

# GOD WITH US

**A Catholic Bible Study for Inmates**

## PART TWO

# GOD WITH US

*A Catholic Bible Study for Inmates*

## PART TWO The Wisdom Books The Prophetic Books

### **God Is With Me**

When my day is lonely and depressing,  
*God is with me.*

When my heart aches because I miss my  
family, friends and loved ones,  
*God is with me.*

When I overcome a hardship or problem,  
*God is with me.*

When I receive that special letter or visit,  
*God is with me.*

When my day is filled with hope and joy,  
*God is with me.*

Contributed by an Inmate  
of a Maximum Security Prison

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# **GOD WITH US**

## **Bible Study Instructions**

### **Part Two**

#### **Part Two of the Bible Study contains:**

- 1) Part Two: A-The Wisdom Books
- 2) Part Two: B-The Prophetic Books

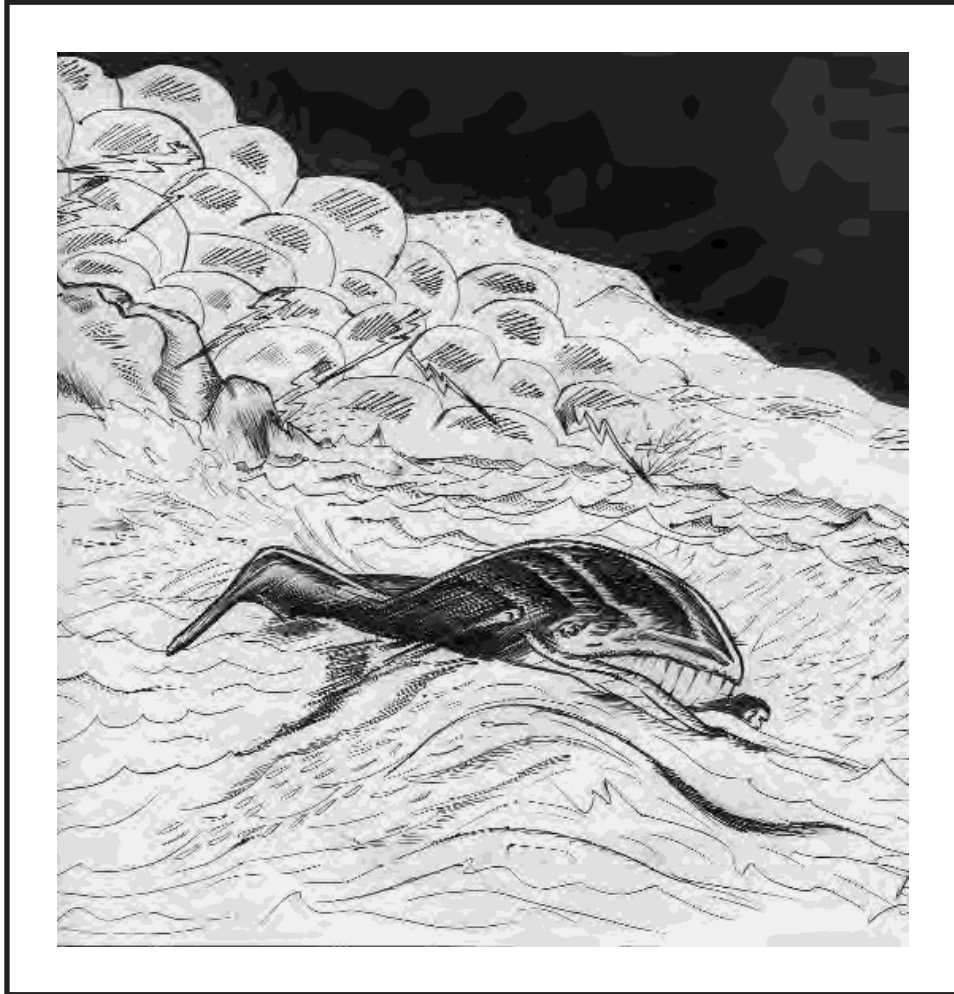
- 1) Read the page called “Part Two: A-The Wisdom Books”  
Follow the directions for each book of the Bible  
Answer the “Study Page” after each book of the Bible  
Do the “Review Test” after studying “Part Two: A-The Wisdom Books”  
*(All “Review Tests” are at the back of the Bible study book)*
  
- 2) Read the page called “Part Two: B-The Prophetic Books”  
Follow the directions for each book of the Bible  
Answer the “Study Page” that follows each book of the Bible  
Do the “Review Test” after studying “Part Two: B-The Prophetic Books”

#### **End of Part Two:**

- Tear out only the 2 pages called “Review Tests” for Part Two at the back of the Bible study after you have completed them
- Review and correct these pages with your study coordinator.
- Receive a certificate of completion for the section of the Bible study you have completed.

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*From the belly of the fish Jonah said this prayer to the LORD, his God:  
“Out of my distress I called to the LORD,  
and he answered me” (Jonah 2: 2-3).*

## PART TWO

### A - THE WISDOM BOOKS

This part of the bible follows the Pentateuch and the historical books. The wisdom books offer a different approach to living with God. Through poetry, drama, songs of worship, sayings, and codes of behavior they help God's people live a good and holy life. For example, *Job* seems to be a drama or play. *Psalms* is a collection of worship songs. The following is a list of the wisdom books: *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Song of Songs*, *Wisdom*, and *Sirach*.

Their purpose is to teach God's people how to live a happy life in accord with God's plan. The authors of these books who wrote in different periods of history knew that happiness does not mean a life without pain and death. Sometimes they saw suffering as a part of life, or as punishment for sin, or as a test of faith. In their own way, each of these books has something important to say about the age-old questions: *Why is there evil in this world?* or to put it in another way, *Why do good people suffer?* The book of *Job* especially tries to explain this question. Some of the books also deal with the question of eternal life. Many people throughout history have asked: *Is there life after death?* and *How to we get ready for it?* They are like the young man who asked Jesus: "*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" (Luke 18:18).

How do we learn to live wisely, to make good choices, so that we live a good life on earth that leads to eternal life in heaven? The last book of wisdom called *Sirach* states the answer to this question clearly: "*All wisdom comes from the LORD*" (*Sirach* 1:1). The author goes on to say, "*The beginning of wisdom is fear of the LORD*" (*Sirach* 1:12). Fear in the bible means that we start with a humble attitude before God, realizing that all life, all holiness, and all wisdom begin with our Creator and Redeemer. God not only reveals who he is but how we should worship him and behave toward him and our fellow human beings. Therefore, a wise person is one who knows how to live with God and human beings.

Like many of the ancient world's books on wisdom, these books of the bible are filled with wise sayings, common sense, good rules for getting along with others. They teach about all the human aspects of our lives: worship, marriage, family, social life, and even business. However, they are different than all other wisdom writings because the inspiring stories, songs and poems teach that God is the beginning of wisdom. God's will is the fountain of wisdom that flows into our lives, our families, our nation and the world.



# JOB

## • History

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The book of *Job* is the first in a group of 7 books in the bible known as the “Wisdom Books.” The list of these books includes: *Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, and Sirach*. These books offer a treasure of wise thoughts and sayings, and advice on how to live, collected over centuries of experience as God’s people. The author of *Job* tries to give an answer to the question that human beings ask in every age: “*Why is there evil in the world? Why do good people suffer?*” The great St. Augustine studied this question his entire life, but could only say in the end, “*There is no solution.*” Our sinful choices do have consequences, but to say that people get sick, have bad things happen to them, or die because they are being punished by God even if they are innocent, is not the answer. Job is described in the story as *blameless and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil*. He has a large family, many possessions, and worships God faithfully. Then Satan begins the courtroom drama. Like a prosecuting attorney he comes before God the presiding judge and accuses Job of being good only because everything is going his way. Satan predicts that if Job’s family and wealth are taken away: “*surely he will blaspheme you to your face*” (*Job 1:11*). God allows Satan to put Job on trial and Job’s troubles begin. He is even accused by his own friends. Although everything is taken away from him Job does not turn against God. In the end, God speaks directly to Job, dismisses the charges and restores everything to him, awarding even more than he had before.

## • Outline of Job

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Job’s Sufferings Begin (Chapters 1 to 2)  
Job’s Friends Visit Him (Chapters 3 to 31)  
Job’s Speaks His Mind (Chapters 32 to 37)  
God Speaks to Job (Chapters 38 to 41)  
Job’s Restoration (Chapter 42)

## • Passages to Read

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Chapters 1 to 3 (The opening story)  
Chapter 31 (Job’s defense and call to God)  
Chapters 38:1 to 42:6 (God answers Job)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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“Then the LORD addressed Job out of the storm and said:  
Where were you when I founded the earth?” (*Job 38:1,4*).

You are with us in our suffering - in all the storms of our lives. *Let us trust in you totally, God.*

“God is great beyond our knowledge” (*Job 36:26*). Even if we study and pray all our lives, we will never learn all there is to know about God. *You are wonderful, Lord.*

Only in heaven will we be totally free of suffering where God will wipe away the tears from every face. *Be with us, and comfort us now and in the life to come, God.*

## Job Study Page

Question 1.     *“The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;  
                  blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).*

Job grew in patience and wisdom through his sufferings. Can we learn to be wise and patient as a result of our trials and sufferings?

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Question 2.     *“Perish the day on which I was born,  
                  the night when they said, ‘the child is a boy!’” (Job 3:2-3).*

Have you ever felt like this? Do you realize how precious you are in God’s eyes?

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Question 3. God told Job’s friends: *“You have not spoken rightly concerning me” (Job 42:7-8).*  
Have you met people who had all the answers? Job’s friends judged instead of standing by him.  
How can we help others who are facing hardships?

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Question 4.     *“For his eyes are upon the ways of man,  
                  and he beholds all his steps.  
                  There is no darkness so dense  
                  that evildoers can hide in it” (Job 34:21-22).*

Even if we do something no one sees, can we hide our deeds or thoughts from God?

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Question 5. We tend to forget others while we are in pain. In Chapter 31 Job tells how he cared for the poor, the widows, clothed the wanderer, never raised his hand to the innocent, never put his trust in gold or rejoiced at the destruction of his enemies. Even in our own pain, how does taking care of others help us and please God?

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## God and Evil

Since God looked at everything he created and *called it good*, how can there be evil in the world? Why do bad things happen like floods, fires and earthquakes? or suffering, sickness and death? Why do people do bad things to one another and to them selves? These are questions that people throughout history have asked. People who were great saints or teachers have thought about this problem. No one has given a complete answer. St. Augustine spent a lot of time praying and thinking about it and finally admitted, “*There was no solution.*” The book of *Job* tries to examine evil and offers a way to respond.

All we can do is admit that it is a mystery that has no easy answer. As we study more and more about the earth and the vast universe in which we are born, live and die, we realize that we and the world are not finished. The story of creation in *Genesis* tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, but we know that ice ages have come and gone, animals have roamed the earth and then disappeared, and human beings lived in caves and hunted, but today build large cities, fly airplanes and have walked on the moon. Things are constantly changing and growing, including human beings. A person is born, learns to walk and talk, goes to school, gets a job, raises a family and may even create a painting, write a poem or a song. Each life is like a seed that is planted, sprouts, grows up, and ends in a flower. Human life is like a miracle in slow motion, as it gradually unfolds over time. We also know that change and growth are not always neat, but often messy. Sometimes growing means trial and error. We make mistakes and must start over again. We do not understand something at first, but we learn to be wise and see things better as time goes on. This is something that is built into life as we know it. An important part of being human is that we have a mind and heart. We have a free will to say yes or no, to do good and bad things. This free will makes us human and makes love possible. No machine or robot without free will is able to love. In creating human beings with free will, God took a tremendous risk. He took the risk that human beings might turn against their Creator.

The book of *Genesis* (3:1-24) tells the story of how suffering and death came into the world. It describes how the first human beings, Adam and Eve, used their free will and choose to reject God. It is the story of how sin entered the world, and along with it all the suffering and death that are caused by sin. Sin is a very sad thing. God created the first human beings out of love, gave them minds to choose and hearts to love. But like our first parents, every human being has done the same thing – turned away from God by choosing something that makes them unhappy in the end.

God is all wise and powerful, although at times his wisdom seems like foolishness to human beings. His power is shown in ways that human beings do not expect. God is able to bring good out of evil, so that evil does not have the last word. It is never the final answer, even when all hope seems to be lost. This truth gives each of us great hope, because we know that we often are at war with ourselves. Our problem is that we do not do what we know is right. We choose what we know is bad for ourselves and others. When we reach the bottom of our own sinfulness, we realize that only God can help us out of the pit we have made.

God did not abandon human beings. He created a plan to rescue them by sending his own Son into the world to lead them out of their misery. While the world grew weary of sin and longed for a Savior to deliver it from the mess it had created, the prophets of Israel foretold the coming of the *Messiah*. The story of our salvation through God’s Son, the Messiah, is a story of how God took the greatest evil – the rejection and murder of his own Son - and turned it into our salvation.

In *Acts 2:14-41* Peter, the leader of the apostles and the church, gives us a wonderful version of how God overcame the evil choices of our first parents, and then later, the killing of his own Son, his greatest gift to the world.



# PSALMS

## • History

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The name for this book comes from the Greek word *psalmos* which means a poem that is also a song. The book of *Psalms* is the largest book of the bible, containing 150 sacred songs. These songs cover many different kinds of thoughts and feelings offered in prayer to God. Although the most famous author was David, they were not created by one person or in one time. They were made by many people, in many situations, over hundreds of years in the history of God's people. There also are several kinds of psalms. There are songs of praise and thanksgiving, sorrow and joy; anger and frustration, humility and obedience, faith, trust, and love, as well as longing for God. God is called the king because he is the king of the universe, of all people, and also of the human heart. The psalms are arranged into five groups or "books." Each group ends with a prayer of praise to God or *doxology*, such as *Psalm 41:14*,

*"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
from all eternity and forever.  
Amen. Amen."*

The psalms are just as appealing today as they were when they were composed. A large number of them were used in worship services, as they are today during the *Mass*. Catholic monks and nuns, especially those in monasteries, center their lives around praying and singing the psalms throughout each day in a service called the *Liturgy of the Hours*. This official prayer of the church is done not only by monks and nuns, however, but also by many lay people. The psalms have been called a school of prayer. If we do not have the words to say what we are feeling in prayer, we can find them in one of the psalms. Certainly Jesus used the psalms for his own prayer. During his sufferings on the cross he cried out with the words from *Psalm 22*: "*My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?*" The last song in the book is a burst of joyful praise:

*"Let everything that has breath  
give praise to the LORD!" (Psalm 150: 6).*

## • Outline of Psalms

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Psalms 1 to 41 (The First Book)

Psalms 90 to 106 (The Fourth Book)

Psalms 42 to 72 (The Second Book)

Psalms 107 to 150 (The Fifth Book)

Psalms 73 to 89 (The Third Book)

## • Passages to Read

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Prayers for help (*Psalm 5* and *13*); a song of suffering and sorrow (*Psalm 22*); God shepherds his people (*Psalm 23*); a song of repentance (*Psalm 51*); God knows and sees everything (*Psalm 139*)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Where can I hide from your spirit?" (Psalm 139:2). Lord, you know us better than we know ourselves, our hearts and minds are an open book to you.*

*"Let them all praise the LORD's name" (Psalm 148). We are never alone—with all creatures and people we praise you, God.*

*"[He] heals the brokenhearted" (Psalm 147: 3). You alone have the power to mend our broken hearts, Lord.*

## Psalms Study Page

Question 1. *"Before God I pour out my complaint"* (Psalm 142:3). God is big enough to listen to our complaints, especially when we are afraid or feel like no one cares. When we have no one to turn to, what does it mean that God is there for us?

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Question 2. God is always ready to take us back but we must bring an honest, humble heart. Are we ready to admit our sins? Is it possible to hide anything from God?

*"Then I declared my sin to you;  
my guilt I did not hide"* (Psalm 32:5).

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Question 3. When we feel the deep longing of the human heart can anything other than God fill it?

*"As the deer longs for streams of water,  
so my soul longs for you, O God"* (Psalm 42:2).

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Question 4. Does God never forget about us even when things don't go our way?

*"Though I am afflicted and poor,  
the Lord keeps me in mind"* (Psalm 40:18).

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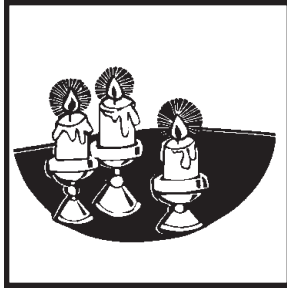
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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Psalms:*

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# PROVERBS

## • History

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This book is a collection of wise sayings. It begins with the word *proverbs* in Chapter 1:1, "*The Proverbs of Solomon...*" A portion of the sayings may have Solomon as their author. He was famous as the wisest king in the history of Israel. However, there are many other sayings from unknown sources. Some of the sayings are common sense and offer advice on many aspects of human life: the family, the community, everyday life, as well as religion. Some give practical advice on day to day living. Others deal with more spiritual things like recognizing God as the source of all wisdom. No matter who collected them, they represent the collected wisdom of generations of God's people. The book of *Proverbs* was not written just for the young. It was intended for people of all ages, to help them make choices that bring about more peaceful and productive lives. It also offers some valuable *life skills* to the people of our day. The basic message of these proverbs is that whoever refuses to accept or God's ways will not live a happy life. Jesus and the apostles knew about this book and referred to it. *Proverbs* 18:4 comes to mind when Jesus said "*rivers of living water will flow from within*" those who believe in him (*John* 7:38). In *Romans* 12:20, when Paul was encouraging his converts to live with christian love, he quoted *Proverbs* 25:21, "*If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat.*"

## • Outline of Proverbs

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Chapters 1 to 9 (An Introduction to Wisdom)  
Chapters 10 to 22:16 (A Collection of Solomon's Proverbs)  
Chapters 22:17 to 24:34 (Sayings of Wise People)  
Chapters 25 to 29:29 (More Proverbs of Solomon)  
Chapters 30 to 31:9 (The Words of Agur and Lemuel)  
Chapter 31:10-31 (A Poem About the Ideal Wife)

## • Passages to Read

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Treating enemies with kindness (Chapters 25:21-22)  
The way of wisdom brings goodness (Chapter 14)  
Good choices and bad choices (Chapter 12)  
I am Wisdom (Chapter 8:12-36)  
Living wisely with God (Chapter 3)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"* (*Proverbs* 1:7).  
We stand before you with humble hearts, God.

*"Happy the man who finds wisdom"* (*Proverbs* 3:13).  
Lead us to those who are wise, and help us make good choices in life, Lord.

*"Happy is he who is kind to the poor"* (*Proverbs* 14:21).  
All of us are poor before the riches of your mercy, God.

*"Sometimes a way seems right...  
but the end of it leads to death!"* (*Proverbs* 14:12).

Help us make choices that lead to a good life, Lord.

## Proverbs Study Page

Question 1. *“He who loves correction loves knowledge” (Proverbs 12:1).* What kind of knowledge does this proverb want us to have? Is it talking about knowledge that comes from books, or an understanding of how to live a better life?

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Question 2. *“A quick-tempered man makes a fool of himself, but the prudent man is at peace” (Proverbs 14:17).*

How does being *prudent* keep us from acting like fools when we are angry? (See *Dealing with Anger* on the following page).

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Question 3. *“He who oppresses the poor blasphemes his Maker” (Proverbs 14:31).* What does our mistreatment of others when they are in need have to do with God? (See *Proverbs 22:2*).

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Question 4. What examples in nature has God given that teach us to be wise?

*“Four things are among the smallest on the earth, and yet are exceedingly wise...” (Proverbs 30:24).*

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Proverbs:*

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## Anger

**About Anger** *"A mild answer calms wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).*

Anger can be either good or bad. It starts with a powerful reaction in our bodies and our feelings. The anger we feel springs from other painful feelings like fear, frustration, hurt, humiliation, embarrassment, helplessness, rejection, or sadness. We seem to feel safer if we are angry. It is a way to avoid these other painful experiences.

Anger is like fire. If it is under control it is a positive thing, but when it is out of control it can hurt whatever is in its way. Sometimes when we may take our anger out on the person we feel the safest with. If someone hurts us or treats us unfairly on purpose, then we have a right to feel angry. It actually means that we have respect for ourselves, that we have self-esteem, which is a good thing. If our anger comes from serious sexual or physical abuse, we need professional help before it causes us more damage.

**Using Anger** *"Be angry but do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).*

Using anger in a healthy way that is not violent or out of control helps us express our feelings and work out our problems. When it is used in a good way, anger helps us remove what is wrong. Even Jesus got angry. When he saw the temple being used to sell animals he turned over the money tables and chased the animals away, *"And he said to them, 'It is written:/' "My house shall be a house of prayer;"/ but you are making it a den of thieves' "* (Matthew 21:13). Using anger in a proper way gives us the energy to work toward a goal. The feeling of anger tells us something is wrong and that we need to deal with it. If we learn to control our anger like Jesus, we can use its energy to make positive changes in our lives or the lives of others. Either we control our anger or it controls us. Otherwise, we say or do things that we regret later as the bible warns: *"The stirring of anger brings forth blood" (Proverbs 30:33).*

**Controlling Anger** *"A hot-headed man is the cause of many sins" (Proverbs 29:22).*

There are things we can do to interrupt our anger and get control of it. *"The fool gives vent to all his anger;/ but by biding his time the wise man calms it" (Proverbs 29:11).* One way is to leave the problem for a while. We can take a time-out and then return to deal with it. If we do not deal with it, the anger builds up and the problem only gets worse. It is important to avoid people who are troublemakers and trigger our anger. Taking time out is wise because it gives us time to cool off. Our emotions have a chance to calm down. It helps to do something that gets rid of the extra energy and tension we feel. Once we have calmed down, we can think more clearly, and find better ways to resolve the problem. If we can't leave the situation right away, maybe we can listen to music, do pushups. If we can't go outside or lift weights, we can wash our hands in cool water or put a wet towel on our face or neck. We can try focusing on our breathing while counting to 50 or 100. Above all, we can ask God to help us relax and give us guidance.

**Letting Go** *"...do not let the sun set on your anger" (Ephesians 4: 26).*

Learning to settle our problems, and let go of memories and resentments will make us healthier. If we hold on to anger it only hurts us. It poisons our bodies, our minds and our spirits. The bible invites us to walk as confident and free persons: *"...do not leave room for the devil" (Ephesians 4:27).*

**Pray and Read the Bible:**

Read *James 1:19*. Reflect on God's patience with us in *Exodus 34:6 "A merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness"* and *Psalms 78:38: "Time and again [God] turned back his anger."*



# ECCLESIASTES

## • History

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*Ecclesiastes* is a Greek word for *Qoheleth*, a Hebrew word which means something like “the one who gathers people together.” It is not like any other book in the bible, because it takes a very different view of life. The book was written about 300 years B.C. and deals with questions that have been asked since the beginning of time: “*Why are we here? Do our lives have any value?*” The book teaches that God has a plan for human life but it is a hidden one. It also says that life is a mystery that cannot be solved by human beings on their own. The author drives his point home again and again that “*All is vanity.*” At first, his message seems to be negative. Much of what human beings do is nothing more than “*chasing after wind.*” No matter how rich, famous, or talented someone may be, the time will come when they must die. He saw that sooner or later, everything that has breath, whether animal or human, dies. “*The dust returns to the earth as it once was*” (12:7). It does not matter whether they are good or bad. No one escapes this fact no matter how busy they keep themselves, or how much drugs or alcohol they use, or how much sex and money they have. “*All is vanity*” repeats the author. The answer to these questions is that people need God’s help to make sense of *the human problem*. Only God can fill the hole in their hearts that people try to fill with these other things. The positive side to *Ecclesiastes* is the belief that God is the Creator of all life. Everything comes from God and returns to God. Even though human beings are ignorant about what the future holds they can enjoy life by living in the present. This brings joy and peace. The book ends with the last word on the subject: “*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man’s all*” (12:13).

## • Outline of Ecclesiastes

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Chapters 1 to 2 (Searching for the Meaning of Life)

Chapters 3 to 11:6 (Life is a Mystery and a Gift from God)

Chapters 11:7 to 12:8 (Enjoy Each Day and Remember God)

Chapters 12:9 to 14 (Conclusion)

## • Passages to Read

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The vanity of this world (Chapter 1:1-11)

There is a season for everything (Chapter 3:1-8)

Learning to live with gain and loss (Chapter 5:7-17)

No one is master of life (Chapter 8:5-8)

Closing thoughts (Chapter 12:9-13)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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“*All is vanity and a chase after wind*” (*Ecclesiastes* 1:14). We have looked for happiness in all the wrong places. Keep our hearts always fixed on you, God.

“*Go, eat your bread with joy...because it is now that God favors your works*” (*Ecclesiastes* 9:7). Help us to live in the present, it is your gift to us, Lord.

“*As he came forth from his mother’s womb, so again shall he depart, naked as he came*” (*Ecclesiastes* 5:14). Let us live humbly before you, God, the creator of our lives.

## Ecclesiastes Study Page

Question 1. In what way is the following verse like the words of Jesus in *Luke 9:25*?  
*"What profit comes...from all the toil and anxiety of heart?" (Ecclesiastes 2:22).*

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Question 2. There is always more to learn about God. Can we accept and enjoy this search?  
*"Man is unable to find out all God's work that is done under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 8:17).*

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Question 3. Do we always know what our good deeds will bring about?  
Does the goodness or forgiveness we share ever come back to us?

*"Cast your bread upon the waters;  
after a long time you may find it again" (Ecclesiastes 11:1).*

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Question 4. How does the following compare to what Jesus says in *Matthew 5:45-48*?  
*"God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).*

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Ecclesiastes:*

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# SONG OF SONGS

## • History

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*Song of Songs* seems to be a collection of old love songs. Although the title mentions the name of Solomon, other authors also may have written some of the songs. Today we might describe this book as an album or medley of love songs. Some of the words used to describe love or the beloved may seem strange to us. Other words are still used by people today. Flowers and the scent of spices (or incense), gold, silver and jewels are all still popular. Ripe fruit, enclosed gardens, the fleece of sheep, city walls, towers, and vineyards may not be as familiar to us in our day. Like the lovers described in this book, people today dream about their loved one and write songs that are dedicated to them. No matter what words are used, the kind of love that *Song of Songs* describes is something that everyone can understand. It celebrates the joy that comes with being loved, and loving in return. It describes pure love as God intended it to be, not lust or abuse of the opposite sex. If people do not know how to love properly, are abusive, or think sex is dirty, then they can learn from this book about the goodness of love. Jesus reminded his followers of God's beautiful plan: "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Matthew 19:4-6). Very often in the New Testament married love, or the love of a bride and bridegroom, is used as a symbol of God's love for his people, or Christ's love for the church. For examples read *Matthew* 9:15 and 25:1-13, *John* 3:29, *2 Corinthians* 11:2, *Ephesians* 5:29, and *Revelation* 19:7 and 21:9. In *John* 2:1-11 we read how Jesus performed his first miracle and began his public ministry during a wedding party. Jesus taught the beauty of married love, and so did *Song of Songs*.

## • Outline of Song of Songs

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Chapter 1:1 (The Song of Solomon)	Chapters 3:6 to 6:10 (The Bride and Groom)
Chapters 1:2 to 2:7 (Two Lovers Speak)	Chapters 6:11 to 8:4 (The Dance of Love)
Chapters 2:8 to 3:5 (The Dreams of Love)	Chapter 8:5-14 (True Love Can Never Be Bought)

## • Passages to Read

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The springtime of newly discovered love (Chapter 2)  
Looking for love—the soul's quest for God (Chapter 3:1-4)  
True love (Chapter 8:6-7)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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"For stern as death is love" (*Song of Songs* 8:6). Like Jesus who loved us to the end, keep our love always strong, Lord.

"Let me see you,  
let me hear your voice" (*Song of Songs* 2:14).

Open our eyes and ears to the signs of your love all around us, God.

"My lover belongs to me and I to him" (*Songs of Songs* 2:16). In all things, we are yours, Lord.

## Song of Songs Study Page

Question 1. *“Were one to offer all he owns to purchase love,  
he would be roundly mocked” (Song of Songs 8:7).*

Compare this passage to the “foolish behavior” Jesus described in *Matthew 13:44-45*.

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Question 2. *“I heard my lover knocking” (Songs of Songs 5:2)* The lover waits outside and does not force the door open. Can love ever be forced? If it is, is it love or abuse? Why is rape an offense against the person and the Creator?

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Question 3. *“I sought him but I did not find him” (Song of Songs 3:2).* Recall the modern song *“looking for love in all the wrong places.”* Where have we looked but not found real, lasting love? What is true love? What do you think about *I John 4:8* which says, *“God is love”*?

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Question 4. *“Catch us the foxes, the little foxes  
that damage the vineyards...” (Song of Songs 2:15).*

Love takes hard work sometimes. Like the vineyard, we have to cultivate it and protect it from getting damaged. How do we help our love for others and God grow?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Song of Songs:*

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# WISDOM

## • History

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This book was in honor of Solomon but it was not written by him, because it is dated about 100 years before Christ. It was written in Greek, to encourage the many Jews who were not living in Israel but in other countries like Egypt. This scattering of the Jewish people outside their homeland was called the *diaspora*, a Greek word meaning dispersed. These members of God's people often had a difficult time living by their religion. They were surrounded by the worship of false gods. Also, in their daily lives they had to deal with customs of the pagans. Sometimes these customs were against God's commandments. This period before the coming of Christ was a very difficult time in the history of God's people. Even in their homeland, and in Jerusalem where the temple was, people were mingling the traditional ways with the "modern" Greek way of living and worshipping. The *Wisdom of Solomon* was written to remind the people of God's care no matter where they lived. It also showed them how wise God's commandments were. Keeping them was not easy but it was wise because it led to eternal life. This book provides a clear teaching about life after death:

*"God formed man to be imperishable;  
the image of his own nature he made him" (Wisdom 2:23).*

The author of this book uses a literary device called *personification*. In other words, wisdom is presented as a woman speaking to the reader. Also, in this book and elsewhere in the bible, good people are called *just*. Justice means giving others what they deserve. This includes everyone and everything: *God, spouse, children, the government, the nation, the world, and nature*. A wise person must do justice to all of these responsibilities according to God's commandments.

## • Outline of Wisdom

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Chapters 1 to 6:21 (Wisdom is the Way to Life)  
Chapters 6:22 to 10 (The Beauty and Value of Wisdom)  
Chapters 11 to 12 (God's Care in the Exodus)  
Chapters 13 to 15 (The Foolishness of Worshipping False Gods)  
Chapters 15 to 19 (The Reward and Punishment in the Exodus)

## • Passages to Read

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The good person is threatened (Chapter 1:12-24)      An early death (Chapter 4:7-14)  
The good are in God's hands (Chapter 3:1-9)      Who knows God's ways? (Chapter 9:13-18)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Those who trust in him shall understand truth,  
and the faithful shall abide with him in love" (Wisdom 3:9).*

Lead us to everlasting life by trusting in the goodness of your will, Lord.

*"God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him" (Wisdom 2:23).*  
We really are your children, God. Bring us home to your love now and when we die.

*"You love all things that are  
and loathe nothing that you have made" (Wisdom 11:24).*

Give us the wisdom to see ourselves as lovable in your eyes, Lord.

## Wisdom Study Page

Question 1. *“Let us beset the just one...  
Let us condemn him to a shameful death” (Wisdom 2:12,20).*

Also read *Matthew 27:39-43*. How does this compare with what this passage of *Wisdom* describes?

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Question 2. *“Because God did not make death,  
nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living” (Wisdom 1:13).*

In what ways does misusing what God made harm us or others? Is this God’s fault?

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Question 3. *“For even though their branches flourish for a time,  
they are unsteady and shall be rocked by the wind  
and, by the violence of the winds, uprooted” (Wisdom 4:4).*

Compare this to *Matthew 7:24-28*. What will keep us faithful and secure in the storms of life?

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Question 4. *“Because Wisdom opened the mouths of the dumb,  
and gave ready speech to infants” (Wisdom 10:21).*

Compare this to *Matthew 21:16* and *Luke 10:21*. Why should we become childlike in the eyes of God? Doesn’t this make us look foolish to others?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Wisdom:*

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# SIRACH

## • History

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This book is the last of the wisdom books in the bible. It is called *Sirach* because its author is identified as the grandson of "Sirach" (50:27). In some Catholic bibles this book is called *Ecclesiasticus*. This is because the church used it so often in teaching the people and instructing converts that it was called the *Church Book*, or *Liber*

*Ecclesiasticus* in Latin. It was written in Hebrew around 175 B.C. and translated into Greek after 132 B.C. As this bible study noted in the Introduction to the Bible, it was not easy to translate this book: "Words spoken originally in Hebrew are not as effective when they are translated into another language." Between 1896 and 1956 several ancient remnants of the Hebrew text were discovered. In every case the Greek translations agreed with the original Hebrew. Apparently, the translator of *Sirach* did his work well.

*Sirach* is a collection of sayings and reflections on serving God and living a good life according to God's wisdom. This material is arranged into topics which form a spiritual "how to" manual. The book gives practical advice on family life, raising children, friendship, poverty and wealth. It also offers thoughts on self-esteem, accepting responsibility for choices, admitting sins and God's mercy. It offers strength and comfort to those who are faithful to God but undergo trials, including sickness and death. The examples of the patriarchs and prophets are held up to inspire God's people in every time and place. The book begins and ends with a focus on God who created life and wisely guides human beings with his commandments: "All wisdom comes from the LORD/ and with him it remains forever" (*Sirach* 1:1). The book deserves a slow and thoughtful reading.

## • Outline of Sirach

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Foreward

Chapters 1 to 23 (Fear of God is the Foundation of Wisdom)

Chapters 24 to 50:21 (The Blessings of Living Wisely)

Chapters 50:22 to 51:30) Epilogue

## • Passages to Read

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We are tested by trials (Chapter 2:1-18)

Duties toward parents (Chapter 3:1-18)

True friendship (Chapters 4:5-17 and 9:10-16)

Using our time well (Chapter 4:20-28)

Judging by appearances (Chapter 11:1-6)

Good and bad choices (Chapter 15:11-20)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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"For in fire gold is tested, /and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation" (*Sirach* 2:5).

Whatever happens, make us stronger in our love for you, God.

"With humility have self-esteem" (*Sirach* 10:27). We are valuable in your eyes, Lord.

"Despise not a man for his appearance" (*Sirach* 11:2). Let us see everyone with your eyes, God.

"Say not: 'It was God's doing that I fell away' " (*Sirach* 15:11). Teach us to take the blame for what we do, Lord.

## Sirach Study Page

Question 1. Compare the following to *John 15:18-25*.  
Why does Jesus tell his loyal followers they will have enemies?

*"My son, when you come to serve the LORD,  
prepare yourself for trials" (Sirach 2:1).*

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Question 2. What is a healthy self-respect? Who gives it to us and how do we keep it?  
Can we sometimes gain the respect of others in the long run?

*"Let no one intimidate you" (Sirach 4:22)*

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Question 3. Can doing time be wasted or put to good use? Jesus encouraged us to go  
beyond the law. Even though we are supervised by guards, can we live by *Sirach's* words?

*"Use your time well; guard yourself from evil" (Sirach 4:20).*

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Question 4. Compare this to Mary's words in *Luke 1:47-55*.  
Why does God use the poor and powerless for his plans?

*"...despise not a man for his appearance" (Sirach 11:2).*

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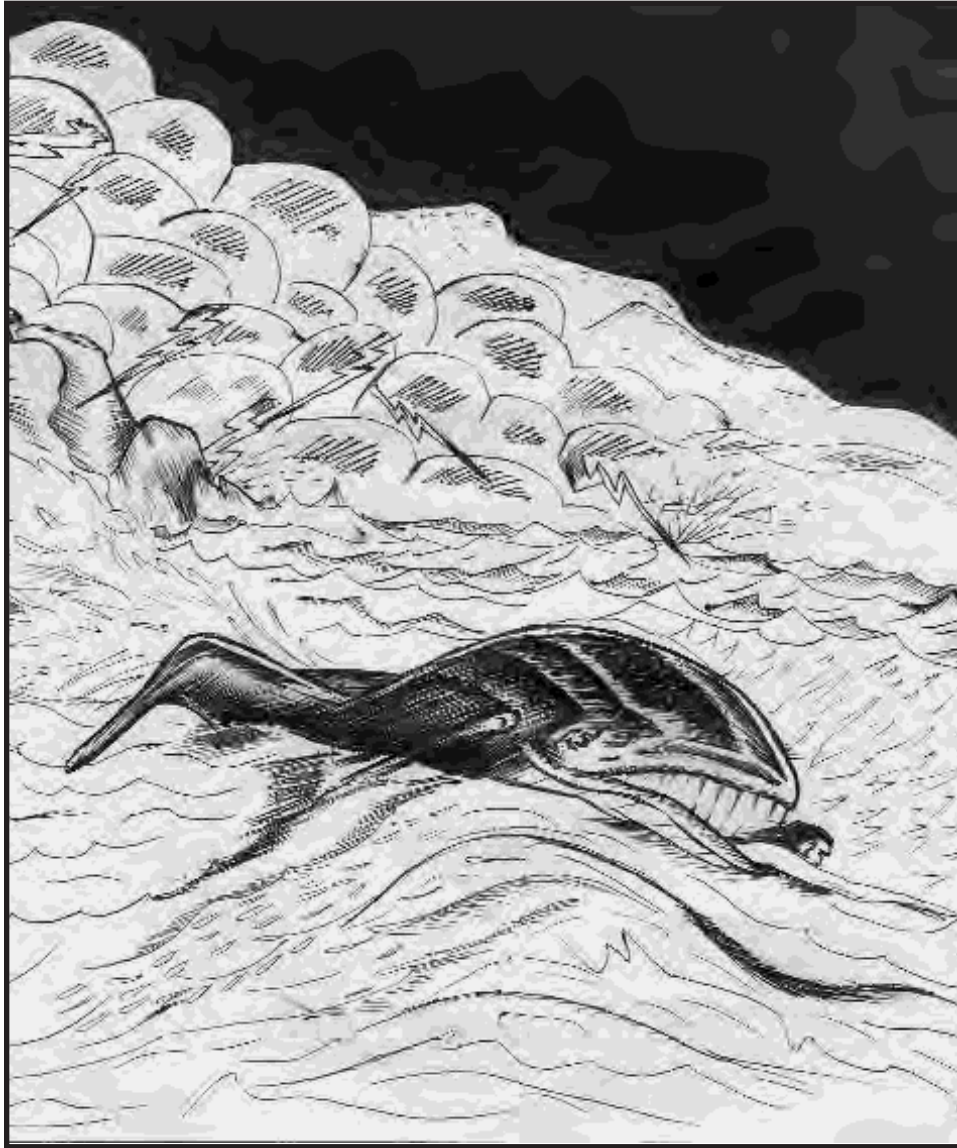
*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Sirach:*

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*From the belly of the fish Jonah said this prayer to the LORD, his God:  
“Out of my distress I called to the LORD,  
and he answered me” (Jonah 2: 2-3).*

## PART TWO

### B - THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

This part of the bible deals with the 18 prophetic books which are as follows: *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*. Some parts of the prophetic books are the prophets' own words. Other parts were written by followers or admirers of the prophets. In general, the prophets were not people who predicted the future. They were called by God to serve as messengers who spoke for God. In *Isaiah 50:4* the prophet said:

*“The Lord GOD has given me  
a well-trained tongue,  
That I might know how to speak to the weary...”*

Some prophets, however, did predict what would happen if the people did not obey God's law. Partly, this came from knowing about the consequences of their sinful choices. For example, if the someone was cruel or ignored the needs of their neighbor, they would be hated and in danger of being harmed. The prophets warned the leaders and people what the future held for them if they did not stop their *idolatry* and *injustice*. Ezekiel and Jeremiah warned the people about the Babylonian invasion, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile. The prophets also gave the people hope of returning home and rebuilding their lives with God's blessing. They also kept alive God's promise to send a messiah who would bring about a kingdom of justice and peace.

God's spirit powerfully urged the prophets to speak the truth in order to save the people by calling them to repent. Very often they began their sermons or speeches with the words *“Thus said the Lord.”* The prophets presented their message in both *words* and *actions*. They spoke out in public places where people could hear them. If people would not listen to them they did strange things to get the people's attention. One time the prophet Jeremiah wore a yoke around his neck that stood for a foreign king's oppression of the people (*Jeremiah 27:1-11*). Other examples of such actions are found in *1 Kings 11:29-31* and *Ezekiel 12: 1-16*.

The prophets also brought words of hope when needed. Through *“apocalyptic”* words and symbols that had hidden meanings, the book of *Daniel* gave courage to those who were living in captivity. The prophets also gave warned of coming disaster when the people were unfaithful to their covenant with God. For this reason, the prophets took a stand not only in matters of religion and worship. They also spoke out for justice and truth when social and political changes were needed. They did this even when it meant placing themselves in danger. They spoke out fearlessly against religious and political leaders whenever God's law was put aside by their human laws. As a result, the prophets sometimes were jailed or executed for the sake of God's message.

Many times during the history of God's people, the prophets defended the rights of those who needed special care: *the poor, orphans, widows, and strangers*. Care for the weak and the poor was part of the ancient covenant that Moses and the people made with God (*Deuteronomy 26:12*). In that spirit the prophets defended the weak and the poor. They spoke out against those who made unjust and oppressive laws,

*“Depriving the needy of judgment  
and robbing my people's poor of their rights” (Isaiah 10:2).*

We might even say that God is described in the bible as having a special place in his heart for the poor. Today the Catholic church calls this concern the *preferential option for the poor*.





# ISAIAH

## • History

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Isaiah is one of the greatest of all the prophets. He lived during the time when Israel was divided into two kingdoms, Judah (south) and Samaria (north). He witnessed the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrian forces in 722 B.C. He also witnessed the unsuccessful attack on Jerusalem by the Assyrians during Hezekiah's reign. In 742 B.C. when Uzziah, king of Judah died, Isaiah was called by God to serve as a prophet while praying in the temple. In his own words he described what happened. He saw God seated on a throne, and then an angel brought an ember from the alter and touched his mouth with it. Then he heard God's voice saying: " 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' 'Here I am, ' I said: 'send me!' " (Isaiah 6:8). Before the angel touched his lips he felt unable to speak to others because of his own sins. After the angel told him his sins were purged by the ember which touched his mouth, Isaiah's life was completely changed. He was consumed by the holiness of God and how far from God's ways the people lived. Isaiah had a long career as a prophet. It spanned the reigns of three kings: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. At one point he served as an adviser to King Ahaz. When or how Isaiah ended his days is not known, but his message was a powerful reminder then and now of the *holiness* of God and that God is the *Lord of history*. Isaiah also has provided some of the most beautiful prophecies about the coming of the messiah. There are four *Servant Songs*. His fourth description of the *suffering servant* (Chapter 53) was fulfilled by the passion of Jesus.

## • Outline of Isaiah

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### A. The Book of Judgment

Chapters 1 to 5 (Accusations)

Chapters 6 to 12 (The Immanuel Prophecies)

Chapters 13 to 23 (Prophecies for the Pagans)

Chapters 24 to 27 (Devastation of the World)

Chapters 28 to 33 (God Alone Is Salvation)

Chapters 28 to 33 (God Is the Avenger)

Chapters 36 to 39 (Additional History)

### B. The Book of Consolation

Chapters 40 to 48 (Deliverance from Captivity)

Chapters 49 to 55 (Israel is Spiritually Free)

Chapters 56 to 66 (The Captives Return Home)

## • Passages to Read

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Justice not sacrifices (Chapter 1:11-20)

The call of the prophet (Chapter 6:1-8)

The messiah will bring peace (Chapter 11:1-11)

Devastation of the world (Chapter 24)

Come to the Lord (Isaiah, Chapter 55)

The vineyard song (Chapter 5:1-7)

A child is born (Chapter 9:1-6)

Peace after the storm (Chapter 12:1-6)

The suffering servant (Chapter 53)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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" 'Here I am,' I said, 'send me!' " (Isaiah 6:8). *You ask us to be prophets despite our sinfulness, Lord.*

*"Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
a light has shone" (Isaiah 9:1).*

*Even in the darkest hole your light reaches us, God.*

*"By his stripes we were healed" (Isaiah 53:5). You took upon yourself all of our sufferings, Lord.*

## Isaiah Study Page

Question 1. *“So he became their savior  
in their every affliction...  
he himself... saved them” (Isaiah 63:8-9).*

How does the prophet’s words apply to Jesus? Besides death, what else did Jesus undergo?

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Question 2. *“Before they call, I will answer;  
while they are speaking, I will hearken to them” (Isaiah 65:24).*

How close is God to us? Does he know what we need even before we ask?

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Question 3. When the Suffering Servant came among us he was *“condemned, he was taken away” (Isaiah 53:8)*. How blessed are we because he was treated as a criminal?

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Question 4. *“My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8).*

As we grow closer in friendship with God, how does this change  
the way we look at people and events in life?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Isaiah:*

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# JEREMIAH

## • History

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The prophet Jeremiah was born in a small town near Jerusalem around 650 B.C. His family members were priests of the temple. When God called him to be a prophet he tried to tell God that he was too young. God insisted that he take his words to the people, promising to be with him:

*“They will fight against you, but not prevail over you,  
for I am with you to deliver you...” (Jeremiah 1:19).*

Jeremiah did not have an easy life as God’s messenger—he was told to announce the destruction of the temple. As he spoke out against the wickedness of the leaders and the people, this caused him great suffering. Members of his own family turned against him. He endured scourging and imprisonment, and survived two separate attacks on Jerusalem. During the second attack he was thrown into a deep well and left to die. While most of the people were taken into exile in Babylon, he was rescued. He was left in Jerusalem, heartbroken among the ruins. Although much of the time Jeremiah exposed the evils of his time, he also spoke about hope and new life in God’s mercy. Because he spoke the truth he often payed the price. But he never backed off from his duty as a prophet. He was even outspoken with God. He shared his feelings honestly with God, complaining about his trials and the way people treated him. Eventually Jeremiah died in Egypt where he was taken after the Babylonian governor of Jerusalem was murdered. Jeremiah foresaw a time of peace when *“all nations will be gathered together to honor the name of the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:17)*. This vision is more important now than ever in a world that is being torn apart by differences.

## • Outline of Jeremiah

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Chapters 1 to 6 (Prophecies During the Reign of King Josiah).  
Chapters 7 to 20 (Prophecies in the Days of King Jehoiakim).  
Chapters 21 to 33 (Prophecies in the Final Days of Jerusalem).  
Chapters 34 to 45 (The Fall of Jerusalem)  
Chapters 46 to 51 (Prophecies against the Nations)  
Chapter 52 (Destruction of Jerusalem and Death of the King)

## • Passages to Read

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A sermon in the temple (Chapter 7)  
The symbol of broken pottery (Chapter 19)  
The prophet pours out his heart to God (Chapter 20:1-18).  
A promise of a new beginning (Chapter 31)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“They will walk no longer in their hardhearted wickedness” (Jeremiah 3:17).*  
Change our hardened hearts into hearts of forgiveness and love, God.

*“For I am merciful, says the LORD...  
Only know your guilt” (Jeremiah 3:12-13).*

Your mercy will be there for us, if only we confess our guilt, Lord.

*“With age-old love I have loved you;  
so I have kept my mercy toward you” (Jeremiah 31:3).*

You loved us even before we loved ourselves, God.

## Jeremiah Study Page

Question 1. *"But my people have changed their glory  
for useless things" (Jeremiah 2:11).*

A great saint once said: *"The glory of God is man fully alive."* What choices do we make that deaden our spirit and reduce the value that God gave us?

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Question 2. *"Two evils have my people done:  
they have forsaken me the source of living waters:  
They have dug themselves cisterns,  
broken cisterns, that hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).*

What happens when we *dig our own wells*, and rely totally on our own strength and wisdom?

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Question 3. *"I had thought:  
How I should like to treat you as sons...  
You would call me 'my Father,' I thought,  
and never cease following me" (Jeremiah 3:19).*

How does this passage compare with the words of Jesus in *Luke 13:34-35*?  
What do both of these passages reveal about the heart of God?

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Question 4. *"Why did I come from the womb,  
to see sorrow and pain,  
to end my days in shame?" (Jeremiah 20:18).*

Is it alright to tell God how we feel as Jeremiah did? Will God not listen when we are honest?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Jeremiah:*

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# LAMENTATIONS

## • History

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*Lamentations* is a collection of 5 poems that express the grief and suffering of the nation over the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. It was written by one or more eyewitnesses during the exile in Babylon, sometime after this terrible event. The authors saw this disaster as the consequence of the people's sins, that they had been unfaithful to

their covenant with God:

*"But your wickedness...he will punish,  
he will lay bare your sins" (Lamentations 4: 22).*

Not only was the city laid waste, but the temple also was robbed of its sacred objects and badly damaged, which added to the people's feeling of total rejection and punishment by God:

*"The Lord has disowned his altar,  
rejected his sanctuary" (Lamentations 2: 7).*

The book is not only about grief and sadness, however. It also contains words of hope in God and his mercy which follows when the people repent. Even though the people suffered the consequences of their poor choices, these poems reminded them that God would not abandon them. *"He will not prolong your exile"* they are told (4:22). Like a prophet bringing both good news and bad news, *Lamentations* offered a promise of renewed strength and the hope of a new beginning once their punishment was over. The underlying message of this book is that God has an unending love for his people and wants to rescue them from their own destruction.

## • Outline of Lamentations

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Chapter 1 (Jerusalem Is Abandoned)	Chapter 4 (The Misery of the City under Attack)
Chapter 2 (God's Is Angry with Israel)	Chapter 4 (The Misery of the City under Attack)
Chapter 3 (The Prophet and People Suffer)	
Chapter 4 (The Misery of the City under Attack)	

## • Passages to Read

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All Chapters: 1 through 5

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Come, all you who pass by the way  
look and see  
Whether there is any suffering like my suffering..." (Lamentations 1:12).*

Comfort us in all our sorrows, Lord.

*"My soul is deprived of peace,  
I have forgotten what happiness is,  
I tell myself my future is lost" (Lamentations 3:17-18).*

When all seems lost, let us remember your faithful love, God.

*"Lead us back to you, O LORD, that we may be restored" (Lamentations 5:21).*  
When we find our way to you, we find ourselves, God.

## Lamentations Study Page

Question 1. *“Her friends have all betrayed her  
and become her enemies” (Lamentations 1:2).*

Sometimes friends don't stand the test of time and distance, or they turn against us.  
How do we begin to choose healthy friends? Who is our most faithful Friend?

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Question 2. *“Far from me are all who could console me,  
any who might revive me” (Lamentations 1:16).*

When we are separated from loved ones, where can we turn to be consoled and feel like living again?

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Question 3. *“When anyone tramples underfoot  
all the prisoners in the land,  
When he distorts men's rights...  
the Lord does not look on unconcerned” (Lamentations 3:34-36).*

Why is God concerned about the treatment of prisoners or people's rights?

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Question 4. When it seems like God has forgotten us, what does faith ask us to do?  
Compare the following passage with the cry of Jesus on Calvary (*Mark 15:34*).

*“Why, then, should you forget us,  
abandon us so long a time?” (Lamentations 5:20).*

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Lamentations:*

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# BARUCH

## • History

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This book is named after *Baruch*, the secretary of the prophet Jeremiah. It may have been written by more than one person, however. The chapters that were put together as a book around 200 B.C., seem to show different styles of writing. *Baruch* was written in Hebrew first, then translated into Greek for the many Jews who lived outside of their homeland. These faithful followers of the Law lived amidst the challenges of the pagan world. However, they remembered Jerusalem as the holy city and the worship of God in the temple as the ideal.

*Baruch* also described what it was like to be held captive in a strange place. It expressed the feelings of being separated from home and living in the custody of Babylonian authorities. Nevertheless, suffering the consequences deeply changed them for the better. In their letter to those who remained in Jerusalem, they openly confessed their wrong doings: *"we have sinned against the LORD, our God"* (Baruch 1: 13). They described how sorry they were for being unfaithful to God's law: *"we today are flushed with shame"* (1:15). They understood what had happened to them: *"we are brought low, not raised up, because we sinned against the LORD, our God, not heeding his voice"* (Baruch 2: 5). The "Letter of Jeremiah" in the last chapter of the book showed in detail how pointless the worship of false gods was. They are *"like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch, that is no protection"* (Baruch 6: 69). *Baruch* provides a look at people who suffered terribly, learned their lesson, and were living in humility and hope. This hope was based on their memory of the reliable mercy and love of God. They appealed to the fatherly heart of God: *"Hear, O LORD, our prayer of supplication, and deliver us for your own sake"* (Baruch 2: 14).

## • Outline of Baruch

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Chapter 1 (Prayers of the People in Exile)  
Chapter 2 (Praise for the Law of Moses)  
Chapter 3 (Mother Jerusalem Comforts Her Children)  
Chapter 4 (The Exile Will Soon Be Over)  
Chapter 5 (God is Leading Israel to Joy)  
Chapter 6 (Jeremiah's Letter against False Worship)

## • Passages to Read

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All Chapters (1 through 6)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"They shall praise me in the land of their captivity, and shall invoke my name"* (Baruch 2:32).  
When we can't escape our surroundings, we find words to praise you, Lord

*"Had you walked in the way of God,  
you would have dwelt in enduring peace"* (Baruch 3:13).

In your way, not ours, we find deep and lasting peace, God.

*"He who gave you your name is your encouragement"* (Baruch 4:30).  
We look to you for courage, Lord, you know each of us by name.

## Baruch Study Page

Question 1. *“In the land of their captivity they shall have a change of heart; they shall know that I, the LORD, am their God. I will give them hearts, and heedful ears”* (Baruch 2:30-31). In what way is being incarcerated like the captivity of God’s people in Babylon? How can this time be put to good use for ourselves and others who feel the effects of crime?

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Question 2. *“You put into our hearts the fear of you: that we may call upon your name”* (Baruch 3:7). Would we look for God if our hearts were not made for him? Compare this to what Peter said to Jesus in *John 6:68*. If God is not first in our lives, will anything else make sense?

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Question 3. How is straying from God a dead end? How can we use our time well and even the daily routine to turn ourselves into spiritually stronger persons?

*“As your hearts have been disposed to stray from God, turn now ten times the more to seek him”* (Baruch 4:28).

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Question 4. *“Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever”* (Baruch 5:1).

Inmates must wear clothes that the system gives to them.  
How do we clothe ourselves as followers of Christ? Read *Colossians 3:12-17*.

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Baruch:*

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## EZEKIEL

### • History

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Ezekiel was a priest taken into exile after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. While in captivity he had an amazing vision (perhaps a dream) in which he was called to become a prophet. He had the unpopular job of preparing the people for the final destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel's words expressed his feelings of helplessness and pain as he foretold the oncoming disaster and the people's refusal to listen and change. No one believed him until it finally happened in 587 B.C. After that he taught the people that their survival as a nation depended on making a new covenant with God. He told them that even though they were only a remnant of a once great nation, they were called to be its hope. He foresaw that once their punishment was over, they would return to their homeland. Once they were home they would rebuild Jerusalem and restore proper worship in the temple. The last eight chapters of *Ezekiel* describe how God's people would enjoy a bright and happy future if they turned away from their rebellious behavior and kept God's law. In Chapter 37 he described a *vision of dry bones* rising up to become living bodies to show that God, rather than human power, would restore the people. This was to remind them that none of this would happen without God's guidance and help.

### • Outline of Ezekiel

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Chapters 1 to 3 (Ezekiel Becomes a Prophet)  
Chapters 4 to 24 (Before Jerusalem Falls)  
Chapters 25 to 32 (Prophecies against Other Nations)  
Chapters 33 to 39 (Israel's Salvation)  
Chapters 40 to 48 (The New Israel)

### • Passages to Read

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Ezekiel's vision and call (Chapters 2 and 3)  
The coming disaster (Chapter 6)  
Each person's responsibility (Chapter 33:10-20)  
God will be the people's shepherd (Chapter 34)  
The vision of the dry bones and sticks (Chapter 37)  
God returns to the temple (Chapter 43:1-12)  
The vision of the stream (Chapter 47)

### • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Whether they heed or resist...they shall know that a prophet has been among them"* (Ezekiel 2:5).  
Lord, who are the prophets of our day?

*"Take into your heart all my words that I speak to you; hear them well"* (Ezekiel 3:10).  
Give us the courage to listen, God.

*"Then spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me"* (Ezekiel 3:24).  
Remind us of our dignity and worth as we stand before you, Lord.

*"I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their bodies, and replace it with a natural heart"* (Ezekiel 11:19).  
Change our hearts forever, God. Let us never go back to our old ways.

## Ezekiel Study Page

Question 1. *"They shall teach my people to distinguish between the sacred and the profane, between clean and unclean"* (Ezekiel 44:23). In our society movies and TV are allowed to make fun of and show anything. What should Christians value as sacred and pure?

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Question 2. *"You shall give them no property in Israel, for I am their property"* (Ezekiel 44:28). When we are allowed to own very little, how valuable is God's Word (the Bible) to us?

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Question 3. *"The name of the City shall henceforth be 'The LORD is here' "* (Ezekiel 48:35). Is God living with us in all places and times? Even here and now, in this time and place?

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Question 4. *"Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit"* (Ezekiel 18:31). Is God really willing to wipe away our sins? What will God do about our past wrongs if we have a new heart and spirit?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Ezekiel:*

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## Restorative Justice

Restorative justice provides another way of looking at crime and justice. It focuses on the harm that crime does to *the victim, the community and God*, not just the state. It offers a positive way to heal wounds and rebuild the lives of victims and offenders. To be fair the focus should be on helping the victim and rehabilitating the offender as much as possible. Offenders should be accountable to their victims. This means that offenders are responsible for their actions and must repair the harm they have caused to the victim and the community. Restorative justice invites the victim, the offender and the community to work together to restore peace and justice. Help for victims, restitution, community service, face-to-face meetings of victims and offenders, victim panels, and life-skill classes for offenders all help restore justice.

**Crime Hurts Everyone** *"Lead us back to you, O LORD, that we may be restored" (Lamentations 5:21)*

- Crime is an offense against the dignity of a person not just against the laws of the state.
- Crime hurts victims, the community and offenders. Every one should be part of the solution.
- Justice is more than punishment. It means making things right as far as possible.
- Victims are hurt the most by crime. They should be at the center of making things right.

**The Victims** *"Grant me justice, LORD" (Psalm 26:1).*

Restorative justice helps victims regain the dignity and power that was taken by the offender. They are more than witnesses at a trial. Instead of being left out of their own cases, victims need the chance to speak about their feelings and see justice done. Victims should have the chance to meet their offenders face to face if they wish (this is called *mediation*). Victims can also help find ways for offenders to repair the harm caused.

**The Offenders** *"You guide me along the right path  
for the sake of your name" (Psalm 23:3).*

Usually, the criminal justice system focuses on the law and punishment. As a result offenders do not face the harm they caused. Although prison bars separate offenders from their victims, offenders are responsible for the choices they have made. They should take part in righting the wrongs they have done. Prison walls make it hard for them to do this, but they can use their time to realize the harm they have done, learn new living skills, pray for their victims, and apologize to them. To do this they need God's help in prayer: After their release offenders can work in service projects to benefit the victim and the community.

**The Community** *"Restore again our fortunes, LORD" (Psalm 126:4).*

The community is responsible for everyone involved—victims and offenders. Churches, social agencies, and volunteers can work together to support and assist victims and their families, and the families of offenders. Churches can sponsor or "mentor" offenders before, during and after their release. Businesses and community groups can find jobs for them after their release. Service projects let them give something back to their victims and the community. The community also must work to remove the causes of crime so there will be fewer victims.

### **Pray and Read the Bible:**

Read how the good Samaritan cared for a victim in *Luke 10:29-37* or how murder was a community affair in *Deuteronomy 21:1-9*. Reflect on *Isaiah 1:16-17*:

*"Put away your misdeeds...  
cease doing evil; learn to do good.  
Make justice your aim: redress the wronged."*



# DANIEL

## • History

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This book does not take its name from the author but from the hero, Daniel. He is a young Jewish man serving as a slave in the palace of the king of Babylon. After Jerusalem was destroyed he and his people were living in exile. Daniel became famous by solving the meaning of a dream that upset the king. Daniel did not take the credit for doing this. He told the king: *“But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries”* (2:28). Daniel describes his job as God’s humble servant: *“To me also this mystery has been revealed, not that I am wiser than any other living person, but in order that its meaning might be made known...that you may understand the thoughts in your own mind”* (2:30). God called Daniel to help others understand the truth about themselves.

Although *Daniel* is listed with the books of the prophets it also is an example of “apocalyptic” writing. Apocalypse means to uncover or reveal a secret. This writing uses symbols and dreams to describe what will happen in the future on earth, or as a vision of heaven. It teaches that God’s goodness always overcomes evil. Neither evil nor death have lasting power over our lives or human history. The prophet’s dreams and visions help people look beyond their sufferings or death, to a life of justice and peace in God’s kingdom. Other examples of this writing in the Old Testament are: *Ezekiel 38-39, Isaiah 24-27 and 60-62, and Zechariah 1-6*. Examples in the New Testament are: *Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21, and Revelation*.

*Daniel* was written to give courage and hope to the Jews living about 167 years before Christ who were being punished for their religion. It taught them that *God is with us*, that everything will turn out according to God’s plan. *Daniel* reminds God’s people that he is greater than any power, human or satanic, and that his kingdom will come. *Daniel 7* described the “son of man” as one who will help this happen (7:13-14). In the gospels Jesus called himself the “son of man,” preached the coming of God’s kingdom, and used “apocalyptic” words to describe it.

## • Outline of Daniel

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Chapters 1 to 6: Daniel and the Kings of Babylon

Chapters 7 to 12: The Visions of Daniel

Chapters 13 to 14: Additional Stories: Susanna, Bel, the Dragon, and Daniel in the Lion’s Den

## • Passages to Read

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Daniel explains the king’s dream (Chapters 1 and 2)

The writing on the wall (Chapter 5) and Daniel in the lion’s den (Chapter 6)

Four great visions (Chapters 7 to 12)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“Daniel was removed from the den, unhurt because he trusted in his God”* (Daniel 6:24).  
God, you are never powerless. Never let anyone harm our souls.

*“His kingship shall not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:14).  
Evil is no match for God’s power. Lord, we believe that your goodness always wins in the end.

*“Blessed is the man who has patience and perseveres”* (Daniel 12:12).  
God, keep us strong and faithful to you in all our trials.

## Daniel Study Page

Question 1. How do the words and example of Daniel remind people then and now that *God is with us* even during the worst times?

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Question 2. Why do human power and evil not last forever, but eventually fall?  
Is it because they stand only on themselves?

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Question 3. When we suffer for doing the right thing where do we get the strength to do this?  
Does our example strengthen others?

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Question 4. Have there been any people in our lives that God sent to help us "*understand the thoughts in your own mind*" (Daniel 2:30)?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Daniel:*

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# HOSEA

## • History

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This book is named after Hosea who preached during the last days of the northern kingdom of Israel (783-724 B.C.). During this time six kings rose and fell. Hosea compared God and his people to a husband and wife. At the beginning of the book, Hosea compared his own painful marriage to the problems God had with Israel. Like his own wife Gomer, Israel was unfaithful. Through the words of the prophet, which came from Hosea's own marriage problems, God complained that his people gave themselves away by their misdeeds, just like an unfaithful wife. Everyone, including the priests and kings, were guilty. They forgot to care for the poor and twisted the law in their favor. They even turned to worshipping Baal, a pagan god. Hosea predicted what would happen to the people because they did not keep their vows and were unfaithful to God. Although they suffered the consequences of their own choices, God wanted to save them from unhappiness. That is why God called them to repent through the words of the prophet. Like Hosea who finally saved his marriage, God was like a forgiving husband whose love for his people never ended. He brought them home to be happy with him. Following the example of Hosea Jesus referred to himself as the bridegroom of his people. An example of this is found in *Matthew 9:15*: "*Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?*" John and Paul also wrote about Jesus as the groom. There is also a reference to the passion and resurrection of Jesus in *Hosea 6:1-2*.

## • Outline of Hosea

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Chapter 1 to 5 (Hosea's marriage compared to Israel and God's unfaithful people)

Chapters 6 to 8 (The people fail to trust in God)

Chapters 9 to 13 (The punishment of Israel)

Chapter 14 (Those who return to God are forgiven)

## • Passages to Read

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God's people are unfaithful (Chapter 1)      God's tender love for his people (Chapter 11)

Israel's punishment and return (Chapter 6)      The return of Israel to God (Chapter 14:2-10)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"It is love I desire, not sacrifice..." (Hosea 6:6).*

Rituals have their place, but none must take the place of true love for you, Lord.

*"In their affliction, they shall look for me" (Hosea 6:1).*

Let our troubles bring us not despair, but hope in you, God.

*"Because they refused to repent  
their own counsels shall devour them" (Hosea 11:6).*

Save us from our own bad advice, Lord.

## Hosea Study Page

Question 1. *"I will resettle them in their homes"* (Hosea 11:11). When families and spouses are separated from us how do we keep our love strong and reach out to them at home?

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Question 2. *"One and all they sin against me,  
exchanging their glory for shame"* (Hosea 4:7).

What did St. Irenaeus mean when he said: *"The glory of God is man fully alive"*?  
How have we traded our own value for things that have left us empty and feeling worthless?

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Question 3. What did Hosea mean when he said the people are *"a hearth cake unturned"*?  
(Hosea 7:8). What happens if a pancake is not turned? How are we half-baked Christians?

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Question 4. *"Even as they go I will spread my net around them,  
like the birds of the air I will bring them down"* (Hosea 7:12).

When we are caught in our own web of sins, where is God?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Hosea:*

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# JOEL

## • History

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The Hebrew spelling of Joel is *Yo'el* which means "Yahweh is God." Other than his name little else is known about the prophet Joe who wrote this book about 400 B.C. During his lifetime, the prophet Joel saw the awful destruction that a vast army of locusts caused to the land. The locusts first appeared like a dark, rumbling storm cloud.

When they arrived, they ate everything in their path – grain fields, grape vines, and even stripped the bark from trees. The sheep and cattle starved because they had no grass, and the people had little left to eat. The prophet saw in this terrible event a warning from God for the people to repent. (The Church uses a reading from *Joel* to open the season of Lent each year). He convinced the rulers, priests, and people to fast and pray until the locusts stopped. In due time, the land was restored and life returned to normal. However, Joel never forgot this experience. He saw it as a symbol of things to come. Like the other prophets, he believed that one day God would gather all nations together for a final judgment. It would be an awesome day that no one could escape:

*"For great is the day of the LORD,  
and exceedingly terrible; who can bear it?" (Joel 2:11).*

He warned God's people to be ready for this "day of the Lord" as the prophets called it. After that a new age of blessing would begin. In the *Acts 2:14-17*, after the Spirit came upon the first Christians, Peter reminded the crowd in Jerusalem of Joel's prophecy, "*I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind*" (*Joel 3:1*). With Jesus Christ, God's new age of blessing began to unfold with the outpouring of the Spirit.

## • Outline of Joel

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Chapters 1 to 2:27 (Locusts destroy the land)

Chapters 2:28 to 3:21 (Prayer and fasting bring God's blessing)

Chapter 3 (God pours out his spirit)

Chapter 4 (The nations are judged and God's people are saved)

## • Passages to Read

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Read all of *Joel* (Chapters 1 to 4) The people call on God now and at the final judgment.

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Yet even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with your whole heart..." (Joel 2:12).*

There is no better time than right now to give our hearts to you, Lord.

*"He has given you the teacher of justice" (Joel 2:23).* Without you to teach us we would be lost, God.

*"I will pour out  
my spirit upon all" (Joel 3:1).*

You send your spirit to everyone who calls on you, Lord.



## Joel Study Page

Question 1. *"You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel" (Joel 2:27). Where is God when our addiction is like an invasion of locusts? Why is prayer and fasting necessary?*

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Question 2. *"Everyone shall be rescued who calls on the name of the LORD" (Joel 3:5).*

What name of God did Jesus give us to *"deliver us from evil"*?

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Question 3. *"Let the weak man say: 'I am a warrior!'" (Joel 4:10). Can God give us the strength to overcome any weakness or trial in ourselves or others?*

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Question 4. *"Near is the day of the LORD in the valley of decision" (Joel 4:14).*

When we feel down and alone in our failures, what are we free to decide?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Joel:*

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# AMOS

## • History

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Amos, the prophet of this book, was a shepherd and took care of trees (*Amos 7:14-15*). He also was smart and holy enough to see how the wealth of his nation was built on injustice. He lived at a time when Israel was very prosperous and powerful. It also was a time when the rich grew richer and the poor became poorer. Amos warned those who “had it made” at the expense of the poor, that God rejected their empty worship and that they were facing disaster. The prophet did not spare his words. Through terrible visions and warnings (woes) he tried to convince the people to repent: “*The eyes of the Lord GOD are on this sinful kingdom*” (*Amos 9:8*). Because of the things he said, Amos was not popular with those in authority. Amaziah the priest reported him to the king: “*Amos has conspired against you here within Israel; the country cannot endure all his words*” (*Amos 7:10*). The final words of Amos are ones of hope and a better future. He predicts that after God has sifted his people, he will restore peace and rebuild their lives.

## • Outline of Amos

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Chapters 1-2 (National crimes exposed)      Chapters 7-9:8b (Visions of coming judgment)  
Chapters 3-6 (A special warning for Israel)      Chapters 9:8c-15 (God will restore his people)

## • Passages to Read

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The prophet is a roaring lion (Chapter 3:8-15)  
The First Woe: Chapter 5:7-17  
God wants justice and goodness: Chapter 5:21-27  
The prophet pleads for the people (Chapter 7:1-9)  
God will restore his people (Chapter 9:9-15)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“Yes, days are coming, says the Lord GOD,  
when I will send a famine upon the land:  
Not a famine of bread or thirst for water,  
but for hearing the word of the LORD” (Amos 8:11).*

You have the words of everlasting life, Lord.

*“For three crimes..., and for four,  
I will not revoke my word” (Amos 1:6).*

Our sins follow one after the other. Help us turn to you for strength and forgiveness, God.

*“I will plant them upon their own ground” (Amos 9:15).* Whatever we do, wherever we are, we stand on your faithful word, Lord.

*“...they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph” (Amos 6:6).*

When things are going good, let us not forget others who need our help, God.

## Amos Study Page

Question 1. *“You alone have I favored  
more than all the families of the earth;  
Therefore I will punish you  
for all your crimes” (Amos 3:2).*

Would God warn us or correct us if God did not love us so much?

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Question 2. *“...prepare to meet your God, O Israel:  
Him who formed the mountains, and created the wind,  
and declares to man his thoughts” (Amos 4:12-13).*

As we go about our day, what are we thinking about mostly, our will or God’s will?

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Question 3. *“For thus says the LORD  
to the house of Israel:  
Seek me, that you may live” (Amos 5:4).*

Is God ever far from us or have we moved away from him?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Amos:*

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## OBADIAH

### • History

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Although this is the shortest book of the bible (only 21 verses), it offers some of the strongest words for the enemy of God's people. The prophet Obadiah cries out for the punishment of Edom, the age-old enemy of the Jewish nation. From the time God's people entered the promised land until they were led away to exile in Babylon, the people of Edom fought against them. The prophet recalls how the people of Edom stood by and rejoiced when his people were taken away as captives by the Babylonian army.

Not much is known about the author or when he wrote this book. Most likely it was written after Jerusalem fell in 587 B.C. since the prophet refers to this event. One thing is for certain, Obadiah deeply loved his people and wanted to protect them and give them hope. Eventually, Edom as a country disappeared from the map. There is a saying: "*pride goes before the fall.*" This is what Obadiah told his enemies also.

The warning of Obadiah offers food for thought for people of every time and place. It is the golden rule described in other words: "*Your deed shall come back upon your own head*" (Obadiah 1:15). The prophet warns us as a nation and as individuals – before we act, we must stop and think about the consequences. How we treat others, what we say and do can cause a chain reaction that comes back to hurt ourselves. In the end, God wants everyone to be treated with justice and respect. It is for our own good and the good of all.

### • Outline of Obadiah

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Chapter 1:1-14 (The pride of Edom is its own downfall)

Chapter 1:15-21 (The *day of the Lord* is coming)

### • Passages to Read

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Read the entire book of *Obadiah*.

### • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Though you go as high as the eagle  
and your nest be set among the stars,  
From there I will bring you down..." (Obadiah 1:4).*

We may seem on top of the world, but only your grace will keep us safe, Lord.

*"Your deed shall come back upon your own head"* (Obadiah 1:15).  
Help us treat others with the kindness that we want for ourselves, God.

*"The kingship shall be the LORD's"* (Obadiah 1:21).  
Remind us that all our days and deeds belong to you, Lord.

## Obadiah Study Page

Question 1. *“On the day when you stood by,  
...you too were one of them” (Obadiah 1:11).*

What did Jesus say about those who do nothing when others were suffering? (See *Matthew 25:45*).

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Question 2. *“As you have done, so shall it be done to you” (Obadiah 1:15).* What most likely will happen if we treat others as if they had no value? How do we feel if this happens to us?

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Question 3. *“Yes, they shall drink and swallow,  
and shall become as though they had not been” (Obadiah 1:16).*

Besides hurting our loved ones, what happens to us when we become slaves to alcohol?

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Question 4. *“The pride of your heart has deceived you” (Obadiah 1:3).*  
What does this saying mean: *pride goes before the fall*?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Obadiah:*

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# JONAH

## • History

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This book stands out in the Old Testament as a very different one. *Jonah* is a story about a prophet who may or may not be real. There was a “servant, the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai” mentioned very briefly in 2 Kings 14:25. We know that he lived during the 41 year reign of King Jeroboam, and foretold the boundaries of Israel. Other than that, nothing is known about this prophet. Nor is there anything known about the author of this book who made Jonah the hero of this story. *Jonah* was written to teach an important spiritual lesson—that God’s love is not bound. He forgives everyone who repents, not just those who think they are God’s favored ones. The story of *Jonah* teaches that all nations belong to God and that prophets must go wherever God sends them. Like Jonah, who tried to avoid God and even argued with Him, we may question God’s will, but we cannot limit God’s mercy. The book of *Jonah* may not have been a popular one during the time it was written. In general, the Israelites thought of themselves as the only ones who deserved God’s care. That is why Jonah tried to avoid his job. He tried to run away when God told him to preach to the people of Nineveh. They were the enemies of Jonah’s people and he thought they deserved punishment. However, God wanted to save them. Jonah was so desperate that he did not care what happened to himself. He almost drowned, was confined inside a whale, and nearly died of thirst and heat. But as the saying goes, “you can run but you can’t hide.” God did not leave Jonah alone until he got his way. In the end Nineveh repented and was saved.

In the New Testament, when Jesus said “love your enemies” he may have been thinking of the book of *Jonah*. He faced the same attitude at a time when the Jewish nation was occupied by Rome and ruled by the puppet king, Herod. We do know that Jesus used the story of *Jonah* in his preaching. In speaking about himself and his own message of repentance he said: “there is something greater than *Jonah* here” (Luke 11:32). He also compared his death and resurrection to *Jonah*: “Just as *Jonah* was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40).

## • Outline of *Jonah*

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Chapter 1:1-17 (Jonah is called but disobeys God)  
Chapter 2:1-10 (Jonah is saved and gives thanks)  
Chapter 3:1-10 (Jonah preaches to Nineveh)  
Chapter 4:1-11 (God has mercy on Nineveh)

## • Passages to Read

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Read all of *Jonah*

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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“Perhaps God will be mindful of us so that we may not perish” (*Jonah* 1:6).  
Even when things seem overwhelming, you are always looking out for us, God.

“When my soul fainted within me,  
I remembered the LORD” (*Jonah* 2:8).

When all is darkness, and we are falling apart, we reach out for your strong, saving hand, Lord.

## Jonah Study Page

Question 1. *"Take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live"* (Jonah 4: 3).  
Like Jonah, have we fought with God, or felt like dying would be a solution?

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Question 2. *"It is because of me that this violent storm has come upon you"* (Jonah 1: 12).  
Why do our mistakes and our attempts to avoid God cause problems for others?

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Question 3. *"Should I not be concerned over...persons who cannot distinguish their right hand from their left?"* (Jonah 4: 11). What do God's words to Jonah say to us and those we judge?

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Question 4. *"But you brought my life up from the pit,  
O LORD my God"* (Jonah 2: 7).

Do we believe that God can deliver us from the belly of disaster, or any hole we are in?

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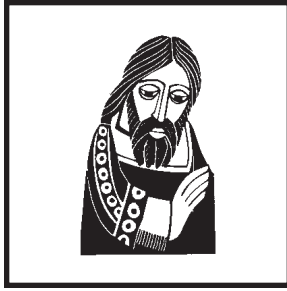
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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Jonah:*

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# MICAH

## • History

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*Micah* means “Who is like God?” in Hebrew. The prophet came from the village of Moresheth, about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. He also preached during the same time as Isaiah. In fact, some of his words are identical, as in *Isaiah* 2:4 and *Micah* 4:3,

*“They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks.”*

Micah also is mentioned in the book of *Jeremiah*, when that prophet was on trial for his life: “Some of the elders of the land came forward and said to all the people assembled, ‘Micah of Moresheth used to prophesy in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and he told all the people of Judah: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Zion shall become a plowed field, Jerusalem a heap of ruins.../Did Hezekiah, king of Judah, and all Judah condemn him to death?’ ” (*Jeremiah* 26:17-19). During Micah’s career (742 to 687 B.C.) he spoke out against the injustices of the two cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, calling for an end to their crimes. Because they were so rich, they had a false sense of security, saying: “No evil can come upon us” (*Micah* 3:11). Micah reminded them that their wealth was built on bloodshed and greed. The rich were grabbing land from the poor, enslaving those who could not pay their debts. With all his might he sided with the poor and the oppressed: “As for me, I am filled with power” (*Micah* 3:8). Chapters 6 and 7 are set up like a courtroom trial. God acts as prosecutor and judge, and Israel as the defendant. Micah gives a clear understanding of true religion. Worship of God means nothing if we hurt or fail to help others: “Only to do the right and to love goodness...” (*Micah* 6:8). Chapter 6 also is one of the sources for the prayers of Good Friday. The book of *Micah* ends with a play on the prophet’s name: “Who is there like you, the God who removes guilt?” (*Micah* 7:18). *Micah* is also important to the New Testament because it contains the prophesy of Christ’s birth quoted in the Gospel of *Matthew*: “But you, Bethlehem.../ From you shall come forth for me/ one who is to be ruler in Israel” (*Micah* 5:1).

## • Outline of Micah

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Chapter 1-2 (God judges his people)  
Chapters 4-5 (The new Israel is restored)

Chapter 6-7 (Words of warning and hope)

## • Passages to Read

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Read the entire book of *Micah*.

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“O my people, what have I done to you,  
or how have I wearied you? Answer me!”* (*Micah* 6:3).

How deep is your love for us, Lord?

*“You shall eat, without being satisfied,  
food that will leave you empty”* (*Micah* 6:14).

Give us the living bread of Christ, your Son, God.

*“You will cast into the depths of the sea  
all our sins”* (*Micah* 7:19).

In baptism and confession of our sins, we are made clean, Lord.



## Micah Study Page

Question 1. *“With what shall I come before the LORD  
and bow before God most high?...  
You have been told, O man, what is good,  
and what the LORD requires of you:  
Only to do the right and to love goodness,  
and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:6,8).*

How true is our worship of God if we neglect those in need, or harm others?

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Question 2. *“A man’s enemies are those of his household” (Micah 7:6).* Is there a time when we must walk away from people that are no longer good for us? (See *Matthew 10:34-36*).

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Question 3. *“...though I have fallen, I will arise;  
though I sit in darkness, the LORD is my light” (Micah 7:8).*

The saints were sinners who kept getting up again. Can we live like this too?

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Question 4. *“Who is there like you, the God who removes guilt?” (Micah 7:18).*  
Can we imagine what our lives would be like if God was not forgiving?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Micah:*

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# NAHUM

## • History

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We know nothing about the prophet Nahum except that he witnessed the destruction of the Assyrian empire in 612 B.C. His name means “God comforts” in Hebrew. He believes God is just and merciful, but also powerful and the avenger of evil. If it was hard to understand why Jonah had a hard time preaching to Nineveh, the book of *Nahum* explains why. The fall of Nineveh was like the fall of Nazi Germany at the end of World War II. Everyone was happy and relieved that the suffering caused by the Nazis was over. Because the Assyrians were such savage warriors everyone was glad when the Medes and Babylonians finally ended their power:

*“All who hear this news of you  
clap their hands over you” (Nahum 3:19).*

They had terrorized country after country, including Israel, for 300 years. Cities were conquered and burned, and headless bodies of men, women and children were piled up outside the city walls. Some who were alive were stuck on sharp posts to die slowly. Nahum described how the Assyrians destroyed the beautiful Egyptian city of No-amon (Thebes) without mercy:

*“Yet even she went captive into exile,  
even her little ones were dashed to pieces  
at the corner of every street;  
...all her great men were put into chains” (Nahum 3: 10).*

As a prophet who cared deeply for his people, Nahum wanted them to be free of oppression and fear. His description of the attack on Nineveh was one of the most detailed in the bible. *Nahum* describes how a cruel nation was brought to a cruel end at the hand of the enemies it had made. It is interesting to note that *Capernaum* was the name of the town to which Jesus moved as an adult (Mark 2:1). It means *village of Nahum*.

## • Outline of Nahum

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Chapter 1:1-15 (The Judgment of Nineveh)

Chapters 2-3 (The Fall of Nineveh)

## • Passages to Read

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Read all the chapters of *Nahum*.

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“The LORD is slow to anger, yet great in power” (Nahum 1:2).*

Let us follow your example, Lord. Give us the power to be patient and forgiving.

*“The LORD is good,  
a refuge on the day of distress” (Nahum 1:7).*

Let us remember your goodness and turn to you in all our troubles, God.

*“See upon the mountains there advances  
the bearer of good news, announcing peace!” (Nahum 2:1).*

We carry the good news of your kindness wherever we are and wherever we go, Lord.

## Nahum Study Page

Question 1. *“Now will I break this yoke from off you,  
and burst asunder your bonds” (Nahum 1:13).*

Can you see in Israel’s history your own struggle against the things  
that threaten your happiness and peace?

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Question 2. *“...be they ever so many and so vigorous,  
still they shall be mown down and disappear” (Nahum 1:12).*

Do you believe that God’s truth and love are always stronger than evil?

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Question 3. *“...even her little ones were dashed to pieces  
at the corner of every street...  
and all her great men were put into chains” (Nahum 3: 10).*

It is easy to see and judge the violence of ancient times,  
but what is happening to our youth on the streets of our own cities?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Nahum:*

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# HABAKKUK

## • History

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The prophecy of *Habakkuk* took place some time after the fall of Assyria in 612 B.C. and before the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. Not much is known about Habakkuk except that he preached at the same time as Jeremiah. Both prophets knew that their people were about to be attacked by a new and powerful enemy. This pained them deeply. The prophet Habakkuk is one of the few people in the bible who dared to complain to God. His question "Why?" at the beginning of this book is one that everyone asks at one time or another. Why does it take God so long to answer our prayers? Why do we suffer at the hands of bad people? "Why, then, do you gaze on the faithless in silence?" (*Habakkuk* 1:13). One of the hardest things that we struggle with is the silence of God in the face of evil. This very important question is one that people have asked in our day, when millions of people were killed in Nazi concentration camps. As God tells Habakkuk, the answer lies in faith: "The just man, because of his faith, shall live" (*Habakkuk* 2:4). Human beings live in time and only see a small part of God's plan. God lives in eternity where his pure eyes see everything from the beginning to the end of time. One day, everything will become clear to us. We will see things as God sees them, and we will understand. Until then "we walk faith, not by sight" as Paul the apostle wrote in *2 Corinthians* 5:7. Jesus told his followers: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (*John* 8:12). As people of faith, we must trust in God and follow Jesus who is like a lighthouse on a dark and foggy seacoast.

## • Outline of Habbakuk

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Chapter 1 (The Prophet Complains to God)  
Chapter 2 (God Gives an Answer)  
Chapter 3 (The Prophet's Song of Praise)

## • Passages to Read

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Read all of *Habakkuk*.

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Are you not from eternity, O LORD,  
my holy God, immortal?" (Habakkuk 1:12).*

We are from time, you are from eternity. Hold us in your hand and keep us faithful to you, God.

*"I will stand at my guard post...  
And keep watch to see what he will say to me" (Habakkuk 2:1).*

Keep us strong and faithful in prayer, even when it is hard to be patient, Lord.

*"For the vision still has its time...  
If it delays wait for it" (Habakkuk 2:3).*

Help me to be patient when justice seems to far away, Lord!

*"Woe to him who builds a city by bloodshed" (Habakkuk 2:12).*  
Save us by the innocent blood of Jesus, God.

## Habakkuk Study Page

Question 1. *“How long, O LORD? I cry for help  
but you do not listen!” (Habakkuk 1:2).*

Have you ever felt that God was not listening to your prayers?

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Question 2. *“For a work is being done in your days  
that you would not have believed, were it told” (Habakkuk 1:5).*

Is it possible that we do not always see how God answers our prayers?  
Could it be that his answer is not the one we wanted, or when we expected it?

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Question 3. *“The just man, because of his faith, shall live” (Habakkuk 2:4).*  
Why are these words so important in the New Testament? (Read Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11).

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Question 4. *“The LORD is in his holy temple;  
silence before him, all the earth!” (Habakkuk 2:20).*

Is there a time when words fail to describe God? Is silence before God also a way to pray?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Habakkuk:*

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## ZEPHANIAH

### • History

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Zephaniah the prophet lived while Josiah was king of Judah (640 to 609 B.C.). Josiah became king at a very young age, and received spiritual guidance from Zephaniah. Before then, Josiah's father and grandfather had a bad influence on the nation. They made deals with the Assyrians, supplying them with troops and money. Besides that, worship of pagan gods became popular throughout the country and even in Jerusalem. As a result, belief in the one, true God was being threatened. If the words of Zephaniah seem frightening, they are meant to be. They are like the scream of a mother when her child is in danger of falling from a high cliff. Zephaniah used the strongest words possible to warn other nations and his own people that they were on the edge of disaster if they did not repent and return to worship of God alone. He foretold that a very serious time of doom and judgment was near, unless the people came to their senses and repented. He gives praise to the poor and powerless as specially beloved by God (*Zephaniah* 3:12-13). It is easy for human beings to hide their faults, even from themselves. Like the other prophets, Zephaniah helped the people take a good look at their lives and see where they had gone wrong. In *Zephaniah* 3:14-20 the prophet foretold a time when God would bless his people. Many parts of this passage can be used to describe the coming of Jesus also.

### • Outline of Zephaniah

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Chapter 1: A Day of Doom Is Near  
Chapter 2: Israel's Neighbors Will Be Judged  
Chapter 3: God Will Spare Part of the People

### • Passages to Read

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Read all of *Zephaniah*.

### • Thoughts for Prayer

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*"Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth" (Zephaniah 2:3).*  
There is no other road except humility that leads to you, Lord.

*"Seek justice, seek humility,  
perhaps you may be sheltered  
on the day of the LORD's anger" (Zephaniah 2: 3).*

Not by our words, but by our deeds do we prove our love for you, God.

*"Morning after morning he renders judgment,  
unfailingly, at dawn" (Zephaniah 3:5).*

Every day, especially when we have failed, we turn our hearts to you, Lord.

## Zephaniah Study Page

Question 1. *"The LORD their God shall visit them  
and bring about their restoration" (Zephaniah 2:7).*

What are God's blessings that come to us when other people visit us?

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Question 2. *"She hears no voice,  
accepts no correction.  
In the LORD she has not trusted,  
to her God she has not drawn near" (Zephaniah 3:2).*

How do we block God's grace and action in our lives?

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Question 3. *"I will save the lame,  
and assemble the outcasts;  
I will give them praise and renown  
in all the earth, when I bring about their restoration" (Zephaniah 3:19).*

Although locked up and away from society, can inmates to find favor in God's eyes?

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Question 4. *"I said, 'Surely now you will fear me,  
you will accept correction' " (Zephaniah 3:7).*

How can living behind bars be turned into a chance to change for good?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Zephaniah:*

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## The Bible and Social Teaching

The bible is a guide for our lives. It teaches us how to live with God, our fellow human beings, and all other creatures including the earth itself. God created all things to be part of his plan. The Catholic church recognizes seven basic *social* teachings that are found in the bible. Read and pray over the following teachings and the bible passages that shed light on them. By exploring the bible you may find more passages.

### 1. The Dignity of the Human Person

Every human decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the life and dignity of the human person.

*“Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ ” (Genesis 1:26).*

### 2. The Call to Family and Community Participation

Human dignity can be realized and protected only in the community.

*“They shall be my people, and I will be their God. One heart and one way I will give them, that they may fear me always, to their own good and that of their children after them. I will make them an eternal covenant, never to cease doing good to them” (Jeremiah 32:38-40).*

### 3. Human Rights and Responsibilities

Catholic social teaching recognizes three sets of rights: the right to life (including food and shelter), economic rights (including education and employment), and political and cultural rights (including religious freedom). With rights come responsibilities to others, to our families, and to the common good of all.

*“If he holds off from evildoing, judges fairly between a man and his opponent; if he lives by my statutes and is careful to observe my ordinances, that man is virtuous—he shall surely live, says the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 18:8-9).*

### 4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

All members of society and society as a whole have a special obligation to poor and vulnerable persons. God’s covenant includes a special concern for these persons.

*Defend the lowly and fatherless,  
render justice to the afflicted and the needy.  
Rescue the lowly and the poor,  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:3).*

### 5. The Dignity and Rights of Workers

Human dignity finds special expression in the dignity of work and in the rights of workers. Through work we participate in creation. Workers have rights to just wages, rest, and fair working conditions.

*“The laborer deserves his payment” (Luke 10:7).*

### 6. Solidarity

We are called to global solidarity. We are one human family regardless of national, racial, ethnic, gender, economic, or political boundaries. Global solidarity means concern for world peace and international well-being.

*“Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:50).*

### 7. Care for God’s Creation

Our faith calls us to be good stewards of the earth and all its creatures.

*“How varied are your works, LORD!  
In wisdom you have wrought them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures” (Psalm 104:24).*





# HAGGAI

## • History

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The meaning of the name *Haggai* is not known. It may mean “*festival*” in Hebrew. The prophet Haggai lived when Nehemiah and Ezra were leaders, and was mentioned a few times in the book of *Ezra*. At that time he also worked with another prophet, *Zechariah*. His preaching took place in 520 B.C. After the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians, the Jewish people were allowed to return to their homeland. The people were busy building their homes, markets, and government buildings, but lost interest in the temple. Only the foundation of the new temple was finished. Through Haggai, God reminded the people to restore his house too:

*“Because my house lies in ruins,  
while each of you hurries to his own house” (Haggai 1:9).*

Haggai encouraged Zerubbabel and the high priest, to organize the people and finish the job:

*“Who is left among you  
that saw this house in its former glory?...  
Greater will be the future glory of this house” (Haggai 2:3, 9).*

Haggai showed how a prophet sometimes acts like the coach of a team. He stirred up their spirit and convinced them that they could do even more than they were doing. Because of his words the leaders and people began to work on the temple and finished it in less than five years. Haggai’s message can be helpful in our day when the church is going through a very hard spiritual trial. As God’s dwelling place among his people, the christian community also needs to be rebuilt on a strong, spiritual foundation.

## • Outline of Haggai

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Chapter 1 (A Call to Rebuild the Temple)  
Chapter 2:1-9 (Future Glory of the Temple)  
Chapter 2:10-14 (Who May Worship)

Chapter 2:15-19 (The Blessings from God)  
Chapter 2: 20-23 (A Message to Zerubbabel)

## • Passages to Read

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Read all of *Haggai*.

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“My spirit continues in your midst;  
do not fear!” (Haggai 2:5).*

In every place and time, your Spirit is with us to help us, Lord.

*“And take courage, all you people of the land,  
says the LORD, and work!  
For I am with you...” (Haggai 2:4).*

Help us, as temples of your Spirit, to believe in you and carry out your will, God.

*“In this place I will give you peace” (Haggai 2:9).*  
Your peace in our hearts and lives is possible here and now, Lord.

## Haggai Study Page

Question 1. *“Because my house lies in ruins,  
while each of you hurries to his own house” (Haggai 1:9).*

Do we sometimes forget to put God first while we are busy with our own lives?

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Question 2. *“I struck you in all the works of your hands,...  
yet you did not return to me” (Haggai 2:17).*

How can our failures be a time of change and lead us back to God?

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Question 3. *“And I will set you as a signet ring;  
for I have chosen you...” (Haggai 2:23).*

In the old days, people sealed their letters with wax and pressed their ring into it to show that it came from them. How can God use us as his *signet* ring? Do our words and acts represent him?

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Question 4. *“Greater will be the future glory of this house” (Haggai 2:9).*  
Can God take our old selves and change us into someone new?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Haggai:*

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# ZECHARIAH

## • History

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This book is named after Zechariah which means “*God remembers*” in Hebrew. Zechariah was born in Babylon and belonged to a family of priests. When the Jews returned from Babylon, his grandfather brought Zechariah with him to their homeland. He began serving as a prophet with Haggai in 520 B.C. Much of what he wrote is *apocalyptic*, that is, filled with visions, symbols, and predictions concerning the “*day of the Lord.*” It was written to remind the people that rebuilding their lives should include “*kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress...the poor; do not plot evil against one another in your hearts*” (7:9-10). However, some of the writings in this book (Chapters 9 to 14) may have been added in his name long after he died. The details of his death are not known, although speaking the truth is often a dangerous job. He was the prophet *Zecharias* that Jesus described as “*murdered between the sanctuary and altar*” in *Matthew 23:35*. The book of *Zechariah* has several passages that the first Christians saw as pointing to the suffering and death of Jesus. They are as follows:

*“See, your king shall come to you,  
a just savior is he,  
Meek, and riding on an ass” (Zechariah 9: 9).*

*“I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the LORD” (11:13),  
“They shall look on him whom they have thrust through” (12:10), and, “On that day there shall be  
opened...a fountain to purify from sin and uncleanness” (13:1).*

## • Outline of Zechariah

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Chapters 1 to 6 (Zechariah Has Eight Night Visions)  
Chapters 7 to 8 (God Gives Zechariah Four Messages)  
Chapters 9 to 14 (The Two Burdens)

## • Passages to Read

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What true fasting means (Chapter 7)  
A vision of God’s blessings for the new Jerusalem (Chapter 8)

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“Just as you were a curse among the nations,... so will I save you that you may be a blessing”  
(Zechariah 8:13).* You can use our mistakes to help change others around us, God.

*“People will live in Jerusalem as though in open country” (Zechariah 2:8).*  
You make room for everyone to live and breathe in your kingdom, Lord.

*“They shall be as though I had never cast them off” (Zechariah 10:6).*  
Help us learn from our mistakes, but keep the past from dragging us down, God.

*“On that day the LORD shall be the only one, and his name the only one” (Zechariah 14:9).*  
When this world ends and your kingdom comes, You alone will be our home, Lord.

## Zechariah Study Page

Question 1. *“Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” (Zechariah 8:23).*  
Those who love God are drawn to one another to form a community.

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Question 2. *“Take off his filthy garments, and clothe him in festal garments” (Zechariah 3:4).*  
How does it feel when God welcomes us home like the prodigal son? (Compare with *Luke 15:22*).

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Question 3. *“They made their hearts diamondhard so as not to hear the teaching and the message that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit” (Zechariah 7:12).* How do we shut God out of our hearts?

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Question 4. *“I will be for her an encircling wall of fire” (Zechariah 2:9).*  
How is God’s love like a protecting shield, once we have taken all our guilt to him?

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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Zechariah:*

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# MALACHI

## • History

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*Malachi* means “my messenger” in Hebrew. It is not known if this is a name or simply words that describe the prophet, as in Chapter 3:1: “Lo, I am sending my messenger/...before me.” Jesus used these same words to describe John the Baptist who prepared the people for his coming as the savior (*Mark* 1:2-8). This book was written after 515 B.C. and the rebuilding of the temple. The book of Malachi is written as a *dialogue*, that is, like a talk between God and the people. In this dialogue, God and the people ask questions and give answers to one another. For example, the people ask questions like: “How have you loved us?” (1:2) or “How have we despised your name?” (1:6). God asks: “Will he welcome any of you?” (1:9) or “Shall I accept it from your hands?” (1:13). Jesus also used this dialogue method when describing the final judgment would be like: “Lord, when did we see you hungry...or thirsty...ill or in prison?” (*Matthew* 25:37-45). The teaching of Jesus about marriage in *Matthew* 19:3-12 also follow the words of *Malachi* 2:14-16. Malachi saw that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah had been ignored. Even the priests were not spiritual leaders. Malachi was disappointed in the religious and everyday life of the people. He told the leaders and people that things should be better between themselves and God, and that God had a covenant with them. They should live up to their part of that agreement by offering the best of their animals and food as sacrifices to God, not spoiled food or sick animals. They also should stop robbing the workers of their wages, lying in court, divorce, taking what belongs to widows and orphans, and going to fortune tellers. *Malachi* describes God as a father who is disappointed in his children:

*“If I am a father,  
where is the honor due to me?” (Malachi 1:6).*

## • Outline of Malachi

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Chapters 1 to 2 (The Sins of the Priests and the People)  
Chapters 3 (The Judgment and Compassion of God)

## • Passages to Read

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Read all the chapters of *Malachi*.

## • Thoughts for Prayer

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*“If I am a father,  
where is the honor due to me?” (Malachi 1:6).*

Even if we have no earthly parent to rely on, we rely on you, Lord.

*“From the rising of the sun, even to its setting...  
And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name” (Malachi 1:11).*

With all the Masses offered throughout the world, we offer you praise and thanks, God.

*“Surely I, the LORD, do not change,  
nor do you cease to be sons” (Malachi 3:6).*

In you we find love that never changes, Lord.

## Malachi Study Page

Question 1. *“Have we not all one Father?  
Has not the one God created us?” (Malachi 2:10).*

As we look around us at those who live with us, do we see them as God sees them?

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Question 2. *“I have loved you, says the LORD,  
but you say: ‘How have you loved us?’ ” (Malachi 1:2).*

What makes us doubt that God loves us? Is it God or what others do?

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Question 3. *“You have said: ‘It is vain to serve God,  
and what do we profit by keeping his command?’ ” (Malachi 3:14).*

What does the question of Jesus mean: *“What profit is there for one to gain  
the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mark 8:36).*

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Question 4. *“Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven,  
to pour down blessing upon you without measure?” (Malachi 3:10).*

Is eternal life only in heaven, or does it begin now?

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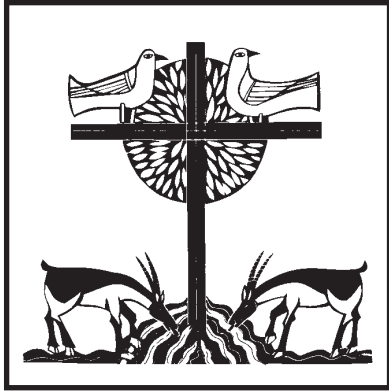
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*Please write down any other thoughts you may have about the Book of Malachi:*

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## PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE

“...from your delightful stream you give them to drink.  
For with you is the fountain of life” (Psalm 36:9-10).

When we turn to the prayers of the bible, we truly are praying in the Spirit, because the bible is the inspired Word of God. Not only are they beautiful prayers written a long time ago, but they are still full of meaning for people today. Another reason they are special is because they were known and used by Jesus and the apostles. Remember, Jesus and the apostles were Jews, so they turned to the writings of Old Testament to inspire them and help them pray. The

prayers of the New Testament are a great treasure because they were given to us by Jesus, Mary, and the apostles themselves. We have their own words to teach us how to pray.

### Prayers of the Old Testament

Prayer of Moses (*Exodus 15:2-18*)

Prayers from Selected Psalms

*Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143*: The Seven Penitential Psalms

*Psalm 22*: The cry of Jesus on the cross

*Psalm 23*: God our shepherd

*Psalm 25*: God our help

*Psalm 27*: Trust in God

*Psalm 34, 121*: God our protector

*Psalm 40*: Doing God's will

*Psalm 42, 63, 84*: Longing for God

*Psalm 62*: Trust in God alone

*Psalm 90* Time and eternity

*Psalm 96*: Praise for God's glory

*Psalm 103*: Praise for God's goodness

*Psalm 130*: A prayer for pardon

*Psalm 139*: God sees and knows us

*Psalm 142*: Prayer of a prisoner

*Psalms 148, 150*: Praising God

Prayer of Judith (*Judith 16:1-2 and 13-16*)

Prayer of gratitude (*Isaiah 12:1-6*)

Prayer of deliverance from evil (*Sirach 51:1-12*)

### Prayers of the New Testament

Prayer of Mary (*Luke 1:45-55*)

Prayer of Zechariah (*Luke 1:68-79*)

Prayer of Simeon (*Luke 2:29-32*)

Lord's Prayer (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

Prayer of Jesus at the last supper (*John 17:1-26*)

Prayer of Jesus in agony (*Matthew 26:39,42*)

Prayer of Jesus on the cross (*Luke 23:46*)

Prayer of Consolation (*2 Corinthians 1:3-4*)

Prayer of God's blessing (*Ephesians 1:3-6*)

Prayer for others (*Ephesians 3:14-21*)

Prayer for fellow Christians (*Ephesians 6:23-24*)

Prayer of new birth (*1 Peter 1:3-5*)

Prayer of praise (*Jude 24-25*)

# The Holy Land in the Old Testament







## REVIEW TEST

### Part Two: A-The Wisdom Books

*After completing all the test pages, review and correct them with the study coordinator.  
Be sure to put your name and ID number on each test page.*

1. Five examples of wisdom books are *poetry, drama, songs of worship, sayings and sacred rituals*. (Circle one) True False
2. List the 7 names of the wisdom books: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which book is a collection of worship songs? \_\_\_\_\_
4. *Song of Songs* is a long poem describing the 12 tribes of Israel. True or False (Circle one)
5. Give one of the age-old questions of the human race: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Which book tries to explain why good people suffer: \_\_\_\_\_
7. “*All wisdom comes from experience*” says the book of *Sirach*. True or False (Circle one)
8. According to the bible what is “*the beginning of wisdom*”? \_\_\_\_\_
9. A wise person is one who knows how to live with God and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. One of the most famous authors of the *Psalms* was \_\_\_\_\_
11. Jesus never prayed the *Psalms*. (Circle one) True False
12. The *Psalms* are arranged into how many groups or books? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the basic message of *Proverbs*? \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Which wisdom book teaches “*All is vanity*”? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Which book is a collection of love songs? \_\_\_\_\_
16. In the Bible the love of a bride and bridegroom is used as a symbol of God’s love for \_\_\_\_\_.
17. What Greek word is used to describe the scattering of the Jewish people outside their homeland?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
18. The author of *Wisdom* uses a device called “personification.”  
What does this mean? \_\_\_\_\_
19. Chapter 2 of *Wisdom* teaches that “God formed man to be \_\_\_\_\_.”
20. What is the last of the wisdom books called? \_\_\_\_\_



## REVIEW TEST

### Part Two: B-The Prophetic Books

After completing all the test pages, review and correct them with the study coordinator.

Be sure to put your name and ID number on each test page.

1. There are 25 prophetic books. True or False (Circle one)
2. In general the prophets were not people who predicted the future. They were called by God to serve as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What words did the prophets often use to begin their sermons or speeches?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Some prophets *did* predict what would happen in the future. True or False (Circle one)
5. The prophets warned the leaders and people about their future if they did not stop their \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The prophets presented their message in words and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. What did the yoke around Jeremiah's neck stand for? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What did the book of Daniel use to remind the people of God's concern for them?  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
9. According to the prophets who needed special care?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What does the Catholic church call God's concern for the weak and the poor?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Which prophet described the messiah as the *suffering servant*? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Who tried to tell God he was too young to be a prophet? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Jeremiah was thrown into a deep well and left to die. (Circle one) True False
14. \_\_\_\_\_ is a collection of 5 poems that express the grief and suffering of the nation.
15. Which prophet said that false gods are "*like a scarecrow that is no protection*"? \_\_\_\_\_
16. What was the meaning of Ezekiel's vision of dry bones? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Although *Daniel* is a prophetic book is also an example of \_\_\_\_\_ writing.
18. Following the example of *Hosea* Jesus referred to himself as the \_\_\_\_\_ of his people.
19. In the *Acts 2* who reminded the crowd in Jerusalem about the prophecy of Joel? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Which prophetic book whose name means "*my messenger*" is written as a dialogue? \_\_\_\_\_

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