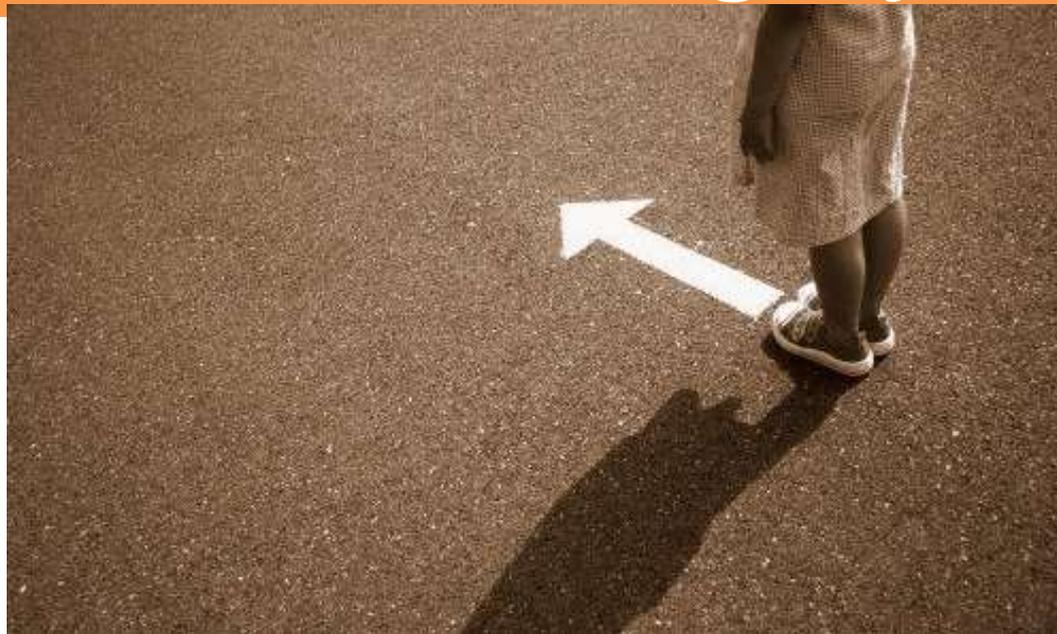


Foundation in Discipleship Series

“Help, I need a real Integrity!”



Mr. Shane W Varcoe © 2000

Disciplesplanet Consulting

www.disciplesplanet.net

Some Historical perspective

The work we know as 'Job' has a quite remarkable literary status. It is considered one of the supreme literary creations of the world, and the greatest production of the Hebrew Wisdom literature. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states... *"Its place in the Hebrew Canon corresponds to the high estimation in which it was held; it stands in the 3rd section, the "writings" (k^əthuôbhĀôm) or Hagiographa, next after the two great anthologies Psalms and Proverbs; apparently put thus near the head of the list for weighty reading and meditation. In the Greek Canon (which ours follows), it is put with the poetical books, standing at their head"*.

But more than being of great Academic worth, Job has the remarkable flexibility to minister profoundly to the 'common man, again from the ISBE... *'The Book of Job was not one of the books designated for public reading in the synagogues, as were the Pentateuch and the Prophets, or for occasional reading at feast seasons, as were the 5 megilloth or rolls. It was rather a book for private reading, and one whose subject-matter would appeal especially to the more cultivated and thoughtful classes. Doubtless it was all the more intimately valued for this detachment from sanctuary associations; it was, like Proverbs, a people's book; and especially among the cultivators of Wisdom it must have been from its first publication a cherished classic.'*

You can understand that status even more when the likes of the renowned English poet Lord Alfred Tennyson, stated that... *"Job is the greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature."*

Almost without exception all scholars concur that Job is set in the patriarchal days and read primarily as a narrative. It is considered to be one of the most ancient pieces of finished literature in existence, and arguably the oldest book in the Bible.

The debate continues to rage about the 'factual' nature of Job's existence. The work has been lauded for its literary worth, but often 'left alone' when it comes to Historical potential. A couple of key elements lend themselves to the strong notion that Job was indeed a real person. Though some of the details may present some ambiguity, they are not evidence enough for the relegation of the work of JOB to fiction.

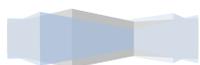
Henrietta Mears states... *"The Word of God settles the fact that Job was a real person. God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel and says, "even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness" (Ezekiel 14:14; see also Ezekiel 14:20). If you doubt Job's existence, you will have to refute Noah and Daniel."*

John Franklin Genung in his commentary concedes... *"It is not the way of Hebrew writers, however, to evolve literary heroes from pure imagination; they crave an authentic basis of fact. It is probable that such a basis, in its essential outlines, existed under the story of Job."*

Universally speaking, the theme of Job revolves around this almost timeless theme, "Why do the righteous suffer?"

Henrietta Mear in her work "What is the Bible All About" summarises the following thoughts...

1. *The shallow view of Satan—that the children of God love and serve Him because it pays in riches and honor (Job 1:1-2:8). Satan said that Job's godliness was selfishness, that he served God for profit, that when prosperity ended he would be no*



more godly. He received permission to test Job (Job 2:6). Satan added, “Who wouldn’t serve God for a handsome income of so many thousand a year? Watch him when his prosperity ends.”

2. The scarcely less false view of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (who agreed for the most part) that the unrighteous suffer because of their sins and the righteous are rewarded. Hence they reasoned that Job must have sinned, and this suffering was his punishment. Job was a great sufferer; therefore he must have been a great sinner. They said, “Who, being innocent, has ever perished?” (Job 4:7). But Job knew that his heart was true to God, and he could not accept the accusation of his friends. He showed them that their conclusion was false and that the wicked often prospered in the world (Job 24:6).
3. Elihu had a far more just answer of the problem, but his eloquent discourse was marred by conceit. He defended God and saw in affliction the chastisement of a loving Father. But this did not explain the reason of suffering to Job. Elihu argued that suffering was God’s discipline to bring His sons back into fellowship with Himself. He believed that suffering was sent to keep us from sinning.
4. Jehovah explained to Job (by revealing Himself to him) that when men see God something always happens. The godly are allowed to suffer that they may see themselves first. Read Isaiah 6:1-5; Genesis 17:1-3; Daniel 10:4-8. When we come to the end of ourselves, God can lift us up. Job was a good man, but self-righteous.

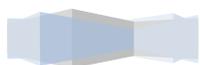
Some assumptions

“Divine providence is a mystery that only God understands, and belongs in what I have called *“The Encyclopaedia of Theological Ignorance”* for the simple reason: no time-bound human, living on a rebellious planet, blind to the realities of the unseen world, has the ability to comprehend such answers – God’s reply to Job in a nutshell.”

Phillip Yancey (Disappointment with God)

I really enjoy much of Yancey’s work, for me it acts as a catharsis; a respite for an often tired soul, wearied mostly by the pursuit of an egocentric theology. Yet, if I fully subscribe to the above statement, I may determine that mystery is the norm and divine disclosure a premium. In this mindset I am then at risk of abandoning much of what both Old and New Testament writers, not merely hinted at, but found; and that is a palpable and intimate relationship with the God of Creation, that is more than children playing in a electronically supervised play-ground. I mean the incarnation itself and the promise of the Holy Spirit – God taking up residence in the fallen individual – is remarkable in itself, and one would have to look no further for irrefutable proof that God not only desires, but goes to great lengths to maximise our potential for Communion with Him.

Even ‘under the law’ mere mortals have been invited to commune with God in incredible ways: Moses and his communion in the Tabernacle, as recorded in Exodus 33. The great ‘weeping prophet’ and one who struggled under oppressive and seemingly pointless duress, was the one who penned one of Heaven’s most profound promises... *“and you will seek me and you will find me, when you seek me with all your heart I will be found of you.”* Not to mention God’s invitation through Isaiah for His people to *“Come let us reason together”*. Such beckoning cannot be assigned to mere euphemism or metaphor, especially in the light of the coming of THE HOLY SPIRIT.



This Omnipotent YHWH – The Creator of all, the originator of ‘Ex-nihlio’, *‘the one who calls things that are not as if they already are’*, is inexorably committed to ‘relationship’ with you and me.

What is also remarkable is that even though we, as a creation, are fallen and constantly miss the mark, God is relentless in His pursuit of relationship with us and goes to, at times, almost indiscernible lengths to develop that connection. God often permits what He does not prefer. Why? I would suggest to you it is so that the fullness of God’s Transcendent qualities (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and immutability) can be most effectively revealed in the human dimension, through the incredible process of redemption. It is then, via this journey of Redemption that we mere mortals can begin to understand, engage and even grow a little more in that relationship with God.

Another ‘angle’

Have you ever damaged a body part and it wasn’t that ‘big a deal’, and it seemed to fix itself after a time? Yet, it was never quite the same again? I had a knee like that.

When I was about 20 year old a car sideswiped me whilst I was riding my motorcycle and the left knee swelled up like a balloon. Doctors said it wasn’t a serious or permanent problem and after a couple weeks things were back to normal. So I took that at face value and continued on with life as usual. Of course that meant I continued with all my sporting pursuits too, which were quite a few, but over time things unseen and unfelt were developing.

To cut a long story short after 10 years my knee began to ache, and ache severely when I did certain things. I found if I didn’t play sport there was little if no discomfort. So I didn’t play sport. As time progressed if I did any real exercise that involved my knee being bent the cracking and pain were quite severe, so I avoided exercise of my knee. Finally it got to the point that on some days it ached whilst simply walking around. I attempted to avoid any activity to do with my knee. Of course I prayed for it. I even tried continuing exercise to repair it. I saw physiotherapists, chiropractors, but in the end that which I was trying to avoid had to happen – I needed the knee repaired if I was going to ever fully live out the rest of my life without this impediment. (“Where’s your faith brother?” is the cry I hear...I know, I know, bear with me) I needed surgery. After ten years of avoiding it... it still came. They had to remove chronic cartilage damage from my left knee...ouch!

For about a week I was pretty much immobilised and in greater pain than I had ever been before with my knee; however it soon passed and I not only had pain free mobility, I no longer had a limp and I could again take up all the things I had been laying down one by one.

So what has that to do with integrity? Well, let me explain. Integrity is a place of flawlessness – having no fault – it is in essence a state of intrinsic perfection. Now in this definition alone it would be impossible for us to experience integrity. I like Rick Warren’s definition of integrity. Rick believes that “Integrity is Transparency”. I’d however, like to take that one step further. To me integrity is not only **transparency** it, to be complete, must be accompanied by **authenticity** and **accountability**, only then can real and lasting adjustments be made. From my perspective this means the acknowledgment that I am flawed and I will not conceal my flaws in an attempt to parade a spurious facade of wholeness that doesn’t exist in substance. I have brokenness in my life and I am seeking help from God and man to grow through this but refusing to deny, conceal or bury it so deep that not only others, but I am now no longer able to see it.

It could also mean simply arriving at, or being brought to a place of the acknowledgment of a blind spot - a flaw I don't even know exists – yet, so that it can be repaired and my psyche can grow without the 'limp'.

With this premise in mind I want us to look at the events and processes that surrounded the recalibration of a soul as recorded in the book of JOB.

Introduction

For preparatory reading the following is suggested.

Hebrews 4:13; Is 11:3-4; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Psalm 19:12-13, 51:7; 66:18: 139:23, 24.

I Chronicle 28:9 “...for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intents of thoughts...”

Proverbs 17:3 “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold. But the Lord tests the hearts.”

! Corinthians 2:9-16 “But as it is written, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches ALL things, yes the deep things of God. Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit Who is of God, that we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual, but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by none. For who has the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

In these ‘all sufficient’ Holy-Spirit inspired words we see evidence of God’s transcendent ability to see, know and understand all. Omniscience, as it is called, doesn’t merely deal with the knowledge of all things seen and hidden but the very origins, designs, motives, intents and purpose of things thought, said and done.

However it is of far greater significance to realise that this insight and understanding of humanity ends not simply with information accumulated, but these perfect perceptions are constantly being compared with ‘Himself’ and His ultimate will for humanity - perfect knowledge; perfect understanding; perfect wisdom; perfect will and perfect purpose. And by no means for His sake alone, but much more for humanity sake, that we may experience the life and liberty our Creator always purposed us to have. It is also with this premise in mind (God’s desire for us to know and attain His best, not man’s best) that I believe we must look at Job’s journey.

Misplaced Emphasis

At first glance the record of Job’s experience appears to be a cosmic contest for supremacy, with Job’s character being the prize. As much as that may have been Satan’s sadistic plot, it was (as we’ll see) by no means God’s. To imply that God’s involvement in this process was simply for a point proving purpose is to relegate the Benevolent Father of creation to the ranks of the cruel, petty and capricious. This is in vehement opposition to the very nature and character of God who seeks only the best for His sons and daughters. The account of Job’s

experience is also significantly more than the dialogue of men attempting to either placate themselves or defend God. Too often when we study Job our attention is focused on analysing the dialogue of advice, reproof and rebuttal, which is the majority of Job. From my perspective what is of far greater significance are the first two and the last four chapters of this book.



Discovery Point (Read the first two chapters of Job in entirety.)

JOB'S REPUTATION AND STANDING

We see in the first five verses of this book that Job was a wealthy man. So great was his possessions that he was considered "the greatest of all people in the east". Job was also a pious man and one who was concerned for his family that they too kept holy ordinances and kept 'short books' (as it were) with God, even offering burnt sacrifices on his children's behalf. But more than wealth was Job's reputation. Culturally speaking, wealth was often evidence of the Hand of God on one's life. But more than this Job was seen as somewhat of an 'oracle of God' and the 'yard stick' (as it were) for society in the east.



Discovery Point (At this point read Job 29:7-25; Discuss and consider Job's status/reputation)

In these passages we see a revealing of the considerable extent of influence and impact Job had – Job was God's man on the earth and he was also known in heaven, as even the Lord declares in chapter 1:8 and 2:23... "There is none like him on the earth." **Verse 8. Hast thou considered my servant Job]** Literally, Hast thou placed thy heart on my servant Job? Hast thou viewed his conduct with attention, whilst thou wert roaming about, seeking whom thou mightiest devour? viz., the careless, prayerless, and profligate in general.(Adam Clarke's Commentary of Job)

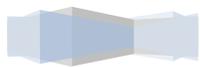
The word 'considered' used in the text is a compound word derived from three Hebrew words 'soom' to put the next component is 'labe' which denotes heart or will and the final word 'al' against (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance by James Strong, S.T.T., LL.D., 1890)

Satan's Accusation

Events commence in verse six of chapter one when Satan, the Accuser of the brethren, appears to surreptitiously presence himself in a Heavenly assembly. (This is pre-New Covenant operation; the devil could accuse brethren before God, but now because of the blood of Jesus can only accuse the brethren to the brethren, God sees only the blood). This is evident by God's question in verse 7, "Where did you come from?" (Now the following may appear to be supposition and conjecture, but as we look at it in the context of the whole Job experience and the entirety of God's character and nature, I believe what is mere possibility will become plausible). Satan replies, "From going to and from on the earth" (perusing his domain). As written, God's immediate response is to bring Job to Satan's attention. (Job 1:8). One could assume any number of things, but one of the ensuing scenarios seems most likely to me.

1. Job is the best example of His standard on the earth.
2. Tragically (but unlikely) the only example of God's standard on the earth, or
3. **God had a specific and as yet undisclosed purpose in and for Job.**

I believe it's that third scenario that we must consider. Job was indeed a godly man (as we have seen). But the omniscient God saw something, something that, I believe Satan perceived



also, but Job didn't: a flaw in this purported paragon of virtue and a foothold for The Enemy could possibly use to bring Job undone or further mock God, or prevent Job discovering God's perfect will? But a foothold God wanted removed that Job may not merely experience the permissible in God (which he had) rather the perfect, not merely the interim, but the ultimate in God. (Much like His desire for the Church).

In all this, I believe God wanted the following for Job - as He also does for us...

1. "Lift Job's gaze' and reveal more completely to him His sovereignty, omniscience and omni-benevolence – Show Job that God can be COMPLETELY trusted.
2. Reveal and deal with the "access point" in his life so Satan would have no further opportunity to harass or inhibit Job's growth and understanding.
3. Job would know and truly enjoy the fullness of God's life-purpose and eternal potential (not merely provision and prosperity) which he had not as yet.
4. That Job would become the Ambassador on the earth that God wanted him to be (not men). (Eph 4:12 exactly what Christ purposes for His saints – perfection).
5. That Job would truly know God, not merely about Him. (Hosea 6:6, Jer 9:23-24)

The Flaw

The flaw in this 'paragon of virtue', as with us all, was subliminal (unseen by man, difficult to detect due to subtlety) pride, self-righteousness and ultimately self-determination. These intrinsic character foibles are easily detected by Satan because he suffers from this same pernicious malady. Having position, reputation and authority, but not the character and understanding of purity that is required to maintain humility, keeping it in perspective with God's standard. This conditioned state of familiarity and subsequent passivity, incrementally induced, was the cocoon of his own 'world-view'. Being known as the 'yard stick' for integrity can induce such a state and generate the 'blind spot' that has the potential to be used to trip us up consistently.



Discovery Point (At this point, turn to Revelation 3:17 and ponder the Divine assessment of the Church at Laodicea. Keep this in mind as you continue.)

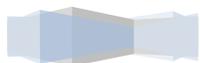
Why didn't God just tell Job?

The question one could ask is, "If God saw the problem and wanted it rectified, why didn't He merely tell Job instead of allowing him to be inflicted so devastatingly?"

The great early church father Augustine made some interesting observations about Abraham's Mount Moriah experience with his son Isaac that may help us step into this section...

"Whatever God knew, Abraham at any rate did not know, that his obedience could endure such a command until the event taught him: and the obedience which Abraham did not know that he would choose, he cannot have said to have chosen. The reality of his obedience was the act itself; and what God knew in knowing what Abraham 'would obey' was Abraham's actual obedience on that mountain top at that moment. To say that God need not have tried the experiment is to say that because God knows, the thing known by God need not exist"

How does this discourse give us insight into Job's experience? "What God knew, Abraham had to experience." Does the same process apply to Job? Was Job's experience a divine experiment – a test - as with Abraham? If Job was the 'most righteous man in the east', then there is no higher station to achieve, he has already demonstrated his righteousness and faith.



Yet Job's journey, unlike Abrahams, was not an experiment by God to 'add to' Abraham to help him grow. Rather, with Job, I would like to suggest it was an encounter to help remove an impediment to growth, understanding and trust.

As you continue I believe it will become clear why this didn't take place. Let me digress and give a personal testimony.

Pride, self-righteousness and the self-determination they foster in their overt garb are fairly obvious and distasteful to most, so they really don't pose a problem except for the blatantly hubris souls, who essentially parade their pride and have no desire or perceived need to change. However the 'spiritual' pride and self-righteousness that is most dangerous is the one that we don't believe exists. Ironically it reminds me of the old truism "The greatest lie the devil promulgated is convincing people he doesn't exist." It's no different here. Pride and Self-righteousness are, in short, the antithesis of the nature and character of God. They are the declarations of the created to the Creator that we are sufficient in and of ourselves. The Creator, if at all existent, is now obsolete, we are capable of determining and actualising our own destiny and salvation. Surprise, surprise – this is the spirit of 'the Anti-Christ'.

These things don't start off here; no they have much more innocuous origins.

We are created in the image and similitude of God. In simple terms we are wired a lot like the Creator. We humans have God instilled capacities and faculties that enable us to function at some surprising levels as much of our technological, medical and genetic developments suggest. Even as far back as Genesis 11:6 God said of his highest creation "*they are of one mind and nothing they propose to do will be unobtainable.*" But the question shouldn't be is it obtainable or possible, rather it should be, can it be obtained both fruitfully and without harm and be honouring to the Creator?

This isn't a strange thing; God knew this from the outset that's why he set in place one stipulation for Adam and Eve. They could know much of the secrets of the divine, but couldn't broach the transcendent qualities of the Divine for they didn't have the qualities necessary to manage them fruitfully and without harm. Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Immutability and Origin-less are what enable the Father of Creation to manage the knowledge of good and evil fruitfully yet without any harm. The capacity to know good and evil and manage them fruitfully and without harm is one such faculty we cannot possess, thus the instruction '*not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*'.

So where are we going with this you may ask? Fair question! All the previously mentioned (brief as it is) points to the trend that we start off dependent, humble and submitted, but as we acquire, attain and actualise, we begin to separate ourselves from God. For the Disciple of Christ this trend, although not as problematic, is still existent.

I lived my life pretty much self-determining until I met the Lord. I was deeply convicted of my sin and brokenness and the great redemptive work God had done through Jesus Christ. I bowed my knee and threw myself on the Grace and forgiveness of God. The joy and peace that dependency, trust and submission bring are incomparable. However as life went on, not as a disciple, rather a sojourner and without the deliberate nurture of intimacy with the Author and continuing submission to the transforming work of sanctification, the "pride of life" began to impact me through a number of influences. I strayed from the 'narrow way' and required

humbling and reproof to bring me back. Again, joy, peace and now and immense gratitude to God for having taken me back again, I was a prodigal son.

Now my contrite heart was so set toward knowing and serving my Lord that I was His servant and wanted to honour and please Him as one of His disciples. In that place of trust, dependency, humility and obedient submission, this branch well attached to the Vine, began to bear fruit. 'The Author of my salvation' began to give me vision, direction and resource me with gifts, capacities and faculties that were of divine nature and I saw God use me to do many exciting and often supernatural things. This leads to recognition, release and greater faith. Then comes the focus on call, productivity and influence...now the slide starts. At first this just humbled me more, that God would use such wayward one as I... Ah...but then it comes. I had been granted certain divine disclosures. I had seen and understood certain things. I had a 'special' relationship with God. The 'I' was beginning to be seduced into pride and self-righteousness. Not the 'look at me I'm gifted and your not' pride... Worse! It was the subtle pride that made me believe I was 'special' not just unique and that this 'special-ness' was somehow earned and thus owed something. I knew things, I could justify things, I had an answer for everything and as a result I should be listened to.

This is rarely overt or even evident to many and especially self, but the signs are there. The 'sign' of preoccupation with ministry over mission; the 'sign' of the preoccupation with 'productivity', over people; the 'sign' of the preoccupation of 'giftedness', over serving; the 'sign' of the preoccupation of 'what I could accomplish', over what He wanted me to do. The scary thing is that all of these aspects have the 'scent' of legitimacy and when embarked upon with passion, commitment, boldness, sincerity and sacrifice they look downright Godly! But the ability to fully trust God, fully submit and be totally dependent is eroded and before I knew it, I was self-reliant, self-determining and ultimately self serving. My gracious Father had to utilise a plethora of circumstances, events and people to bring me again to a place of contrition, submission, dependency and trust so I could know not merely the good, but the best – *according to HIS prescriptions!*

Just to conclude this brief digression, I'm reminded of the words of God to King Saul... *"When you were small in your own eyes were you not greatest in Israel?"* There is a fine line between working in/with and working for the king and an even finer line between building His kingdom and building our own 'sanctified' empire.

Job's Three Friends

The short answer to the above question of, "why didn't God just tell Job" is ... "Because Job wouldn't listen!" That is precipitated by the inability to 'hear'. This becomes very evident as we investigate the interaction Job has with his three friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Even in the midst of Job's 'circumstances' (which God can often speak to us in) he refused to hear the counsel of three friends. Consider the following; Eliphaz (Job 4:1-6) note verse 6. In an almost sarcastic fashion Eliphaz challenges Job and, (to take a little license) *"Well Job, if you're so reverent and pure there's no need to worry, is there?"* inferring that what Job purported to be may not be what is in fact so.

Then Bildad, Job 8:1-7, challenges Job similarly, (again a little license) *"you're full of host air, Job. God only punishes sinners and if you really sought Him and were pure, then God would listen to you and wouldn't merely extricate you, but blesses you even further than He has."* (In fact verse 7 was prophetic, *"your later days will be greater than the former"*, yet Bildad didn't realise that, due much to his own myopic view of the divine operations, as we'll see later).

Zophar waits his turn, then speaks to Job in chapter 11:1-9, and continues much in the same vein as Bildad. A condensed and modified synopsis might read – “Man, you talk a lot and what you’re saying about yourself and God demands someone put you right on the facts.” Then again another Divine prompt amidst the words of men, v 6 “If you knew the secrets of God’s wisdom (not man’s) it would make you twice as prudent. (Even Job’s insights, as great as they were, were only half, at best, of God’s.) “The trouble you’re experiencing is less than your iniquities deserve.” Zophar ends his reproof by comparing Job’s ability with God’s. Again, divine prompts, prompts missed because they were couched in carnality, limited understanding of the truly Divine nature and delivered to an increasingly prideful heart (as we’ll soon see). However if one is truly humble and seeking to know all the Father’s heart then one would see past the carnality and find the wisdom that could assist one to grow. Those who deem themselves better than others or dismissive of those deemed not ‘eligible’ to bring reproof will not hear or see these prompts. It is those whom God often uses to bring such to us...remember Balaam’s Ass?

However Job’s flaw becomes a little more evident and the pride is made manifest in an aggressive fashion, partly provoked by superficial men.



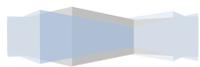
Discovery Point (Revisit Job 29:7-25. Note the attitude. Remember, trial does not only produce character, it reveals it.)

I don’t know about you, and I am happy to be accused of ‘small thinking’, but when someone starts presenting an inventory of skills, status and privileged position, the ‘cringe meter’ starts peeking. Job is reaching the very end of his patience (and it would appear reserves of character) and was starting to seriously ‘leak’ egocentrically. When we deplete the character reserves or pressure test the ‘metal of the soul’ the risk is the only thing that will manifest after a while is self. Is that justifiable? In the reading of Job and the subjection to his insensitive guests, we may say yes. However, to truly be the ‘all we can be’, then to quote John the Baptist... “HE must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30). Every time we ‘wheel out’ the score card of ‘kingdom productivity’ we are exercising the self, not the Christ. Job had certainly reached this latter state when we consider the following...

“But now they mock at me, men younger than I, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.” Job 30:1 (NKJV) OUCH!

Matthew Henry follows similar thinking in his Concise Commentary... *“All sorts of people paid respect to Job, not only for the dignity of his rank, but for his personal merit, his prudence, integrity, and good management. Happy the men who are blessed with such gifts as these! They have great opportunities of honouring God and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride.”*

Now the three hapless men as we’ll see later, although bringing (for some part) sound counsel, didn’t have a right motive, even though the Lord revealed Divine truths in their speaking. Their responses were more an opportunity to deride Job; their chance to counsel and reprove the one whom had so often ministered rebuke and prescribed direction to them. In short, Job was a ‘tall poppy’ that, in their eyes, required trimming. Their comments also revealed something of their ‘theology’ of how God ‘should work’. Their remarks reveal some interesting motives...a) God ‘must’ reward good behaviour, regardless of purpose or context b) God can then, in some way, be manipulated by our good conduct and must be ‘good’ to us on our terms if we follow



the rules and c) God will on 'hurt' people who deserve it (relegating God to petty realm of the capricious 'karmic' merry-go-round).

We see in the journey of Job that he transitions from patiently suffering and consolate to, incredibly, arrogant and blasphemous accuser of God, even to the point of wanting to go 'head to head' with the previously unapproachable ONE. In Job 9:3 Job utters not only a futility but humble understanding of the pointlessness of trying to argue with the one He (at least at this point) believed to be all knowing as recorded... "Job 9:3 (NLT) *"If someone wanted to take God to court, would it be possible to answer him even once in a thousand times?"*

With time and mounting duress Job's integrity begins to wain (from my pitiful perspective understandably) and His initial self-prohibition gives way to a 'mutter' in Chapter 10:1-2 (NLT) *"I am disgusted with my life. Let me complain freely. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, 'Don't simply condemn me—tell me the charge you are bringing against me.'"*

Job's muttering turns into a process of defence, his wearied soul understandably is trying to find 'legitimacy' for this suffering – doubt about both God's character and His brokenness are beginning to shift...*"I have prepared my case; I will be proved innocent. Who can argue with me over this? If you could prove me wrong, I would remain silent until I die."* Job 13:18-19 (NLT)

From defence Job graduates to accusation, no longer is he possibly at fault, it is now God who is wrong! *"I cry out for help, but no one hears me. I protest, but there is no justice."* Job 19:7 (NLT)

Via a powerful combination of insufferable duress, ignorance of the divine, little support and careless friends, Job is spiralling from faith to despairing disbelief and the subsequent self preservation they generate. It is indeed difficult not to revert to trying to alleviate grief your own way, especially when the divine source of such has seemingly failed to help. Finally after all this the purported humble, dependent and submissive Job has the audacity to accuse God in a most insulting manner...*"You spoil my success"* (Job 30:22 NKJV).

It seems to me at least all four men to varying degrees failed to comprehend both the nature of God and man. They, in essence, had dragged God down into their arena of understanding and applied their limited and myopic perspective to Him...as I have also done more times than I care to remember. They were not seeing God as He truly is, but as they wanted Him to be. As a consequence of that they saw themselves as having a bit more of a clue than they actually did, and trusted their own judgments. However, that is what selfish, prideful, and self-determining people do to achieve or access what they genuinely believe to be good, right and fair.

In so doing we invariably bring God down, step ourselves up and so we delude ourselves into believing we know, if not best, reasonably well, what should be done and expect God to comply. It is then in this new manufactured (but for the most part undetected in us) self-importance and wisdom, that cripples our ability to totally trust in and walk with our omnibenevolent and omniscient Creators perfect, loving and eternal will.

A speculation: In the statement *"You spoil my success"* could Job be echoing the same self-indicting words of Satan upon failing to achieve the status of Christ in Heaven? Christian tradition tells us that Satan was an Archangel a servant of God at the highest level. Scarily, at



least to me, the only real difference between the Satan and Michael or Gabriel is that they continued to exercise their identity in Christ appropriately, according to the divine prerogatives, the devil didn't. One of the primary things that keeps us from being an agent of hell rather than an agent of heaven is that we continue to exercise our identity in Christ according to His prescriptions... worth pondering and quite sobering, don't you think?



Discovery Point (At this point, read Job 30:1. Consider Job's insulting assessment of his friends parents in the light of his purported humility (it's important to know that this deriding comment of these men's fathers was incredibly pejorative and derogatory in this cultural context.)

Job 27:1-7 (NKJV)

"Moreover Job continued his discourse, and said: "As God lives, who has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, As long as my breath is in me, And the breath of God in my nostrils, My lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should say you are right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live. "May my enemy be like the wicked, and he who rises up against me like the unrighteous.

Job 22:2-3 (NKJV)

"Can a man be profitable to God, though he who is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless?"

Isaiah 64:6 (NKJV)

"But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

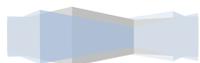
John 15:4-6 (NKJV)

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."



Elihu – A man in touch with the Divine Nature?

Finally a young man name Elihu has to speak because the three friends of Job ceased answering him 'because he was righteous in his own eyes'. (Job 32:1) THERE IT IS! Elihu, after venting his righteous disapproval of the lack of wisdom of both Job and his friends, is compelled to speak and he does so with forthrightness and humility. In the midst of Elihu's reproof we see clarity and the unimpaired impartation of God's Truth because it is spoken through a contrite and humble vessel preoccupied with God's character and agenda. In Job 33:8-18 Elihu 'lets go' with a mighty insight and says, "I've listened to you telling everyone how pure and sinless you are and how God unjustly counts you as any enemy. How dare you! God doesn't have to give an account to anyone and things He does escape man's detection but



serve an imperative purpose – TO TURN MAN FROM HIS DEED AND KEEP A MAN FROM PRIDE.”

The evidence given by Elihu is not reproved by God; whereas the other three men before him were all impugned. This is a clear indicator that what Elihu was saying was an accurate evaluation of Job's attitude and position, as well as a more complete understanding of both Who and how God is. In fact Elihu 'nailed' Job on his self-righteousness. Note particularly Job 34:10-12 (NKJV) *"Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity. For He repays man according to his work, and makes man to find a reward according to his way. Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice."* It's important to note a distinction, that Elihu, in part, makes a similar assumption to the other three before him, but not in a way to show Job's inferiority, as that seemed to be the big 'prize' for his envious friends, rather he reveals God's nature – God is not capricious, unjust or a 'game player' the inference here is that God sees something that escapes the eyes of selfish and 'one dimensional' men.

In simple terms God will employ all divine means to ensure that His servants know and enjoy the fullness of life which as John 1:4 declares *"Is the light of men."* (Compare Matt 11:19b). This is precisely what the Benevolent Heavenly Father of Job wanted him to have. Elihu continues through chapter 34-37 declaring the justice, goodness and majesty of God and continually condemns Job's Self-righteousness. If you particularly note verses 5-9 or Job chapter 34 you will hear Elihu quoting Job and condemning him in the process... *"God has taken away my justice...My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression"* (Ah, but by whose standard?) Then the spectacularly 'damning' quote is revisited by Elihu in verse 9... ***"It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God!"*** Ouch! I mean, Job is so caught up in his perception of righteousness and his understanding of how God 'works' that he boldly declares in another fashion... 'There is no benefit to thinking God is wonderful, might as well give it up!'

Does this sound to you like someone who humbly knows and understands God's ways as 'the greatest man in the east'?

Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz were wrong because their evaluation and accusation was based on personal 'world view assumptions'. We all have them, but they must never be our basis for evaluation, no matter how profoundly imbedded they are in our lives. God's objective standards and His omniscient nature must be the basis for all our evaluations. Not easy when we become 'the benchmark' of our own world, let alone anyone else's. The 'culture' of these men was strongly, almost immovably, geared to the idea of Good = Blessed; Bad = Cursed. If bad things happened it was because you did something wrong. In fact the assumptions became accusation which were plain 'untruth'. In chapter 31 we read where Job denies (and rightly so) the wrong that they all believed must have been done to have precipitated such wrath from God. However, they were all wrong. The formula they were applying for 'cause and effect' whilst having historical and evidential appeal, was only part of the understanding they needed, if they were to evaluate correctly.

No man can obtain perfection and to believe so is to ultimately self-deify. A subtle yet deluded state that can only lead to disaster. Job, because of his heart for righteousness, had an 'inkling' that there may be more to what's going on, another 'level' perhaps, as evidenced by this statement in verse 9 of chapter 21... *"I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life."*



The Devil's agenda is to destroy a godly man and mock God. God's agenda is to take Job to a new level of understanding, wisdom, righteousness, blessing and ultimately, relationship. The 'ceiling' or impediment holding him back had to be revealed to Job before it could be breached.

Remember at the start of Chapter 32 the three friends of Job had stopped talking because in their mind it had become pointless, Job was convinced of his righteousness. Elihu picks up on this and is disgusted. He understands something of the next level. To self-justify to the extent Job has is to then leave no other conclusion than that God is at worst capricious and malevolent or at best unjust.

When 'we' set the priorities or 'rules' for righteousness, particularly a level of righteousness deserving of blessings, then the governance of the process is ours and God can then become to our way of thinking, simply the dispenser of that which is behaviourally deserved. None of these suppositions or insights, ascribe a transcendent perspective to God. When an individual becomes completely entrenched in this mind set, it is only one small step to believe that we know, see and understand as God does and consequently we delude ourselves to thinking that God is compelled to act according to our attainments and/or perceptions/prescriptions.

I'd like to submit here that this very dangerous state can also be imbibed by the 'hyper-faith' movement; that having determined the standard and requirement of Christ, i.e. 'only believe' then we can become inscrutable in our processes. When we think we have 'worked out' what God requires, we simply do that and the 'law of cause and effect' or 'sowing and reaping' comes in - God then becomes merely a respondent to our needs, bound by our formulas and unable (we believe) to see beyond our issues and deliver that which is Divinely perfect for us.

Finally Elihu revisits some of Job's outrageous claims in verses 9-10 or Chapter 33. He quotes Job who said earlier... *"I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me. Yet He finds occasions against me, He counts me as His enemy..."* Then Elihu correctly defends God's discretion in the remaining verses of this chapter. Take particular note of verse 30... *"To bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life."*



Discovery Point (At this point, pause and read Job chapters 34-37.)

Even with all these clear statements of fact; the impartation of God's truth through circumstances; friends and God – breathed counsel; (with which Job is supposed to be so conversant, in both word and deed) Job is still blind to the reality of his current state and God's perfect will. It is my contention that this is yet further evidence that the conditioned state of Job prior to Satan's affliction had become so insensitive that if God had simply come to him and spoken concerning pride it would not have been received. The subtlety of this perfidious thing called pride had lead Job to believe if not consciously then in the sub psyche, that he was somehow special. It didn't greatly matter that he had lost his possessions (Job 1) because they were of no real value to him, but this renown, reputation and station were, and this was the pride which was restricting Job knowing God's highest. In this cultural setting it was only the combination of the physical affliction that would have any real leverage in moving the 'soul foundation' to see the metaphorical 'cracks' appear in the perception that had become his personal reality. That affliction was simply, (even as the Church at Laodecia was, Rev. 3:14-20), WRETCHED, MISERABLE, POOR, BLIND AND NAKED. The state God saw and wanted rectified, because The Omni-benevolent Father desired his ULTIMATE and not simply interim BEST for Job.





Moses and Solomon

Discovery Point (At this point, briefly recount the lives of these men, noting both their strengths and their inglorious ends)

Job, even with his experience and understanding had, as countless men, some before, many after him, succumbed to formula, routine, ritual and resting on their collected experience. Even though these may have been carried out faithfully, diligently and consistently, they alone are not what God is seeking. God's desire for humanity has always been intimate progressive relationship with Him. Moses and Solomon were two such examples. Both were oracles of God, had great prominence, authority, ("none greater on the earth"), yet both men fell prey in some part to the same thing God warned Jerusalem about in Isaiah 29:13. God declares, "*The people in appearance and deed are doing all that appears godly, but their hearts are far from me.*" They had, as did the Church in Ephesus (Rev 2), left their first love, and as Jesus indicts in verse 5, "*Remember from what great heights you have fallen.*" Following rituals and even maintaining a godly standard isn't the sole or even significant priority. God seeks and desires relationship/fellowship with us. Remember Hosea 6:6. God desires knowing Him far above burnt offerings (practices/rituals/legalism).

Moses neglected that intimacy he was called to and in so doing allowed that subliminal pride to weave its self-righteous web that lead to the inevitable reliance on experience, formula and gift. (What I call the **Rod Syndrome**). In failing to 'hear' what God was saying he yielded to convenience and relied on system not relationship (and its requirement of interaction and reliance), consequentially struck the Rock in the wilderness instead of speaking to it as God commanded. This seemingly small misinterpretation of God's directions resulted in his preclusion from the 'Promised Land'. Austere, perhaps, but... "*To whom much is given, much will be required.*" Besides 'hitting' the RESOURCE isn't the way God likes to be approached... Paul refers to the Rock that followed the Israelites in the desert as the Christ Himself present. When we understand that reality we begin to realise that 'beating' God to obtain what we think we require is not simply poor judgment, it is a travesty.

Solomon too forsook his youthful dedication to his God (though maintaining some ethic, due, in my thinking, to his reputation and gift carrying him). Pride and indulgence overwhelmed him to lead to sorrow and despondency in his latter day because he too had left his 'First Love'. This is borne out in much of the writings accredited to him such as in the book named 'Ecclesiastes'.

These subtle conditioning processes had so eroded that special communion and ushered in a purported strong impression (but poor facsimile) of intimate relationship with God. Due to this God had to employ the very process of Isaiah 29:14 "*Perform a marvellous work and a wonder*", to bring change. The true value of "**marvellous**" can only be gauged by the eternal fruit that it brings not the ephemeral. If we look at Proverbs 17:3 (NLT) "*Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the Lord tests the heart.*" and compare it with Zechariah. 13:9 (NKJV) "*I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'*" and too, remember the price Moses and Solomon paid. Add that to the fact that they had both experienced the provision and "dunamis" power of God, yet still missed the mark; they like Job, didn't realise the potential which Bildad had prophetically (but unconsciously) revealed in Job 8:7. "*Though you beginning were small (not God's estimate of Job's previous stature, possession and position) yet your latter end would increase abundantly.*"



God had to recondition Job to be open to receive His council for, as we had seen, earlier attempts proved ineffective in bringing Job to see his self-righteousness, pride and diminishing intimacy. In turn it failed to remove the scales that blinded Job to the vastness and perfection of his God. He had 'primed' Job, so to speak, and as soon as Elihu had finished (in chapter 37:23, 24. *"As for the Almighty, we cannot find him, He is excellent in power, in judgement and abundant justice, and HE DOES NOT OPPRESS. Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart"*). Then God, out of a whirlwind asks a poignant question of Job in 38:2. A question that goes the very heart of the issue (as only God can) *"Who is this who darkens counsel by words without wisdom?"* In a single sentence God cuts through all hte self justification and ego posturing by questioning the origin of Job's authority the 'who', in essence stating, your 'who', your person doesn't even register on the scale of authority to speak. Then the very sobering challenge, *"prepare yourself like a man. I WILL QUESTION YOU and you shall ANSWER ME!"*



Discovery Point (God Addresses Job (Are you ready to listen? 38:2 At this point read Job chapters 38 & 39, if possible in both the Authorised Version and Living Bible Translation)

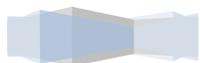
For the ensuing four chapters God declares some of the works, abilities, knowledge and His character. He then compares them with Job's. In Job 40:2 God asks another question *"Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He, who rebukes God, let him answer it."* Now Job's 'eyes are opening', there is a divine awakening to some of the realities our mortality inhibit us seeing. Job is struck with the 'juxtapose' of his 'candle' of righteousness and the 'divine Brilliance' of God's righteousness. His response; (note verse 4) *"I am vile, what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer – twice, but I will proceed no further."* In simple terms our 'paragon of virtue', Job, is declaring "I've got a big mouth. What can I say? I am vile! (English definition is wretchedly bad, highly offensive, disgusting and depraved.) Job is seeing the reality that the churches in Ephesus and Laodicea had not, and he saw his righteousness and stature as they really were compared to God's – In fact 'Filthy rags' (Is 64:6)

Job had lost the *'broken spirit and contrite heart'* that God requires for fellowship to develop (Psalm 51:16-17). It was this heart that was evident in the prostitute in Luke 7:36-48. She knew what she was spiritually (a sinner, wretched, blind, naked, poor and deprived). She knew because she had lived it and Jesus was not her judge, rather the gracious and compassionate God who not only could, but desperately wanted to extricate her from *"the mire and set here feet upon the solid rock."* God loved Job and wanted him free, no only from his developing wretched state but to that fellowship and life (unimpaired) with God.



Discovery Point (At this point, pause and read Job Chapter42)

In this chapter we have presented to us one of the most significant revelations, not only to Job, but more importantly to humanity. Job humbly utters, *"I know (now) that you can do everything and NO purpose of yours can be withheld from You. I uttered what I DID NOT UNDERSTAND, THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME WHICH I DID NOT KNOW."* Then the powerful realisation in verse 5, *"I've heard of you by the hearing of the ear (Is 29:13) but now I see you (Is 29:14) THEREFORE I abhor myself (I see myself too, as I really am) and repent in dust and ashes."*



(In context with 'vile' – considerably worse than insignificant, this is in some translations)

Not until he really met with his God did he really see, understand or repent. Perspective has grown, vistas of the divine have opened and Job can now look back to earlier discourse as in Job 13:15 and 'cringe'. This further demonstrates the immense priority God has placed upon fellowship, communion and relationship, and how desirous God is for Him and us to enjoy just that.

Elevated to Priesthood

Then our Just and Omniscient God addresses the three friends of Job who had *'not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.'* God is now quick to note and declare if you like 'see, Job has got it and admitted unequivocally so' God immediately counts this now revelation as Job's new state and moves past the previous ignorance and sin – Forgiveness liberates into a new space.

God then compels these men to offer up a sacrifice before Job and to ask him to pray for them, so then and only then, would God forgive them. Then *'God's oracle on the earth'* and a man, who could not (in human terms) possibly go higher, was promoted to priesthood, a role and function of intermediary advocate between man and God – AMBASSADOR. So God not only restored Job's previous wealth and possessions but in fact doubled it (proving still further that Job, as great as he was, had only at best half of what God had for him). The most dynamic of all consequences was that JOB now *'KNEW HIS GOD'* and was experiencing the fellowship and life he had missed, and could be that 'advocate' on the earth that the Father wanted.

The lessons in Job for us are I believe, many and imperative. Let us not ever lose sight of that 'First Love' (Matt 22:37-40).

Dear Heavenly Father, cause us to pursue tenaciously that intimacy with our Living Lord no less than the aspiration of Paul, 'That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection' and with the same fervour discard all that would hinder such intimacy. Oh my Lord and God, cause us to see You, that we may be conformed to Your image.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Matthew 5:8

Conclusion James 5:7-11

With the exception of a single verse mention of Job in Genesis regarding genealogy and a two verse reference in Ezekiel referring to the righteousness of three, Noah, Daniel and Job, there is no other reference to Job. The only exception is the account given to us in the book of Job, until James. It is significant that it is James who cites Job. James deals predominantly with the definition, requirement and demonstration of FAITH and its derivative state FAITHFULNESS. Take particular note of verse 11, "those who endure (remain long, bear trials and have fortitude) are beatified (made extremely happy, fortunate, well off)". Yet another immutable promise of God – real and eternal blessing for those who prevail in trust in the wisdom, goodness and righteousness of God. Then James refers specifically to Job and his perseverance and the tangible manifested fruit of that perseverance which was the perfect and deliberately orchestrated will and purpose of his GOD.



Even the writer of Hebrews profoundly states in Chapter 12 verses 5-11 that discipline of Father God is truly one of the greatest blessings we can receive from Him, as it is evidence of His supreme love for us, that we may know His best for our lives. Verse 11 is the key, '*NOW NO CHASTENING SEEMS JOYFUL FOR THE PRESENT BUT GREIVIOUS (Gods interim perfect will), NEVERTHELESS, AFTERWARDS IT YEILDS THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (equity of character and impartial fair character) TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT*' (God's ultimate perfect will!) Indeed Paul reiterates similarly in Romans 5:1-5 that it is primary intent of God in trial to produce that perseverance, which will in turn produce character which will give us the hope that will not disappoint us. This happens because we are seeing revealed the wonderful love of God being shed abroad in our lives. This is evident by the further deposit of His understanding, priority and agenda along with the further resources to make manifest that ever-enhancing form of Christ in us. It is here then that the world may know that God not only is whom He declares Himself to be; or merely that He can do far above all that we can hop or dream. But of paramount importance is that those transcendent attributes is focused on bringing us to the BEST GOD PURPOSED US TO BE.

We have clearly seen in the Job experience Gods desire for Job to know not only the permissible but also the perfect will of God. , not merely the interim but the ultimate will of God for his life. Also that to attain the echelon of LIFE and exceedingly more important, that INTIMACY with his creator God had to utilise interim and somewhat convoluted processes to:

- ✓ DISCLOSE TO JOB THE WEAKNESS AND VULNERABILITY THAT JOB HAD.
- ✓ EXCLUDE THE ENEMY FROM ALL ACCESS TO JOBS LIFE BY REMOVAL OF INADVERTENT OPPORTUNITY
- ✓ TRULY INSTRUCT JOB IN KINGDOM WISDOM AND HUMILITY, NOT MERELY THE BEST OF MEN.
- ✓ INSTIL IN JOB THE CHARACTER OF GOD HIMSELF AND THE SUBSEQUENT ATTRIBUTES THAT BRINGS.
- ✓ MAKE JOB THE AMBASSADOR OF GOD THAT GOD WANTED HIM TO BE.
- ✓ ABOVE ALL, THAT JOB WOULD TRULY EXPERIENCE THAT INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP OUT CREATOR WANTS US ALL TO HAVE.

I believe our compassionate and unsearchably wise FATHER has purposed for YOU (each one who names the name of the Lord) to know His best. Often though, due to our conditioning, environment, ignorance and the subsequent dysfunction, indifference, complacency, familiarity, pride, doubt, fear and insecurity that can bring, our PERFECTOR, **compelled by His immeasurable love for His creation, must act** to produce or allow event /circumstances to be outworked that we may be His **Ambassadors on the earth and truly know Him**. Men and women of God who changed history were people who endured and did not despise the workings of their God. Abraham, Joseph, Ruth, Daniel and David all pressed through the interim to move into the ultimate in their God.

Beloved we must be more acquainted with and yielded to, our God and His established counsel (HIS WORD). In it we see, as we trust and obey, the unveiling of the manifold wisdom of God. Know with unshakeable confidence that YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN HAS ONLY HIS BEST FOR YOU. Endure and yield that you may know LIFE AND LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY, in that communion with HIM.

Selah! Shane



Study Guide for Leaders

“My people have gone into captivity because they have no knowledge.”

(Isaiah 5:13)

There are many styles of writing and similarly there are myriads of tastes among an audience. Styles reflect many things about the author (and reader). Also, style can be used as a tool to generate a specific response, and with this in mind, I want us to look at the following.

Background

Christianity is a learned religion, and the way in which it is learned is imperative. Jesus stated in Matthew 11:28 that we are to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him. Interestingly enough, that command is of very little benefit if we simply employ a classroom model for the learning.

In interpreting that command the first instruction given to us is often neglected, that is to **take His yoke upon us**...*then* to learn. The priority is the ‘harnessing’ and then comes the subsequent progression, with Jesus, through discipleship. It becomes abundantly obvious that the learning process employed here far exceeds a passive tutorial style (although that is part of it), but very clearly requires the active participation, that is **doing!**

Christianity is not simply an event. It is a process, **and salvation is more a consequence than just an event**. It is a progressively developing kaleidoscope of seeing, hearing, understanding, implementing, demonstrating and, most importantly, being!

The experiential learning evident in the disciple-making mandate embraces the models of *parenting* and *apprenticing*. It is a consequence of the relationship that the Creator had purposed for His creation. That relationship transcends the idea of the collective and even community, and speaks more of *family*. The connection is as vital on the horizontal as it is on the vertical. In fact **any neglect of, or failure to fully develop interpersonal “horizontal” relationships abrogates any chance of achieving wholeness**. God, in His wisdom, has created us for fellowship with Him and with each other. It is in our interactive, progressively developing and comprehensive relationships with each other that we experience a greater understanding and manifestation of God.

Modernity (the modernising process) and its secularising (becoming more like the world) influence has meant that the ‘culture’ of biblical family has been seriously eroded. Even its lesser though just as important facsimile, community, has been inadvertently downgraded, even omitted. Suffice to say, this hinders God’s intention to bring a dynamic expression of Himself through His united Body (Ephesians 2:20-22, 4:16).

What, pray tell, has this to do with “Help, I need a real FAITH?” I am so glad you asked!

Types and Styles

In much of its activity in western culture Christianity specifically has become more ‘event’, ‘gift’ or ‘platform’ oriented. This has meant a discounting (unintentional as it may be) of the individual saint and their relationship, role and experience. The format of this study series attempts to counteract some of the ‘passive spectator/consumer’ type mentality that the previously mentioned orientation has produced.



There are a couple of basic learning processes - deductive and inductive. The former is designed to lead your group to a specific conclusion and so it has a clear point in mind. By its very framework, this way of learning sets clear guidelines and limits debate, and is a reasonable and acceptable style to use to disseminate information.

The inductive style involves learning via an exploration or an investigation, where people are encouraged to arrive at the correct conclusions in their own way.

The other term I want to use here is *'interactive'* which means a style that allows room enough for people to *share their experiences and understandings with each other whilst maintaining subject integrity.*

In the 'mosaic' rather than 'linear' approach of these publications, it is my intention to facilitate interaction and to motivate people to open up and share transparently and to relate with integrity. Ultimately, it is to have individuals identify with each other. The principles and teachings presented achieve their point by having people minister to each other and *apply* that which they have studied. This causes the participants to contribute to and receive from one another. In a small way, this will aid the development of the community that is so desperately needed if we as a church are going to begin to experience a greater dynamic of God's heart. So there are three steps involved– 1) **study**, 2) **discovery** 3) **application!**

The Studies

These studies are the result of personal illumination and experience together with a concern for a rising incidence of public sin and Biblical compromise in the Body of Christ, particularly amongst leadership. Sin is like an iceberg and the public sin is only the tip, making the hidden sin extensive. This sin is often unaddressed due to a lack of real, caring community. Instead we often have 'structures' masquerading as community, but reliant on investigation, legislation and arbitration rather than love, consolation and discipline-based discipleship. True discipleship has trouble developing in an 'elitist culture' that states you have to be seen to be in control (whether you are or not), and particularly that leaders must always present as 'unreal icons' of purported virtue. Thankfully, the **God who is preoccupied with genuineness will tolerate no facade**, no matter how noble, **and is concerned with authenticity in character, word and deed far more than ministry and gifting.**

This series is obviously not exhaustive in the topics presented. It leaves ample room for individual pursuit and is very much a catalyst for exploration. The studies can be undertaken in any order, but *"Help, I need a real Holiness"* can give a sense of preparation if used first because it deals with our separation from the world and the type of difficulties that may be encountered in that.

When using the material it is important to read all the Scriptures referred to, taking the time to **examine** each one. The 'Discovery Point' interludes are self-explanatory, but I will reiterate again that you, the leader, should allow ample time for sharing, contribution and exploration. Going on tangents often brings out the heart of people and the studies will not lose their integrity in the process, so you will not need to tightly hold the reins. In fact, it will be fulfilling one of the primary objectives if interactive dialogue and ministering to one another takes place. We want people to learn not only from the studies but also from each other



What is the best way to present the study?

One can simply launch into the study and see what arises, which can be good for simply a mutual journey of discovery. However, if you have time constraints or a specific destination, learning/action outcome in mind, then these studies can be used very effectively to do just that.

Some of the passages of scripture can be quite long. I want to bring your attention to one such passage in “*Help I need a real Holiness*” (subtitle ‘History’) as an example. The verses of scripture given here need to be read to familiarise the participants with the events and circumstances preceding the extrication of the Israelites from Egypt. Obviously, to read these out during ‘cell’ time would detract from the gathering. Therefore, I suggest that the leader requests the participants to do some preparatory reading in the week before studying this particular section. Then at the beginning of group time, you can ask for a brief synopsis of events in these passages (of course, this principle applies in all study preparation).

The study has been segmented into seven sections that may be looked at as separate studies. If you wish you can spend an evening on each section, however I believe as you really allow exploration and discussion to flow you could spend up to 3 evenings on each section. Again, that will depend on the group and time constraints.

Leadership

Requirements for leadership in these studies are simple yet important. The leader must:

- ✓ Be ‘an open book’, walking with honesty and authenticity (not sinless perfection).
- ✓ Desire to see real community develop in your cell/small group – use the studies to develop mutual sensitivity, vulnerability and care.
- ✓ Have a demonstrated ability to *facilitate* discussion, **not** to lecture or control, and be able to guide the study so that it explores the particular character/attribute in focus. This should challenge and provoke the group in a way that does not detrimentally affect an individual or the group as a whole.
- ✓ Be adept in exercising wise and gracious rectification processes if interaction moves out of the edification ethos and into unrealistic expectations, accusation or insensitive or potentially abusive behaviour.
- ✓ Be someone ‘apt to teach’, which means one who is well acquainted with God’s Word and who has a good grasp of facilitating group discussion.
- ✓ Be very sensitive to the Holy Ghost’s leading and the group dynamic. Always be prepared and seek for the Spirit of God to convict, challenge, encourage and restore. Small groups are a great place for accountability, healing, growth, deliverance and gift expression.
- ✓ Be able to facilitate an authentic application process of things learned. Discipleship is about implementation and accountability as much as it is about understanding. ***Please remember, study, discovery and application are not so much about productivity and performance, they are much more about priority and potential.***
- ✓ Do not let the small group stagnate through inertia or ‘mutate’ through exclusivity or over introspection. Always maintain an environment of genuine transparency, confidentiality and intimacy, but an environment that can embrace new people. ***This is an art all leaders must continue to develop.***



Target Group

These studies were prepared for use with people engaged in active discipleship. With very good leadership and patience these studies can be used with just about anyone. The only exception to this would be very new and unchurched Christians. For them it is advisable that these studies **not** be introduced until after more elementary Bible teaching, and having completed basic discipleship training.

Finally...

In these studies I have written in the manner in which I have received and understood. This will mean I may have used words with which you or some member of the group may not be familiar. I advise you to keep a dictionary handy and please do not be put off by this; simply treat it as a vocabulary extension exercise! This all assists with the development process!

Whatever you do, kick thoughts around, examine, challenge, question...enjoy. I know that for those who do this, these studies will prove to be stimulating, instructive, equipping and very beneficial.

Have a great time! Yours in walking worthy, Shane

© **Shane W. Varcoe – Disciplesplanet Consulting**
(First Edition 1988, Second Edition 2000)



Disciplesplanet - Publications

Books

“Prayer the Language of Relationship!” (2nd Edition)(Devotional companion)
(Available through ‘Koorong Books’, ‘Storm Harvest and Concern Australia)

“Is your past bugging you? Then stop it!” (Self help)
(Available through ‘Koorong Books’, ‘Storm Harvest and ‘Disciplesplanet Consulting)

“Second Chance Solution!” (Soteriology/Discipleship)
(Available through Koorong Books, Storm Harvest and Disciplesplanet Consulting)

Studies (Small Group/Discipleship companion)

“Help, I need a real... HOLINESS/HUMILITY!” (Study on the Exodus deliverance)

“Help, I need a real... FAITH!” (Study on Jesus Miracles)

“Help, I need a real... INTEGRITY!” (Study on the book of JOB)

“Help, I need a real... TRUTH!”

“Help, I need a real... Sincerity!”

Disciplesplanet Consulting

T:#The_Incite

E: team@disciplesplanet.net

W: www.disciplesplanet.net

M: 0403100099

