For those who want to learn more, this will take excerpted and slightly adapted material from *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the three distinct and valuable types of Life Groups at Central, we wanted to offer recommendations for how each might get the most out of the Leader Guide. We trust you to discern what your group needs and are here to support you along the way.

Community Groups

Time Allotment

- *10 mins – The Bible:* Provide an overview of a passage and how it Connects to Christ.
- *40 mins – People:* Engage through your normal weekly rhythms.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Lift up concerns and praises shared during the group.

Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Decide which passage of Scripture is most relevant to your group and its Connect to Christ, creating a concise overview of any needed context.
- Adapt or add to your weekly community questions to incorporate the Connect to Christ section.

Discussion Groups

Time Allotment

- *10 mins – People:* Open conversation or discussion over a question, high/low, etc.
- *40 mins – The Bible:* Discuss the passage and its Connect to Christ.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Invite members to share personal requests and praises.

Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Decide which sections or activities may be skipped due to time constraints and create an overview for those portions.
- Use strategic questions to lead your group into the Connect to Christ section.

Traditional Groups

Time Allotment

- *20 mins – People:* Weekly catch-up and social interactions.
- *30 mins – The Bible:* Teach the passage, revealing its Connection to Christ.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Provide space for those who want to share requests and pray.

Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Consider following the same passage breakdown as the guide, and incorporate questions either rhetorically or literally, depending on the needs of your group.
- In your application, show how we might trust in God's grace—not our works—for salvation and sanctification revealing the Connection to Christ.

RADICAL COMMITMENT: 2 Chronicles 15:1-16

The Point: When God's people experience revival, they make strong commitments to him.

The Purpose: Participants will recognize that genuine revival leads to wholehearted obedience, worship, and removal of competing loyalties.

Christ Connection: Asa's reforms point to Jesus, who calls his people to radical faithfulness and fulfills the deeper renewal God promises.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: When you think of someone who wholeheartedly seeks the Lord, who comes to mind? What causes them to come to mind?

This opens the group to think of examples of sincere devotion and sets up the idea that wholehearted seeking is visible in action, not just intention.

Transition to the Study

The Old Testament contains accounts of God's people during times of rebellion and revival. In today's Bible study, we'll examine a time of spiritual revival, learn more about the consequences of rebellion, and how followers of God wholeheartedly respond to His activity in their lives. Revival often inspires acts of spiritual renewal and radical commitment, as we will see in the lives of King Asa and his people.

STUDY THE BIBLE**2 Chronicles 15:1-7**

Read Aloud: Have someone read 2 Chronicles 15:1-7.

Discussion: Azariah delivered a powerful message to King Asa. What are the main points?

Azariah reminds Asa that God is with those who seek Him, but abandonment comes when people turn away. The message calls the king and the nation to perseverance and faithfulness.

Azariah encouraged Asa to seek the Lord wholeheartedly. What might seeking God look like in the lives of His people today?

Seeking God wholeheartedly includes prayer, obedience, worship, repentance, and trust in His Word. It shows up in daily priorities, decisions, and sacrifices.

Why do you think God sent this message at this particular time in Asa's reign?

God's message came to strengthen Asa at a key moment and to encourage continued reform. It also reminds the people that revival must be sustained by continued dependence on God.

Teaching Tip

To encourage your group to respond even further to discussion questions, follow up their answers with phrases like: "Say some more about that" "That's really good...keep going" "That's a good insight...what else 'ya got?"

2 Chronicles 15:8-9

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read 2 Chronicles 15:8-9.

Discussion: How did the covenant renewal affect the community as a whole?

The covenant renewal unified the people around God and created a shared purpose. It strengthened their identity as a people committed to the Lord.

Asa removed idols from the land. What are some modern-day "idols" that people should remove from their lives as God-followers?

Modern idols can include money, success, comfort, entertainment, reputation, and self-rule. Anything that takes God's place can become an idol.

People had defected from Israel to Judah when they saw God at work in King Asa's life (v.9). If someone observed your life and faith, what would attract them to consider Christianity? What originally attracted you to Christianity?

A life marked by peace, integrity, humility, love, and consistency can point others toward Christ. People are often drawn to visible authenticity and hope.

2 Chronicles 15:10-16

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud 2 Chronicles 15:10-16.

Discussion: What radical commitments did King Asa and the people make to the Lord as revival continued? Are there modern-day equivalents?

They gathered in covenant, worshiped God, and committed themselves to Him with seriousness. Their actions show that renewal involved public and costly obedience.

Was the command in verse 13 fair? Why or why not?

The command reflects the seriousness of covenant loyalty in that time. Even if it feels severe to modern readers, it underscores that idolatry was a spiritual crisis, not a small issue.

Asa removed his mother's idolatrous image to honor God (v.16). How do you navigate situations where your values conflict with loved ones' choices?

We should stay faithful to God while responding with humility, grace, and clarity. Loyalty to the Lord may require hard boundaries, but it should never lose compassion.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: 2 Chronicles 15 summarizes what can happen when God's people experience Him and go through a time of spiritual revival. Intolerance of sinful practices, the renewal of worship, and extreme public and private commitment to God are characteristics of His people when they genuinely experience His favor and grace. How will you respond to this account as you continue your faith journey with God today?"

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

2 Chronicles 15:1–16 shows Israel's need to seek God, renew their covenant, and remove idols—but also exposes how temporary and fragile their obedience is. This points to Jesus, who secures what they could not by bringing permanent access to God, serving as the true High Priest, and establishing a new covenant that transforms the heart. Where Asa's reforms brought temporary peace and rest, Jesus provides lasting rest and reconciliation with God. Ultimately, what the people pursued imperfectly, Jesus fulfills perfectly.

Connect to Christ: Human revivals are temporary and incomplete. Asa's reforms cleansed hearts, called for full allegiance, and brought temporary restoration. The reforms point forward to the greater Son of David, Jesus, the king who brings final cleansing, lasting covenant faithfulness, and permanent restoration for God's people.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Seek God Wholeheartedly: Just as Asa and the people sought the Lord with all their heart and soul, make it a priority to seek God in your daily life through prayer, worship, and studying His Word.

Remove Modern-Day Idols: Asa removed idols from the land to honor God. Reflect on anything in your life that might be taking priority over your relationship with God, and take steps to address it.

Commit to Spiritual Renewal: Asa led the people in renewing their covenant with God. Consider ways you can renew your commitment to God, whether through personal reflection, joining a faith community, or setting spiritual goals.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for calling His people to wholehearted devotion and for renewing those who seek Him.

COMMENTARY

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Book Chapter Background

2 Chronicles 15 describes a pivotal moment in King Asa's reign over Judah. After a significant victory against the Ethiopians, the prophet Azariah, empowered by the Spirit of God, delivered a message to Asa. Azariah reminded Asa and the people of Judah that God would be with them as long as they sought Him, but warned that forsaking God would lead to His absence.

The chapter highlights the spiritual state of Israel during Asa's time, noting that they had been without the true God, teaching priests, and the law for a long period. Azariah's prophecy encouraged Asa to take bold action to reform Judah and renew their covenant with God. Asa responded by removing idols, repairing the altar of burnt offerings, and leading the people in a public oath to follow God wholeheartedly. This spiritual revival brought peace and unity to the land.

The chapter underscores themes of seeking God, spiritual renewal, and the importance of bold leadership in faith. Asa's reforms serve as a powerful example of how turning to God can transform a nation.

Verse by Verse

15:1 The phrase "the Spirit of God came upon..." was common in the Old Testament for an activity of the Spirit particularly in reference to prophetic inspiration. The Chronicler used it several times (20:14; 24:20; cf. 1 Chr 12:18; 28:12).

15:3-5 Commentators try to identify the historical circumstances depicted by the "distress" Israel experiences in "those days"(15:3-5). It seems the writer is intentionally ambiguous because cycles of apostasy and deliverance characterize all of Israelite history. The constant in that story line is the deliverance God provides for those who seek his help. These are the themes highlighted in the prophet's message: God is with those who side with him, and he rewards obedience (15:2, 7); God will be found by those who seek him but forsakes those who abandon him (15:2). In good homiletical style, the sermon ends with an exhortation to continue the good work already begun because God will honor it (15:7). The prophet's speech also has currency for the Chronicler's audience, for it summarizes the three essentials for sustaining the faith of the restoration community in postexilic Judah: the true God, the teaching priest, and the law (15:3).

Andrew E. Hill, 1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 471.

15:5-7 These verses depict days of turmoil in many lands when one city was being crushed by another. It was God who was the source of these troubles, but as in the days of the judges, deliverance also could be found in the days of Asa. The command to be strong in the Lord is found many times in Scripture (e.g., Deut 31:6-7, 23; Josh 1:6-7, 9; 1 Chr 22:13; 28:10, 20; 2 Chr 32:7; Hag 2:4; Zech 8:9, 13; Eph 6:10). J. A. Thompson, 1, 2 Chronicles, vol. 9, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 269.

15:8-9 The king's obedience to God's word through the prophet Azariah launches sweeping religious reforms in Judah (continuing perhaps for ten years). The report of Asa's reform and covenant renewal ceremony (15:8-15) expands the earlier summary statement of the king's eradication of false worship in Judah (cf. 14:3) and should be understood as parallel accounts. As with later religious reforms, the initiatives include purging false worship and repairing Yahweh's temple precincts (15:8; cf. 24:4). The true Davidic king is the shepherd of all Israel (cf. 1 Chron 17:6), an idea that stands behind the assembly of Judah, Benjamin, and large numbers of defectors from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who settle in Judah (2 Chron. 15:9).

Andrew E. Hill, 1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 471-472.

15:10-15 The covenant ceremony may have been associated with the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, as the spring pilgrimage festival would have naturally necessitated the gathering of all Israel in Jerusalem at that time of year (15:10). It also appears that the victory over Zerah the Cushite (cf. 14:9-15) was incorporated into the festival since some of the animals taken as plunder from that battle are included in the sacrificial offerings to the Lord (15:11). The "covenant to seek the Lord" (15:12) is presumably an outworking of the call to seek the Lord embedded in God's response to Solomon's prayer of dedication for the Jerusalem temple (cf. 7:14). The word "seek" (*drš*) in this context means to vow an allegiance to God that results in obedience to his commands. The phrase "all their heart and soul" (15:12), coupled with the emphasis on the death penalty for those who violate the pact (15:13), suggest that this covenant is based on the tradition of the Sinai covenant (cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 13:6-10; 17:2-7). Though seemingly harsh, the death penalty for breach of covenant

underscores the solemnity of the event and the mutually binding nature of the covenant agreement.

The swearing of an oath of allegiance means then people are accountable to God and to each other to uphold the agreement. For the Chronicler acts of obedience to God (like swearing the covenant oath) are also acts of worship, and worship erupts in “rejoicing” (15:15; cf. 23:13, 21; 30:21, 25). The shouts of the people and the blasts of trumpets and horns (15:14) are external expression of an internal reality, echoing Asaph’s psalm of thanksgiving in celebration of the transfer of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (cf. 1 Chron. 16:10).

Andrew E. Hill, *1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 472.

15:16 The Chronicler drew his material for this section of his work from 1 Kgs 15:13–15. The importance attainable by a queen mother is seen in other women besides Maacah (see note on 11:20). Other prominent queen mothers were Bathsheba, Jezebel, and Athaliah. The Asherah symbol was a wooden pole here described as “repulsive.” This was broken up and burned in the Kidron Valley, which runs north-south on the eastern side of Jerusalem between the city and the Mount of Olives. In this area items cleared out in other reforms also were burned (2 Kgs 23:4–6; 2 Chr 29:16; 30:14).

J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles, vol. 9, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 272.

COMPELLED TO ACT: Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:1-5

The Point: Concern for the welfare of God's people compels us to act on their behalf

The Purpose: Participants will see that prayerful concern should lead to wise, courageous action.

Christ Connection: Nehemiah's burden and action anticipate Jesus, who sees the brokenness of His people and moves toward them in love and rescue.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: Where is 'home' for you, what do you love about it, and how long have you been away from your roots?

This question helps people connect emotionally to Nehemiah's grief over Jerusalem. It also introduces the idea of longing for restoration and belonging.

Transition to the Study

When news of Jerusalem's devastated condition was made known to Nehemiah, he immediately fasted and sought God's guidance. After a time of prayer, Nehemiah became convinced that he should be the one to take action. Nehemiah was compelled to act on behalf of God's people in Jerusalem, whose safety was at stake because of the disrepair of the wall that surrounded Jerusalem. Today, we must also take action when we see God's people in need, and respond to their physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Nehemiah 1:1-4

Read Aloud: Have someone read Nehemiah 1:1-4.

Discussion: How would you describe Nehemiah's response to the news about Jerusalem, and what does this say about his relationship with God and his love for his fellow Jews?

Nehemiah responds with grief, fasting, prayer, and deep concern. His reaction shows that he cares deeply about God's people and God's city.

How do we keep our love for fellow believers in our group, and the members of our larger church family, from growing cold?

We stay connected through prayer, service, encouragement, and intentional fellowship. Love grows when we keep noticing and responding to others' needs.

What would be signs that ‘the love of most has grown cold’ towards others and their needs? Are any of those signs present in our group? Our church?

Cold love often appears as indifference, isolation, criticism, or lack of compassion. If needs are ignored, the group may need repentance and renewal.

Teaching Tip: Variety of Teaching Methods

Incorporate storytelling, historical context, visuals, discussion, music, relational, and interactive activities to help bring the text to life.

Nehemiah 1:5-11

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read Nehemiah 1:5-11.

Discussion: In verses 8-9, Nehemiah recalls God’s promise to restore His people if they return to Him. How can reflecting on God’s Word shape our prayers today?

God’s promises give shape, confidence, and direction to our prayers. Scripture helps us pray with faith and truth instead of only emotion.

How does Nehemiah balance prayer and practical action? How can we apply this principle in our own lives?

Nehemiah prays first, but he does not stop there. He seeks God’s help and then prepares to act wisely and faithfully.

In verse 11, Nehemiah asks God to grant him favor with King Artaxerxes. What does this tell us about his approach to taking action?

He depends on God even while planning carefully. His request shows humility, trust, and an understanding that success comes from the Lord.

Nehemiah 2:1-5

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud Nehemiah 2:1-5.

Discussion: How would you describe Nehemiah’s condition in the months between chapter 1 and chapter 2? Why might Nehemiah have been “very much afraid”?

Nehemiah likely carried ongoing grief, burden, and prayerful concern. His sadness shows that his compassion was not temporary or shallow.

What in Nehemiah’s response shows practical wisdom and dependence on God?

He speaks carefully, responds respectfully, and is ready with a clear request. At the same time, he remains dependent on God's favor.

What might Nehemiah's very short prayer in verse 4 reveal about his prayer life?

It suggests that prayer was natural and continual for him, not limited to long sessions. He lived in ongoing dependence on God.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: Nehemiah grieved when he saw the unmet needs of his fellow Jews in Jerusalem. Rather than merely reacting, he sought God and determined that he was the one who should act on behalf of God's people. When we see needs among our group members and church family, we should ask, "What would you have me do about this, God?"

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

Nehemiah like Jesus moved toward broken people with compassion, prayer, and decisive action

Connect to Christ: Nehemiah's grief over Jerusalem and his burden to act point forward to Jesus, who saw the brokenness of God's people and came to restore what was ruined by sin. Nehemiah prayed, fasted, and then stepped forward in faith, but Jesus went even further by leaving heaven, entering our need, and accomplishing the rescue His people could never achieve on their own. Nehemiah sought favor from an earthly king to rebuild a city wall; Jesus secures favor with the Father and builds a lasting kingdom that cannot be shaken. In both cases, God raises up a servant to move toward His people with compassion, courage, and a plan for restoration.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Respond to the needs of God's people with Prayer. Nehemiah's first reaction to hearing about Jerusalem's devastation was deep sorrow followed by prayer. This teaches us to turn to God first rather than reacting impulsively.

Act with Boldness. When Nehemiah approached King Artaxerxes, he did so with courage and a clear plan. This encourages us to step forward boldly when God calls us to lead or take action when we see the needs of God's people.

Using your Influence for Good. Nehemiah leveraged his position as cupbearer to request help from the king. This reminds us to use our resources, skills, and connections to serve others and fulfill God's purposes.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for hearing our prayers and giving courage to act for the good of His people.

COMMENTARY

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Book Chapter Background

Nehemiah 1 sets the stage for the book by introducing Nehemiah, a Jewish exile serving as cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes. The chapter begins with Nehemiah receiving distressing news about the state of Jerusalem—its walls are broken down, and its gates burned. This devastation deeply moves Nehemiah, leading him to fast, pray, and seek God's guidance. Historically, this takes place around 445 BC, after the Babylonian exile. Though some Jews had returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Ezra, the city remained vulnerable. Nehemiah's prayer in this chapter reflects his sorrow, repentance, and plea for divine intervention to restore Jerusalem.

Verse by Verse

1:1 "Nehemiah" means "The Lord comforts." The Lord used Nehemiah to revive the spirit of the discouraged exiles and bring them hope (cf. Isa 57:14–21). The first seven chapters of Nehemiah as well as 12:31–13:31 are written in the first person. This, as well as all or part of Neh 11 and the rest of Neh 12, constitutes what is called the Nehemiah Memoirs. As such it offers an extensive look into the life and heart of an outstanding servant of God that is unique to the Old Testament. Nehemiah was an energetic leader who combined a deep trust in the Lord with precise planning, careful organization, and discreet but energetic action. Christian leaders find inspiration in Nehemiah's life and character.

1:2 Hanani was either a real brother, a kinsman, or a fellow Jew. All are possible ways of understanding the text; however, the fact that he called him "my brother" in 7:2 when he appointed him to a high office supports the first meaning. "Questioned them" indicates Nehemiah's deep concern for his own people, even those who lived far away. From the beginning it is evident that Nehemiah's interest was not only himself or his immediate family; his vision included God's people even though far away. Christian leaders today must also have a global concern for God's work.

1:3 Verse 3 would seem to indicate that by "Jewish remnant" Nehemiah was referring to the returned exiles in Jerusalem and Judea rather than those who were not carried into captivity. The province to which Nehemiah refers probably was the whole province of Trans-Euphrates. Was "the broken wall" the result of the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in

587? Or were some walls built at a later time, such as in the episode mentioned in Ezra 4:12? Nehemiah seems to have been surprised and appalled; therefore it is reasonable to suppose that Ezra 4:12 refers to a partial building of walls at some time after the first return in 538 that had been destroyed, perhaps by Rehum and Shimshai when they interceded according to Ezra 4:23.

1:5 Nehemiah's prayer (vv. 5–11) reminds us of psalms classified as Community Laments (e.g., Pss 74; 79; 80; 85); however, this prayer lacks the complaint element common to those psalms. "The great and awesome God" indicates Nehemiah's appreciation of who God is: the one whom Nehemiah feared and the source and object of his deep faith. God's awesomeness is the impression his total character and person leaves on all who encounter him. Those who know and trust God are those who fear him (cf. Mal 1:14; 4:5; Exod 15:11; Deut 28:58; Ezra 9:4). The order of the prayer is significant: praise then petition. One central theme of the Old Testament is God's special covenant relation with his people. The word *ḥesed* (translated here "love" in "covenant of love") is used frequently in the Old Testament. It is closely related to the covenant and contains the idea of loyalty. It emphasizes God's mercy and love to his people. "With those who love him and obey his commands" shows that covenant love or loyalty was to be reciprocal. God's people are to obey God's commands, which express his will. The mention of the covenant should always cause us to recognize God's faithfulness and our responsibility. As Fensham says, "Love and the Law are the two pillars on which the covenant rests." 1:6 Nehemiah knew that God would hear; he was asking God to take action. One of the utterly astounding characteristics of biblical psalms is that the psalmist never doubted that God heard his prayer. How great is God that he can pay attention to each of our prayers, millions of them around the world, individually and simultaneously! Our minds cannot comprehend it, but God is beyond our comprehension. Even though he was a leader, Nehemiah emphasized his identification with the people and with their sins. Leaders must not consider themselves superior to others; admission of fault will not ruin effectiveness.

1:7 The concept of disobedience goes right to the heart of the matter. God's commands are not capricious; he knows what is best for his people and for all society. Nehemiah recognized the seriousness of disobeying God's ethical demands. Many ethical dilemmas of our day are not easily solved; however, we often make them more difficult by not accepting as relevant ethical commands that are clear in Scripture. In this case "the commands, decrees and laws" refer to the Pentateuch.

2:1 Since "Nisan" spans parts of our March– April, four months had passed since Nehemiah received news from Jerusalem. He had been praying and planning during these four months so that he would be ready when the opportunity arose. When a servant brought the wine, Nehemiah, as official cupbearer, tasted it and gave it to the king. This most likely took place during a feast. Some question whether Nehemiah had not had occasion to serve the king during the four months that passed. No doubt Nehemiah served the king constantly but was waiting for the right time to present his petition.

2:2 When one acts according to God's will, others will take notice. In this case Nehemiah was risking his life. The king might have become suspicious of some kind of a plot. "Sadness of heart" can also mean "a bad (or evil) heart."

2:3 "May the king live forever" was the common formula for addressing the king as we see in Dan 2:4. Nehemiah went on to say he was sad because of the condition of the city "where my fathers are buried." Such a description showed both Nehemiah's respect for his ancestors and also his sense of shame at the condition of his native city. Nehemiah's request no doubt touched the sentiments of the king. He carefully avoided raising the king's suspicions reminding him of his earlier decree, though of course the king knew Nehemiah's background. Nehemiah showed his great ability in communication and delicate diplomacy. He first had to get the king's sympathy before going on to details.

2:4 Quick prayers are possible and valid if one has prayed sufficiently beforehand. In this case Nehemiah's prayer is evidence of a life lived in constant communion with God. Nehemiah had prayed for months, but he knew he was completely dependent on God's work in the king's heart at this moment.

GOD DEFENDS HIS PEOPLE: Esther 7:1-6; 9-10; 8:3-8; 11-17

The Point: The enemies of God's people will not triumph over them

The Purpose: Participants will learn that God defends His people and overturns evil plans.

Christ Connection: Esther points to Jesus, who secures the final victory for God's people and defeats the enemy forever.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: When you think about an evil, antagonistic character in a book or movie, what comes to mind? Who would you say is the worst of them all?

This question helps the group think about the nature of evil and prepares them to see Haman's wickedness more clearly.

Transition to the Study

In today's Bible study, a chief antagonist of the Jewish people, Haman, sought their complete annihilation. Haman despised the Jews in general, but Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin, in particular. Haman manipulated King Ahasuerus to authorize the execution of all the Jews. God raised up Esther, who intervened on her people's behalf, and revealed Haman's evil intentions to the king, saving her people. Although Esther and Mordecai are prominent in this account, it was God who came to the defense of His people.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Esther 1-6 Re:Cap Esther 1-6 sets the stage by showing how God is quietly at work behind the scenes to preserve his people. After Queen Vashti is removed, Esther, a Jewish woman, is chosen as queen, though her identity remains hidden. Meanwhile, Mordecai uncovers a plot against the king but is initially unrewarded, while Haman rises to power and plots to destroy the Jews out of hatred for Mordecai. Esther courageously risks her life to approach the king and begins a plan by inviting him and Haman to a banquet. In a dramatic turn, the king honors Mordecai instead of Haman, setting up a reversal that points toward God's coming deliverance.

Esther 7:1-6

Read Aloud: Have someone read Esther 7:1-6.

Discussion: When Esther sees her people are facing trouble, even though she is not at risk, how does she respond? What happened?

Esther reveals the danger facing her people and confronts Haman's evil plot. The moment is tense because the truth is finally exposed before the king.

If you were one of the main characters in this account, what might you be thinking or feeling at this very moment when Esther revealed evil Haman's plot against the Jews? (the three main people are (1) Queen Esther, (2) King Ahasuerus, (3) Haman)
They likely felt fear, urgency, and pressure, yet Esther shows courage and wisdom. Her example encourages boldness when truth must be spoken.

Teaching Tip: Silence is golden

Pause and let silence work for you. Sometimes people need a moment to think before they can answer thoughtfully.

Esther 7:9-10; 8:3-8

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read Esther 7:9-10; 8:3-8.

Discussion: What unresolved issues remained even after Haman's death?

The decree against the Jews still stood, so the threat had not fully passed. Haman was gone, but the damage of his evil had to be addressed.

When you see events taking place in life, how do you know whether they are 'the fickle finger of fate' or 'the holy hand of God.' How do you know the difference?

We often cannot see providence immediately, but we can recognize God's hand when circumstances align with His protection and purposes. Faith interprets events through God's character.

What lesson should we learn from Haman's life and his hatred of God's people?

Pride and hatred lead to destruction. Opposing God's people is ultimately opposing God Himself, and that path ends in judgment.

Esther 8:11-17

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud Esther 8:11-17.

Discussion: How do you see God's hand at work even though His name is not explicitly mentioned?

The reversal of events, the preservation of the Jews, and the timing of Esther and Mordecai's actions all suggest providence. God is working behind the scenes.

The Jews responded to their new found security with joy and feasting. How do moments of deliverance in our own lives lead to gratitude and celebration in our lives?

Deliverance reminds us that God has intervened for our good. Gratitude naturally follows when we remember what could have happened and what God prevented.

In what ways does God's deliverance of the Jewish people in this account compare to the deliverance of His people through Jesus' death?

Both are acts of rescue from real danger, and both show that God overrules evil for His people's good. Jesus' deliverance is deeper because it saves from sin and death itself.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: Esther 7 and 8 reveal a powerful story of justice, redemption, and divine providence. Esther's courage exposes evil, Haman falls, and Mordecai rises to influence, ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. The reversal from impending destruction to celebration shows that God can overturn human schemes and preserve His people. The narrative highlights the importance of using one's position for good, trusting in God's timing, and boldly acting in moments of crisis. Ultimately, Esther and Mordecai's leadership brings hope and deliverance, inspiring believers today to stand firm in faith and advocate for justice in their own lives.

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

The story of Esther previews the great reversal we find in the crucifixion when Jesus is resurrected, breaking the bonds of death and sin.

Connect to Christ: Esther's courage before the king points to Jesus, who also entered the place of danger on behalf of others and spoke for His people's rescue. Like Esther, Jesus stood between death and deliverance, but He did far more than risk His life, He gave it. Haman's hidden evil and the threatened destruction of the Jews remind us of the real spiritual enemy Jesus came to defeat. The unexpected reversal in Esther, where judgment falls on the enemy and God's people are preserved, anticipates the greater victory Christ won through the cross and resurrection. In both stories, God works through a faithful deliverer to protect His people and turn sorrow into joy.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Trust in Divine Timing. Mordecai's rise to power and the reversal of Haman's decree show that God's timing is perfect. We can trust that setbacks may be part of a greater plan.

Use your Influence for Good. Esther and Mordecai used their positions to protect their people. This encourages us to use our influence whether in leadership, friendships, or work for positive change.

Celebrate Deliverance. The Jews responded to their victory with joy and feasting. This reminds us to celebrate moments of deliverance and express gratitude for blessings.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for being the living Redeemer who sees suffering, sustains faith, and promises final restoration.

COMMENTARY

The New American Commentary, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Book Chapter Background

The Book of Esther is set during the Persian Empire, specifically during the reign of King Ahasuerus (commonly identified as Xerxes I, who ruled from 486–464 BC). The story unfolds in Susa, one of the empire's capitals, at a time when some Jews had returned to Jerusalem while others, like Esther and Mordecai, remained in exile. Esther, a Jewish girl, becomes queen of Persia and, with the help of her cousin Mordecai, saves her people from a plot by Haman, a high-ranking official who sought to destroy the Jewish population. The book explains the origins of the Jewish festival of Purim, which commemorates this deliverance. Interestingly, Esther is one of the only books in the Hebrew Bible that does not explicitly mention God, yet it highlights themes of divine providence, human responsibility, and the triumph of good over evil.

Verse by Verse

7:1 Haman had no idea of what was coming. Destruction and adversity can fall quickly. The banquet was planned following a previous place where the conflict with Haman would come to a climax. Thus far Esther, Mordecai, and the reader knows that Haman's plot is going to be reversed. But only Esther has figured out how.

7:2 There is great irony in Xerxes' request. He assumed that she would ask for material possessions when in reality she was interested in what really matters: human lives. Xerxes, of course, did not know this. Another ironic element in this event is that Xerxes was sitting with his most trusted official.

7:4 Esther identified herself with her people not by their name, the Jews, but rather by their fate. Next, she accused Haman of conspiracy. These announcements placed her in a dangerous position. She did not know how the king would react. She was probably uncertain whether Haman or she would have more influence. By now the king must have remembered that decree and realized what Esther was talking about.

7:6 Esther's answer was short and exact, "This vile Haman." She made her case as strong and clear as possible. By announcing Haman as the guilty person, she revealed her Jewishness. Haman must have felt doomed immediately because he realized he had not condemned to death just a people from another land, for that had never bothered him.

What was troubling was that the king's favorite wife also was a Jew. This would be certain trouble for Haman. "Haman was terrified," and he had every right to be afraid for his life. His plots and lies had now been uncovered by the one who had more power than he, the king.

7:9 The "Harbona" here probably is the same one as in 1:10. Apparently Haman had no friends there. What Harbona said was in essence another accusation that confirmed the king's decision to execute Haman. The ultimate irony is that the death instrument built for Mordecai would now be the method of death for its creator, Haman.

7:10 The evil that Haman planned for his enemy fell on him. A number of proverbs express the truth of what happened here. According to Prov 11:6: "The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires" (cf. Prov 29:16; 26:27). These proverbs teach by expressing contrasts, which the author of Esther frequently used: Haman celebrated, but the people were bewildered (3:15); Esther and Mordecai fasted, but then Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet (4:15; 5:4); Haman expected honor, but Mordecai received that honor, and Haman was humiliated (6:11-12); Haman schemed to execute Mordecai, but he himself was condemned. The story is not over. The narrative has shown the rise and fall of Haman, but the edict of annihilation is still intact. More is at stake here than just Mordecai's life; also at stake are the lives of all of the Jews in the Persian Empire.

8:11 "The Jews" were scattered in many countries and cities. "The right to assemble" perhaps had been denied to them, or that denial might have been implicit in Haman's decree. "Destroy, kill and annihilate" is the same wording as the other decree (3:13), but this time the Jews were allowed to defend themselves. To whom were they to do this? The object of the verbs is "any armed force ... that might attack them." But the end of the sentence appears to give the Jews the right to plunder any of their enemies. Many ask why the decree was so harsh. Moore says it was the wisdom doctrine of retributive justice that the author was showing here, for that was what the edict of Haman proclaimed against the Jews. Haman's followers were to reap what they had sown. Crucial at this point, however, is the fact that the Jews would act in self-defense.

8:12-13 "The day appointed" was the same day Haman's edict had set for plundering the Jews (3:13). The obvious reason was so that the Jews could defend themselves. The edict sounds harsh; however, the people knew that the Jews had permission to defend themselves, but only against people who attacked them first. The purpose of the edict was

to ward off anyone who might try to attack the Jews. All this seems impossible. Many consider it fiction; but if we remember what happened under Hitler, it does not appear so impossible. 8:14 The verbs "riding," "raced out," and "spurred" heighten the urgency of the narrative. The edict also was issued in the area of the palace, no doubt to confirm Mordecai's position before the king. 8:15 The description encourages the reader to imagine how the king looked. The word "crown" here is different from that of 1:11; 2:17; and 6:8. Mordecai was vindicated and promoted, and "the city of Susa held a joyous celebration." As indicated in 3:15 by Susa's bewilderment with the original decree, Mordecai may have been popular with the people. Another possibility is that Susa was not anti-Semitic, but its leaders were. Regardless, the text does not specify who in Susa was anti-semitic. The author wanted to show that the welfare of the Jews meant the good of the whole society. 8:16 The Jews realized the importance of this deliverance. This is in contrast with 4:3, where there was mourning, fasting, weeping, and wailing.

STANDING FIRM IN SUFFERING: Job 19

The Point: Job's suffering deepens, but his hope rests in a living Redeemer.

The Purpose: To help participants see that faith can endure pain by trusting God's justice, presence, and final redemption.

Christ Connection: Job's confession anticipates Christ, the living Redeemer who stands on the earth and gives believers hope beyond suffering.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: When have you held onto hope even when everything around you seemed to say otherwise?

Suffering often makes people feel isolated, misunderstood, and forgotten. Job's words give a voice to that experience while also pointing toward a deeper hope that pain and death will not have the final word.

Transition to the Study

Job 19 shows a man surrounded by confusion, grief, and rejection, yet still clinging to God. His words move from complaint to confession, and that movement helps us see how faith can survive even in seasons of loss. As we read, notice how Job's honest sorrow and bold hope belong together. His testimony invites us to bring our pain before God without pretending everything is fine, because true hope is not found in denying suffering but in trusting the Lord through it.

STUDY THE BIBLE**Job 19:1-10**

Read Aloud: Have someone read Job 19:1-10.

Discussion: What is Job describing in these verses?

Job describes the deep hurt caused by his friends' words and the sense that God has allowed his suffering to overwhelm him. He feels trapped, dishonored, and abandoned.

Why is it important to be honest with God and others about pain instead of hiding it?

Honest lament helps us process suffering with God rather than apart from him. It also keeps us from pretending and opens the door for comfort, prayer, and support from others.

What does Job's language reveal about how suffering can affect a person's view of God and life?

Suffering can distort a person's sense of stability, making everything feel dark and unfair. Job's words show how grief can narrow vision, even while faith still remains.

Teaching Tip: Listen Before Fixing

When someone shares pain, resist the urge to correct them quickly. Ask follow-up questions, acknowledge what they feel, and create space for honesty before moving to advice.

Job 19:11–20

Read Aloud: Have someone or a few people read Job 19:11–20.

Discussion: What relationships and supports have broken down in Job's life?

Job says brothers, relatives, close friends, servants, and even his wife and children feel distant from him. He is describing total social isolation.

How should believers respond when someone feels abandoned by people they once trusted?

We should move toward them with compassion, consistency, and practical care. Faithful presence matters when a person feels cut off from everyone else. We should be very slow to instruct, correct, and even remind and quick to listen, to empathize, and to care.

Why is isolation often one of the hardest parts of suffering?

Isolation makes pain feel personal and permanent. Without community, suffering can seem like proof that no one sees or cares, which deepens despair.

Job 19:21–29

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud Job 19:21–29.

Discussion: What does Job boldly declare in verse 25?

Job says, "For I know that my Redeemer lives." He expresses confidence that God will vindicate him and that his hope is not dead.

How can Job's confession strengthen believers when they face uncertainty, loss, or grief?

It reminds believers that God is alive, active, and able to redeem what feels broken. Hope can survive when it is grounded in God's character rather than our circumstances.

Why is Job's statement about seeing God significant for the whole book?

It shifts the focus from present suffering to future vindication. Job's hope is not merely for relief, but for ultimate encounter with God and final justice.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: Job's confidence in a living Redeemer points beyond his own suffering to Jesus Christ, who truly stands on the earth and secures the believer's future hope. In Christ, God answers the cry for vindication, resurrection, and restored relationship. Job could look forward in faith; we can look back to the cross and forward to our own resurrection in the final day with even greater clarity.

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?

Jesus is the living Redeemer Job longed for. He enters suffering, defeats death, and guarantees that believers will one day see God and be fully restored.

Connect to Christ: Job's words foreshadow the gospel by joining suffering, vindication, and hope. His declaration that a Redeemer lives reaches its fulfillment in Jesus, who died, rose again, and will stand in final judgment and victory. The passage points to resurrection hope and the assurance that death is not the end.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Bring one honest lament to God in prayer this week instead of pretending everything is fine.

Reach out to someone who feels isolated and offer steady encouragement or practical help or reach out yourself asking for encouragement or practical if you're feeling isolated.

Meditate on the hope of resurrection and write down one fear that Jesus' victory over death addresses.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for being the living Redeemer who sees suffering, sustains faith, and promises final restoration.

COMMENTARY

Robert L. Alden, Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993).

Book Chapter Background

Because of the “Redeemer” passage (v. 25), this is the most quoted chapter in Job. Unfortunately, that ray of hope is surrounded by themes more characteristic of Job—criticism of friends, complaint to God, and despair. Some downplay Job’s hopelessness, while others completely ignore, water down, or argue away his hope. In an effort to be fair with Scripture, we must notice both.

Bitterly Job accused his friends of tormenting, crushing, reproaching, and attacking him. Why, he wanted to know, did they enjoy their exaltation and his humiliation when it was God and not they who designed this turn of events?

Verse by Verse

19:1 This standard introduction will be repeated in 9:1; 12:1; 16:1; 19:1; 21:1; 23:1; 26:1.

19:2 At approximately the halfway point of the debate Job wondered if his three friends would ever give up or change their approach from one of accusation to one of support. It was not to be. Instead of comforting him as they had originally come to do, they tormented and crushed him by their words. The term “crush,” Hartley explains, “represents the feelings of worthlessness and futility one experiences when overwhelmed by misfortune.” One could be very successful counseling the depressed by simply applying in reverse the principles exhibited by these three friends.

19:3 “Ten” is a round or unspecific number. It is useless to try to enumerate the insults the three friends had thrown at Job thus far. Verse 3 has three verbs in Hebrew: “you have reproached,” “you are not ashamed,” and “you attack.”

19:4 As in 6:24, where the verb first appeared, Job allowed for the possibility that he had “gone astray,” that is, trespassed inadvertently or was guilty of a sin of omission (Lev 5:18; Num 15:28). The noun “error” is from the same root. By the entire sentence Job asked what business it was of theirs even if he were guilty of this, the least serious variety of sin. They could point to none, and even if they could, they should have acted redemptively, not condemningly.

19:5 There are two ways to be higher than your neighbor: by putting your neighbor down and by lifting yourself up. Job charged that his friends did both. He could well have prayed the imprecation of Ps 35:26b, “May all who exalt themselves over me be clothed with shame and disgrace,” a verse that uses both key words of 19:5 (cf. Ps 38:16 [17]).

19:6 The condition expressed in v. 5 has its result in v. 6. Two important words tie the concluding verse of this section to earlier statements by Bildad. “Wronged” (‘āwat) occurred twice in 8:3, where Bildad asked: “Does God perfect justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?” He would have said no, but Job here argued that God indeed had wronged him. By the term “net” (though not one of the six traps in 18:8–10) Job connected his predicament to that which befalls the wicked, according to Bildad. Only Job did not consider himself wicked, so what Bildad regarded as dynamistic retribution Job called divine injustice.

“God” does not appear in this pericope, but he is the subject of the verbs in vv. 8–13 and the one responsible for all the social alienation Job described so pathetically in vv. 14–19. In a sense these verses are embellishments of the picture of the “net” drawn around him (v. 6). It “blocked” his way (v. 8), was “on every side” (v. 10), was “around” his tent (v. 12), and kept his kin and kith at a painful distance (vv. 14–19).

The Legal Case is Lopsided (19:7–12)

Beginning with legal terminology, Job moved to other metaphors to describe how God mistreated him. God plunged him into darkness (v. 8). He uncrowned him (v. 9). He uprooted him (v. 11). He besieged him (v. 12).

19:7 The Hebrew is more pithy. For “I’ve been wronged!” it has the single word ḥāmas, translated “violence” (RSV, AB, NJPS, NASB, and most commentaries), “injustice” (NAB), or “murder” (Moffatt, AT, NAB; cf. Hab 1:2). It is the opposite of “justice,” the key word of line b (cf. Isa 53:8–9). As in other places, Job felt ignored by an apathetic God.

19:8 Like Balaam (Num 22:24) or Jeremiah (Lam 3:7), Job felt he was at an impasse. God hedged him in (3:23), not to protect him (1:10) but to restrict and restrain him. “Darkness” with all its accompanying hardships, dangers, and fears faced the man from Uz wherever he turned. To the wandering Israelites God had been a pillar of fire (Exod 13:21), and to the psalmist he was “light” and “salvation” (Ps 27:1). Such was not Job’s testimony, for now his lot was darkness and deadlock (compare these verses with Lam 3:1–18).

19:9 Like the stripped counselors and befuddled judges of 12:17, Job was “stripped” of his “honor” and divested of his “crown,” a figure of speech denoting the loss of self-esteem or

personal worth. Sickness and accompanying depression have a way of devaluing life and making the victim self-deprecating and even suicidal (cf. v. 2).

19:10 The contrast between “tear down” and “root up” is more English than Hebrew, but it does describe how Job felt God was dealing with him. Both statements are quite graphic. “Tear down” (nātaṣ) often describes the demolition of heathen altars or city walls (cf. 12:14, but the verb is hāras). “Uproot” (nāsa`) is a more general word for “remove,” but by the analogy of a tree, it signifies something done with vigor and violence. In 14:7 Job said, “There is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again,” but that is not so with an uprooted tree (cf. 18:16).

19:11 Though it was not really the case, Job interpreted his bad fortune as God’s anger burning against him. In fact, God’s anger burned against Eliphaz and his two friends, according to 42:7, because they had not spoken of God what was right. Abraham was the “friend of God” (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23), but Job thought God “counted” him “among his enemies.” Job erred, like his three counselors, in judging God’s attitude from circumstances. Certainly we who have the Scriptures should never make that mistake (cf. Rom 5:8; 8:39).

19:12 The section ends with a tristich with all three lines describing military movements. Perhaps Job compared his three friends to the “troops” who allied themselves against him. Their arguments were like “siege ramps,” and their unwillingness to refrain from their accusations was like so many encampments of hostile soldiers waiting for surrender. The irony is that all this military might was directed at a mere “tent.”

Forsaken by Friends and Family (19:13–20)

The scene Job sketched here is one of the most pathetic and pitiful in the entire book. All his friends distanced themselves from him. His servants did not obey him. Little boys scorned him. Even his wife and brothers found him offensive and loathsome.

19:13 At the beginning of this list of strained and estranged relationships, Job posited God as the source, “He has alienated” (causative of rāḥaq, “put far away”). “Brothers” are probably not siblings (v. 17) but fellow countrymen (cf. Pss 69:8 [9]; 88:8 [9]).

19:14 Two more categories of former associates severed their contacts with Job: “kinsmen” (qārôb, “near one/neighbor”) and “friends” (or “acquaintances,” from the verb “to know”). In vv. 13–15 the author employed the antonyms “far” and “near,” “be strange” and “know” to describe how topsy-turvy Job’s world had become.

19:15 Because v. 14 is so short (four Hebrew words) and v. 15 so long (eight Hebrew words), some translations make v. 14 into one line and v. 15 into three by moving the verb “forgotten” to v. 15 (RSV, NEB, GNB). We must reckon with the fact that the author was not bound by the rules of poetry as strictly as we might wish. The point is clear however the verses are divided—those who should have known and honored Job treated him like a “stranger,” *zār*, or an “alien/foreigner,” *nokrî*, with all the aloofness those terms involved.

19:16 First the female servants did not recognize him, then Job’s male servant was unresponsive. The master ought never have to “beg” his servant, but so great was the alienation and disrespect Job endured.

19:17 While there is no doubt about the meaning of this verse in general, some of the specifics of the translation are in question. “My breath” is *rûḥî*, which could also be “my spirit” or even “my self.” As it stands, Job must have had halitosis. The parallel synonymous verbs in the verse occur only here. The last irregularity is the expression “my own brothers,” which is literally “sons of my womb.” Many are satisfied simply to live with the anomaly of Job here referring to his children, while the prologue records their deaths (AB, NJPS). The RV, ASV, and RSV in different ways added “mother,” something the NIV and all others that read “brothers” do by implication.

19:18 In the preceding verses Job complained that his acquaintances distanced themselves or ignored him. In vv. 18–19 other categories actively offended and spurned him. “Little boys,” who should have respected their elders, were the first to “scorn” and “ridicule” Job.

19:19 “My intimate friends” is literally “men of my council” (or “counsel”). Even these few with whom one would dare to share confidences had nothing to do with Job (Ps 55:12–14 [13–15]). “Those I love” at the end of this list serves as a catchall to review all the categories Job listed in vv. 14–19. While he loved them, they “turned against” him.

19:20 Many options exist for both the translation and interpretation of this verse. The first problem is that the verse does not seem to fit with the preceding context, which does not deal with Job’s physical condition. Second, the first line reads literally, “On my skin and on my flesh sticks my bone.” But “bone” does not “stick” on “skin” and “flesh.” The other way around would be more likely. Third, the occurrence of “skin” in line a makes the line rather long and suggests to some that it may be an error, especially since Ps 102:5 [6] has literally “my bone sticks to my flesh.” The fourth problem is that since “teeth” do not have “skin,” what does it mean to escape with (or by) it? One possibility is that Job meant he escaped with nothing (there is no word “only” in the text). Some suggest it may refer to gums (NIV margin, “only my gums”). The phrase “skin of my teeth” is now an entrenched English idiom.

Elsewhere Job hinted that he was emaciated (16:8; cf. 33:21), so the best interpretation is one that assumes this verse speaks to that condition. If so, v. 20 goes better with the next section, which has “flesh” in the last line.

(3) Plea to Friends (19:21–22)

Having charged his friends and relatives with neglect and even active abuse, Job now pled with them for mercy. It was bad enough that God was against him; he hoped his friends could at least be sympathetic.

19:21 The two imperatival pleas for mercy are right together at the beginning of the verse. Would the friends side with God against a fellow human being, an intimate friend, even a relative? The word for “struck” (nāgaʿ) is the same the Satan used in 1:11; 2:5 when he told God to “strike” Job. God handed Job over to the Satan, so strictly speaking it was not God who “struck” Job.

19:22 “Pursue” was the verb Job used in 13:25 when he compared God’s pursuit of him to the “chasing after dry chaff.” With the use of these two rhetorical questions, he hoped to elicit some support, discover a kinsman-redeemer, or just find anyone who would cross over to his side. In this consuming struggle he had to maintain his integrity and innocence and yet explain his suffering. Some people who think they stand with God are actually standing against him.

(4) Testimony of Hope (19:23–27)

For many this is the high point of the book; v. 25 has been often quoted and put to music. But Andersen’s words of caution must be heeded:

This passage is notoriously difficult. Much depends on the authenticity and meaning of its central affirmation, my Redeemer lives. Unfortunately it is followed by several lines which are so unintelligible that the range of translations offered is quite bewildering. Two extremes should be avoided. There is no need for the loud note of Job’s certainty of ultimate vindication to be drowned by the static of textual difficulties. But too much of later resurrection theology should not be read back into the passage.

The NIV capitalizes “Redeemer,” making clear the translators’ understanding that a divine person was in view. Though this is a central question, it is only one of several questions that arise from these verses. Regardless of details, this pericope is certainly another of Job’s rays of hope in an otherwise dismal assortment of groans and grievances.

19:23 This is one of ten passages in Job where the idiom appears that reads literally “who would give,” translated here and frequently elsewhere as “oh, that.” Job wished for a permanent record, one “written” (kātab in the first line) and “inscribed” (ḥaqaq in the second line). Job feared that he would die before he was vindicated, so he wanted his testimony preserved for later generations. This is not unlike people having Bible verses engraved on their tombstones.

19:24 Verse 24 continues the sentence begun in v. 23. “Inscribed” is not in Hebrew but rather “engraved” (ḥāṣab). Job wanted this account of his faith preserved eternally on “rock.” It is uncertain whether Job had in mind a writing instrument made partly of lead or filling or lining the letters in lead so that they would shine and endure.

19:25 Job was sure of one thing, “As for me, I know.” His certainty was about his “Redeemer.” The word, an active participial, is from the verb (gā’al) that describes what one does to property in hock (Lev 19:29), or what a friend or close relative does for someone in slavery (Lev 19:17–18) or in debt (Lev 19:25), or for one who has been killed (Num 35:12; 2 Sam 14:11; cf. Rev 6:10; 19:2) or widowed (Ruth 2:20). In the Pentateuch and historical books the word was basically commercial or legal, but in the psalms and prophets it became a theological term (e.g., Ps 19:14 [15]; Isa 43:1; Jer 50:34; Mic 4:10). The question is whether Job was using it in the older sense, hoping for some relative to stand up for him, or whether in the later sense that Yahweh was Israel’s Redeemer. It is possible both were in his mind. Certainly he had wished for some fellow human being then and there to say a good word for him before God and his neighbors, but he also envisioned a divine Redeemer (note vv. 26–27 and see comments at 16:19 and 17:3).

One can offer substitute synonyms for the words in the second half that might alter the meaning, but all the words are well known and used in Job. “In the end,” for example, might be “latter/last/afterwards.” “Earth” might be “dust” (but it is “earth” in 28:2; 30:6; 41:33 [25]). “Stand” might be “arise/be established.” Each of these alternatives raises new possibilities about the meaning of the verse, but as usual the straightforward sense is best. The Redeemer would eventually appear. Though Job would die and his stone testimony would stand in silence, he anticipated a Redeemer who “lives” and acts on behalf of those in need who rely on him.

Along with the prophets, Job spoke words that we can understand best from the perspective of the New Testament. Job’s understanding of God’s eternal plan for the redemption of his people through the death of Christ was surely limited, but that does not diminish the veracity of the statement. For Job and for every believer before and after him

there is a divine Redeemer. We know his name is Jesus, and at the last day he will stand up and defend us because he has bought us with his blood (Acts 20:28; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20; 1 Pet 1:18–19; Rev 1:5; 5:9).

19:26 This verse has the most problems of any in this section. “After” is another form of the word translated “in the end” in v. 25. “My skin,” even with no adjustment of vowels, can be read “I awake/ arise.” That option, however, would leave no subject for the verb “has been destroyed.” “In my flesh” ordinarily would be “from my flesh” (see NIV footnote) or even “without my flesh” (AB). The translators, however, appealed to a less common but occasional use of the preposition (*min*) and rendered it as if from Job’s viewpoint, that is, “from within,” partly because of the emphasis in v. 27 on his bodily identity. As Andersen points out, “The references to skin, flesh and eyes make it clear that Job expects to have this experience as a man, not just as a disembodied shade, or in his mind’s eye.” This is the first of three statements averring his anticipation of seeing God.

19:27 The second and third verbs for “see” are in the first two lines of this tricolon, with the additional emphasis of “my eyes.” “Not another” can be understood to mean either that “I and not another will see” or “I will see God and not another.” The latter is more likely, that is, “God will not be a stranger.” It is a debated point whether Job expected this experience to occur following a bodily resurrection, in a conscious state following his death, or even before his death. Andersen’s path probably is wisest. He agrees with those who, “while admitting that the passage falls short of a full statement of faith in personal bodily resurrection, find in it the hope of a favourable meeting with God after death as a genuine human being.”

The attention commentaries devote to this passage and the number of articles on all facets of it are enormous. In this relatively brief presentation the emphasis has been on the text as it exists (rather than as it can be emended) and on the most likely interpretation in consideration of the way the key words are generally used in the Old Testament and in Job in particular. Like the other passages expressing hope, it stands in sharp contrast to the surrounding gloom and doom, but that background also serves to accentuate the extraordinary character of these passages. Diamonds are displayed best on black velvet.

(5) Advice to Friends (19:28–29)

There may well have been a temporal pause here, for v. 28 represents an abrupt change of attitude and subject matter. Just a verse earlier Job was anticipating the sight of God. Now his focus turned once again on his friends, and he lashed out at them with this stern warning.

19:28 The premise of this two-verse conditional sentence is v. 28, which incorporates a quotation that is not exact but represents what Job sensed they were saying and doing. The verb translated “hound” (rdp) is the same as in v. 22, “pursue.” In fact, the general tenor of v. 22 resumes in v. 28. One facet of their contention was that “the root of the trouble lies” in Job, that is, Job himself was the source of the problem with his unacknowledged sin.

19:29 The essence of Job’s advice was to “fear” the execution of divine justice themselves (5:20; 15:22; Lev 26:25, 33; Ps 45:3 [4]). The Bible strongly warns against false accusation (Exod 20:16; 23:1, 7; Ps 101:5; Jer 9:3–9; 2 Tim 3:3; Titus 2:3; 2 Pet 2:10–11), and that was essentially what Bildad and his two friends were committing. The last word of the chapter is an impossible form here translated “that there is judgment.” Most, like the NIV, read it as the relative pronoun (ša) plus the common noun “judge” or “judgment.” Without the last letter the consonants spell one of the common names for God, “Shaddai.” The friends’ contention had been that Job was being judged. In these verses Job warned them they should beware of judgment themselves, a warning that turned out to have substance in light of 42:7.

JOY AFTER JUDGEMENT: Isaiah 25

The Point: God will defeat death and restore his people with joyful salvation.

The Purpose: To help participants trust God's promised victory, even while living in a broken world.

Christ Connection: Isaiah's vision of death swallowed up finds its fulfillment in Jesus, who conquers death and welcomes his people into joy forever.

CREATE INTEREST

Question: What is one celebration or victory that felt so good you wished it would never end?

Human victories are temporary, but Isaiah points to a victory that reaches deeper than success, comfort, or even survival. God promises a future banquet, a final rescue, and the end of death itself.

Transition to the Study

Isaiah 25 gives a picture of God's kingdom that is bigger than any ordinary rescue story. It speaks to people who know disappointment, grief, and fear, yet it offers a surprising promise: God himself will save, satisfy, and restore. As we study the passage, notice how praise, judgment, comfort, and hope all fit together. The chapter invites us to trust the Lord not only for present help but also for the final defeat of death and sorrow.

STUDY THE BIBLE**Isaiah 25:1-5**

Read Aloud: Have someone read Isaiah 25:1-5.

Discussion: What reasons does Isaiah give for praising God in these verses?

God has done wonderful, faithful, and sure things, including bringing down proud cities and protecting the poor and needy. His power and care are both visible.

How can remembering God's past faithfulness help us worship during hard times?

Remembering what God has done keeps our perspective anchored in his character. It reminds us that the Lord who acted before can also sustain us now.

What contrast does Isaiah draw between God’s actions and the actions of ruthless nations?

Ruthless powers destroy and oppress, but God shelters the weak and humbles pride. His rule brings justice rather than fear-driven domination.

Teaching Tip: Start with the Picture

Invite the group to picture the passage before discussing it. Visual imagination often helps people notice the emotional weight and movement of prophetic poetry.

Isaiah 25:6–9

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud Isaiah 25:6–9.

Discussion: What is God preparing on “this mountain”?

God prepares a feast for all peoples, full of rich food and well-aged wine, and he also removes the veil of death and sorrow.

What does this promise teach believers about God’s heart toward his people?

God is not distant or stingy; he is generous, welcoming, and committed to healing what sin and death have broken. His salvation includes joy, not just rescue.

Why is the promise that God will swallow up death forever so central to the passage?

It is the climax of Isaiah’s hope. The deepest human enemy is not merely hardship but death itself, and God promises to defeat it completely.

Isaiah 25:10–12

Read Aloud: Have someone read aloud Isaiah 25:10–12.

Discussion: What happens to Moab and to proud, fortified power in these verses?

God brings down arrogance and destroys the false confidence of those who exalt themselves. Human pride does not survive his judgment.

How should this warning shape the way believers think about pride today?

It reminds us not to trust our own strength, status, or accomplishments. Humility is the proper response to a God who opposes pride.

How do judgment and salvation work together in this chapter?

God saves his people by also judging evil. True rescue requires both comfort for the faithful and the end of the powers that oppose God.

CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)

Share with your group: Isaiah's vision points to Jesus as the one who brings God's final feast, wipes away tears, and destroys death itself. What Isaiah foresaw in promise, Christ accomplishes through his death and resurrection. The kingdom feast and the end of sorrow are not wishful thinking; they are anchored in the risen Lord. Because Jesus lives, God's future is secure.

Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus? Jesus is the fulfillment of God's mountain feast, the bearer of salvation, and the conqueror of death. He turns Isaiah's promise into living hope for all who trust him.

Connect to Christ: Isaiah 25 anticipates the gospel by showing a God who saves, satisfies, and destroys death. Jesus fulfills this vision through his resurrection and the promise of eternal life. The passage looks ahead to the final kingdom when tears are gone and joy is complete.

Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

Worship God this week by thanking him specifically for one way he has been faithful in the past.

Confess one area of pride and ask God to replace it with humility and trust.

Encourage someone who is grieving with the hope that Jesus will one day wipe away every tear.

PRAYER TIME

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for his faithful salvation, his care for the humble, and his promise to defeat death forever.

COMMENTARY

Oswalt, John N. 1986. The Book of Isaiah. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Book Chapter Background

Isaiah 25 is a song of praise in the middle of a section of Isaiah that looks ahead to God's final victory over evil and suffering. The chapter pictures the Lord as the one who brings down proud oppressors, protects the poor and needy, and prepares a great feast for his people. It ends with the powerful promise that God will "swallow up death forever," a verse that later becomes important in the Bible's wider hope of resurrection and final restoration.

The chapter is set within Isaiah's vision of God's judgment on the nations and his salvation for those who trust him. Mount Zion is the center of the scene, showing God's reign from Jerusalem, where shame is removed, tears are ended, and his people rejoice in his deliverance. Moab is singled out at the end as an example of arrogant opposition to God, showing that the Lord will humble every proud power that stands against him.

Isaiah 25 is especially known for its hope-filled tone. It celebrates God's long-planned, faithful work, his care for the vulnerable, and his ultimate victory over death itself.

Verse by Verse

1 You are my God. This intensely personal affirmation sets the tone for the whole song. In place of the raucous drinking songs whose purpose was forgetfulness and the loosening of inhibitions with the result that the worst side of humanity was revealed, this is a song of heightened awareness and true freedom in commitment. The singer says, "I want a being like you for my God. I want to belong to one as powerful and faithful as you." But he also says, "You have shown me that you do truly belong to me, because you have not abandoned me to the oppressor, you have kept faith with me when I was so afraid you had forgotten me. You are my God." The personal note here is a helpful reminder that although God did deal with his people as a group, every individual in that group counted because God related to the group as to an individual. Thus instead of the person being lost in the group, the group became a person and the importance of persons was safeguarded.

The biblical faith is rooted in the concept of a God who is not captive to the normal. He is able to do the remarkable things, and does, in order to save his people. Modern religion has stripped God of his miraculous powers and, using process parlance, has deified the physico-psycho-social system while continuing to call itself Christianity, and thus has drifted

far from its biblical roots. That kind of god neither excites nor deserves the kind of ecstatic praise recorded here. Wonders are not part of its makeup.

Things planned long ago expresses a thought which is especially Isaianic. God's wonders, his amazing acts, are not "off-the-cuff." They are part of the divine purpose in the universe. The idols have no plans, which is to be expected since the wind and rain from which the idols come have none. People make plans feverishly, but all too often they come to nothing. But Isaiah knows a God who, at the right moment, does something which from one point of view is utterly new, but from another is consistent with plans formed before the universe began. This is the only being into whose hands it makes sense to entrust oneself from Isaiah's point of view. No other plan is worth anything.

2 This verse explains what God's plans were that have now been executed. They were to humble all the works of human pride and oppression, here typified as the walled city and the fortified town. The usage here is the same as in ch. 24, in that no specific city is intended. This city is all those arrogant bastions of power that have crushed the righteous through all of time. But the prophet says that their power will not avail them in the end (9:3, 4 [Eng. 4, 5]). God will triumph, and it has been planned so from the beginning.

3 What will be the result of God's judgment? The therefore opening this verse makes it plain that the result is specified here. As elsewhere (17:7-9; 19:19, 20; 23:18), the prophet makes it plain that recognition of God will be the effect. Why should destruction be necessary to cause such honor? Perhaps it is because we human beings do not recognize anything but power. Then, too, until all is lost we tend not to focus upon anything but ourselves. When the situation is hopeless, then we are likely to look to God and recognize him as the only remaining help.

4, 5 These verses continue the causal connection by expanding upon the reason for honoring God. He is to be honored not merely because he destroys the citadels of the proud, but also because he does so for the sake of the oppressed. In so doing, he becomes a refuge for them. All of this indicates that God's reason for attacking pride is not merely that it is false in view of his own incomparability (40:6-26), but also because of what it does to other human beings. Human pride and human well-being are incompatible and God is committed to human well-being.

The theme of God as a refuge is a favorite one in Scripture, especially in the hymnic literature. This is again an expression of the sense of the personal involvement of God with his people. These writers are not conceiving of a life force or a deistic first principle. But neither are they thinking of an amulet or a personal idol. The genius of Hebrew religion is

its capacity to weld together an almighty, transcendent Creator with an imminent, personal Father. Neither one of these alone will do, but no other religion has been successful in holding the two together. Without both of them, “God is our refuge and strength” (Ps. 46:2 [Eng. 1]) is a mockery.

Isaiah uses two extremes of weather typical of the Near East to symbolize the difficulties from which God desires to defend us. They are the thunderstorm and the unremitting heat. In either the sudden intensity of the cloudburst or the steady, enervating heat, life is threatened. Unless one has a stronghold against the flood (cf. Matt. 7:24–27) or a shade from the heat, there is no hope. Life is like that, with the mighty and the powerful breathing out destruction on those not strong enough to fight back. For those people the faith itself, an ability to trust in a Sovereign who cares about them, is a source of strength. But even more, his intervention on their behalf makes him a refuge. The mighty of earth may be great, but God is greater (51:12, 13).

The verse division between 4 and 5 is incorrect, coming as it does between parallel terms, “flood” and “heat.” The present translation follows the suggestion of Kissane to translate *kî rûaḥ* as though the breath instead of “for the breath.” If this rendering is correct, then the new thought starts at this point and the verse division should occur there.

As parching heat in the shadow of a cloud shows how quickly and silently God can overcome the mighty. Just as a cloud slipping between the earth and the sun produces moments of blessed coolness, so God interposes himself in hopeless situations so that life can go on.

6–8 The focus of attention returns here to the banquet, the atmosphere having been heightened by the hymn of praise in vv. 1–5. The inaugural banquet seems to have been customary in the Near East when a king was crowned. It was a time when the king bestowed favors and sought to establish a favorable tone for his reign. That seems to be the picture here. The subjects come from all over the world (2:2) to the mountain of the Lord (24:23; 2:2, 3; 4:5; 11:9; 65:25). There they receive the gifts which only God can bestow: the destruction of death and the removal of the sorrow which accompanies it. This is the key to the richness of the feast—it is the food and drink of life (John 4:13–14; 6:35, 58; 7:37–38).

9–12 This third section of ch. 25 returns to song, and again one can imagine that the writer intends for the reader to envision this song as a part of the festivities around God’s throne. The theme turns once more from the salvation of the nations to the prior judgment, with Moab symbolizing the rest of the nations. Some commentators regret this return, arguing

that the picture of universal salvation in vv. 6–8 is more noble. However, this movement is entirely consistent with the canonical shape of the book as well as of the complete Bible. God does wish to deliver all the peoples of the world. But this does not mean all will respond to his invitation. For those who refuse to do so, the grim final word is judgment. No one ought to be lulled into apathetic unconcern because of God's offer of limitless love. Any nation or person must either run with God or run into him. There is no other way. Those who are tempted to ignore vv. 6–8 because of God's soft heart will learn to regret that decision.