

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry 2
Week 9 – Old Testament Poetry and Wisdom

Editors' note:

- *Italics (lower case or ALL CAPS) show what students should write in their student outline.*
- **Bold (including bold italics and bold ALL CAPS) shows what appears in the student outline.**
- Regular text is used for lecture notes; ALL CAPS are used for emphasis.

Old Testament Poetry and Wisdom

This part of the Bible includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. These books are grouped together in our Old Testament and are part of the “writings”¹ in the Hebrew Bible. Here is a very rough summary of what each book addresses:

- **Job – making sense of undeserved suffering.**
- **Psalms – honest prayer and praise to God.**
- **Proverbs – the value of true wisdom based on the fear of God.**
- **Ecclesiastes – the possibility of finding meaning and significance during our short life on earth.**
- **Song of Songs – celebrating love between husband and wife.**

Despite containing diverse material, these books do share some **common features**:

- *They are all reflective.* For the most part, they don't advance the story of the Bible, but rather look back on what God has said and done and the implications of his words and actions for our lives. Sometimes God's nature, truth and actions in history are considered to answer difficult questions; other times they form the basis for wise living or praising him. Whatever the case, these books contain some of the most moving and powerful material in the Bible. It is an area we hope you don't neglect in your own reading!
- *They form a whole.* A common error when reading the wisdom books is to read bits and pieces, and miss their overall message. They also should to be read together and considered in light of each other. Reading about Job's suffering puts the optimistic wisdom of Proverbs in perspective. The exaltation of marital sex found in Song of Solomon is tempered by

¹ Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

Ecclesiastes' warning not to live for sex. Keep this in mind as you do your daily Bible reading.

In this lecture, we will give you general advice and a framework for reading Psalms and Proverbs. We've also supplied a handout on Ecclesiastes and Job. Make it a goal over the next year to become familiar with each of these books so you can read each one in light of the others.

- *They are all written in poetic form.* Other genres of the Bible contain poems (e.g. Exodus 15:1-18), but these books showcase the use of Hebrew poetry.

Key features of Hebrew poetry

Hebrew poetry has neither rhyme nor meter which are both common in English poetry. Instead, Hebrew poetry “rhymes ideas” through the use of parallelism. It also emphasizes ideas with repetition, and illustrates concepts through the use of imagery. Instructors: You may want to students to refer to the homework they completed for this class as you go through this section.

1. Parallelism

Parallelism is a term used to describe the comparison of identical, similar or related ideas. Two lines in a line of Hebrew poetry may say the same thing using different sets of words, or they may contrast each other, or build on one another. Understanding the parallel structure of Hebrew poetry will help you explore the depth of meaning in each verse.

There are three basic types of parallelism:

a. Synonymous parallelism. The second or subsequent line repeats or reinforces the sense of the first line.

**“For he satisfies the thirsty
and he fills the hungry with good things.” – Psalm 107:9**

b. Antithetical parallelism. The second or subsequent line contrasts the thought of the first.

**“A wise son brings joy to his father,
but a foolish son grief to his mother.” – Proverbs 10:1**

c. Synthetic parallelism: The second or subsequent line provides more information about or completes the thought in the first line.

“Blessed is the man

**who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of scoffers.” – Ps. 1:1**

Notice how each line advances the meaning of what is being said. The verbs “walk,” “stand” and “sit” show the gradual progression of the wicked man—he moves from a casual to a settled relationship with sin.²

Implication for the reader: We live in a sound-bite culture. Listeners demand communication that is quick and succinct. But *Parallelism* forces the reader to circle back to a concept again and again, which *encourages reflection and deepens meaning*. Learn to TAKE YOUR TIME when reading the Psalms. THINK about what you’re reading and what the author is trying to say.

“Some people never learn anything because they understand everything too soon.” – Alexander Pope

2. Repetition

Another key feature of Hebrew poetry is REPETITION. Like modern songs, many Psalms have a “refrain” or repeated phrase that emphasizes key ideas. Did you notice the repeated phrases in Psalm 107? Here’s one:

“Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.” – Psalm 107:8,15,21,31

Implication for the reader: Modern readers are often annoyed with repetition. They wonder, “Why is the author telling me something I already know?” But repetition is an important tool the psalmists use to help reiterate the main point of the Psalm. *Repetition helps readers identify key emphases that God is trying to communicate.*

3. Imagery

Imagery involves the use of word pictures that help explain or illustrate the point the author is trying to make.

**“As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for Thee, O God.” – Psalm 42:1**

“I will say to God my rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me?’” – Psalm 42:9

² Tremper Longman, *Reading the Bible With Heart and Mind* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988) p. 133.

Through the use of parallelism, repetition, and imagery, Hebrew poetry communicates spiritual truths in a memorable way that evokes an emotional response. Let's **compare** two different accounts of Israel's miraculous escape from Egypt through the Red Sea, one written as a **narrative and** the other in **poetry**:

Exodus 14:26-31; Exodus 15:1-5

Moses' narrative lacks the life and color found in his poem. His poem places powerful images side by side and stirs the emotions of the reader. It informs our intellect but also speaks to our heart.

Following God is more than an exchange of ideas or adherence to a set of practices. A variety of emotions are present in any healthy relationship. Through poetry, we enter into the heart of God and experience the emotional highs and lows of people who have tried to follow him in the past.

Psalms

This is probably the most popular book in the Old Testament. The Psalms relate every aspect of the human experience to our relationship with God in emotional language that deeply resonates with readers.

What are the Psalms?

- *A book of songs.*

“Here we have one hundred fifty separate poems, constituting a book that functioned as the hymnbook of the Old Testament people of God.”³

The New Testament urges us to learn and sing/speak these Psalms to us as a key way to set our minds on God and His provision (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
How are you doing this?

Why are scriptural songs important? Songs make the lyrics (content) easy to remember, and the melody can affect our hearts.

Different Kinds of Psalms

Instructors: Refer students to the handout titled, *Kinds of Psalms*, but don't go over it

³ Tremper Longman, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 130.

in class. Cover each of kind of Psalm below as time permits.

We can't study all 150 of the Psalms, but we can expose you to a few different kinds of Psalms and provide you with some simple tools for studying them.

If you read 5 scholars on this topic, you'll get 7 opinions on how to classify the Psalms. Some Psalms will fit in the categories on the *Kinds of Psalms* handout, some may be a mixture of these categories, and some may not fit neatly in any category.

Almost all of the Psalms are prayers to God. As such, they teach us different aspects of a healthy prayer life. We will cover the two aspects that are most frequent.

Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving

Structure:

Praise and thanksgiving are similar ideas. When we PRAISE someone, we extol their positive attributes (e.g. she is good listener, honest, trustworthy, patient). We THANK someone by expressing gratitude for their past actions. In the Psalms, writers praise God for WHO HE IS and thank him for WHAT HE HAS DONE.

Psalms of praise and gratitude typically have a simple structure:

- **A call to praise or thank God. (IMPERATIVE)**

(Psalm 103:1) "Bless (praise – NLT, NIV) the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name." (103:1)

- **An explanation of why God should be praised or thanked. (INDICATIVE)**
 - **Because he cares for the oppressed (103:6).**
 - **Because he is compassionate and gracious (103:8).**
 - **Because he is sovereign and rules over all (103:19).**
- **Conclusion – usually a word of praise or closing command. (IMPERATIVE)**

(Psalm 103:22) "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

The importance of thanksgiving:

Gratitude is a key emphasis in the Psalms and repeatedly commanded

throughout the Bible:

(Psalm 95:2) “Let us come before his presence with *thanksgiving*, let us shout joyfully to him with Psalms.”

(Psalm 107:1) “Oh *give thanks* to the Lord, for He is good, for his lovingkindness is everlasting.”

(1 Chronicles 16:8) “Oh *give thanks* to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples.”

(Colossians 3:15) “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and *be thankful*.”

(Hebrews 12:28) “Therefore, since we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us *show gratitude*, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe...”

Most Christians would agree God has given us good reason to be grateful, but maintaining a grateful attitude is difficult to do. We are continually exposed to advertising designed to make us discontent:

(Ray Locke) "Next to Christianity, advertising is the greatest force in the world. And I say that without sacrilege or disrespect. Advertising makes people discontented. It makes them want things they don't have."⁴

We also tend to compare our station in life with that of people around us. And when we come up short, we experience powerful feelings of discontent.

The result is that we tend to ignore the many ways God has blessed us and instead judge his goodness on one or two very narrow criteria (a.k.a. idols) that are important to us. Will he give me the job, relationship, etc. that I want?

It's very typical for people (especially overfed, wealthy, and coddled Americans!) to be ungrateful. Do you remember the story in Luke 17 where Jesus heals 10 lepers? Only one of them returned to thank him. How typical of us.

An ungrateful Christian is an absurdity in many ways. We have so much to be thankful for. But more than that, ingratitude is a sign of

⁴ Former advertising executive Ray Locke quoted in *Selling Discontent* by Anna White in the New American Dream a web magazine located at <http://www.newdream.org/newsletter/discontent.php>.

sickness—a spiritual cancer that can be very destructive. In Romans 1:18 ff, Paul describes how a seed of ingratitude (“they did not honor God or give him thanks”) eventually grew into rebellion and corruption.

Gratitude is an area we all need to grow in, and there is much to learn in the Psalms. Learning to be grateful, to express our gratitude, and to model it before others is essential for own spiritual health and fruitfulness.

Application:

1. *Cultivate gratitude in your own life.*

Here is a practical suggestion modeled after Psalm 107. You could remember and meditate upon God’s awesome deeds in your own life. Block out some time to sit down and reflect on what God has done for you. Write each “wonderful deed” down. Ask yourself where your life would be if God had not intervened.

Develop practical ways to practice thanksgiving (GIVE PERSONAL EXAMPLES.

Recommend DeMoss, *Choosing Gratitude* for help in this area (see p. 17 for a good quote on this).

2. *Let gratitude for God’s grace be your main motivation for service.*

See Rom. 12:1ff., which states this principle.

(J. I. Packer) “(The cross) is the measure of the goodness of God; lay it to heart. Ask yourself the Psalmist’s question – ‘What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?’ See grace to give this answer – ‘I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord... O Lord, truly I am thy servant... I will pay vows unto the Lord now...’ (Psalm 116:12ff.)”⁵

Effective service is deeply rooted in heartfelt gratitude—especially for what God has given us through Christ. As we learn how to be grateful from studying and applying the Psalms, we’ll find fuel and motivation for ministry.

⁵ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1977) p. 150.

Be careful not to over-emphasize gratitude for temporal blessings (e.g., health; good job; children doing well) and under-emphasize gratitude for spiritual blessings. Temporal blessings come and go, but spiritual blessings (cf. Eph. 1:3-14) are permanent and meet our deepest needs!

3. *Cultivate gratitude in your home church.*

God's love and desire to bless us cultivates gratitude in our own hearts. But how can you act in a way that provokes gratitude in the lives of people in your home church?

- Give without expectations. (Luke 6:35-36)
- Express thanksgiving to God around people in your group in an open and unrestrained way.
- Help them see how God is at work in their lives, especially during low points.
- Challenge them to thank God for what he has done for other people. Challenge chronic complaint and negativity as a spiritual problem.
- Thank and praise people who are consistently thankful.

The importance of praise:

We are also commanded to PRAISE God throughout the Bible:

(Psalm 29:2) “Give honor to the Lord for the glory of his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.”

(Psalm 135:1) “Praise the LORD. Praise the name of the LORD; praise him, you servants of the LORD...”

(Hebrews 13:5) “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.”

But **why would God be so intent on receiving praise from us?** Is he insecure? Did he create creatures and demand praise from them because he needs to be liked and valued? If he doesn't command us to praise him because he needs it, why should we praise him?

1. *Because God deserves it.*

**“For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.**

**For all the gods of the nations are idols,
 but the LORD made the heavens.
 Splendor and majesty are before him;
 strength and joy in his dwelling place.
 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations,
 ascribe to the LORD glory and strength,
 ascribe to the LORD the glory due his
 name.”
 – 1 Chronicles 16:25-29**

Praise is sane because it corresponds to reality. Praise is a true estimation of God’s value. Praise is appropriate because God is worthy of praise! To not praise him is to deny this fact. There is a certain insanity in the life of a Christian who does not regularly praise God. He or she must be deluded or indifferent to who God really is.

2. *Because it benefits US.*

(C. S. Lewis) “I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation... the delight is incomplete till it is expressed... the worthier the object the more intense this delight would be . . . To fully enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him..”⁶

If you’ve ever seen an excellent movie, read a good book, or just come back from a great vacation, you know that Lewis is right. Without someone to share our experience with, our joy is incomplete.

Through praise, God is helping us learn to enjoy him.

3. *Because our praise is a sign of our own maturity.*

We don’t ask our children to be grateful in order to validate our role in their life or to feed our ego needs. We’re delighted when they are grateful because it shows that they’ve become less self-centered and more aware of the contribution that others make.

⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York, New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1986), pp. 95-97.

4. Because praise “makes God big” and shrinks our problems and fears.

Whatever you focus on grows. The more you focus on your problems and the objects of your fears, the more formidable they appear and the more impotent God seems. But the more you focus on who God is (as revealed by the Bible), the more He fills your spiritual field of vision. This cuts your problems and fears down to size. Praising God proactively (not just when you are afraid) makes you more resilient when problems arise.

Application:

1. Choose a psalm filled with praise and pattern your own prayer after it. Every time you see the psalmist praising God, express that same thought in your own words. Tell God how awesome he is, how good he is, how faithful he is. Say it out loud because it’s true. Say it because it ought to be said. **RECITE & EXPLAIN A PSALM THAT YOU USE FOR THIS PURPOSE**

2. Praise God together in your home group prayer meeting. Some groups exclusively focus on praising God during a portion of their prayer meeting. This boosts everyone’s confidence in God and fosters a profound sense of unity.

3. Start your own time of prayer with praise. Praising God helps us remember *who* we are praying to. As we appreciate God’s qualities (his goodness, faithfulness, sovereignty, etc.) we draw strength from him. If we start with praise, our petitions will more likely be an exercise in faith and not just an expression of our anxieties.

Psalms of Lament

A lament is an expression of sorrow or grief. Lament Psalms are the most common type of Psalm, perhaps because it is so important to know how to go to God when we are suffering. They tell God how they really feel, assuming that God wants honesty, not pretense when we communicate with him. They are often filled with powerful reminders of why we should set our hope on God because the psalmist is often struggling to affirm what is true in the midst of great pain.

Structure: Psalms of lament usually follow a predictable structure

- **Address to God**
- **Complaint**
- **Request for help**

- **Expression of trust / vow to praise**

Psalm 42 & 43

Let's use Psalm 42 and 43 as an example to study this type of Psalm. Psalm 42 & 43 are **meant to be read together as one Psalm**. Note how the repeated refrains connect them:

- 42:5 "...put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him..."
- 42:11 "...put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him..."
- 43:5 "...put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him..."

Psalmists often use refrains to draw our attention to their main point.

Importance and Application

(Athanasius) "Most of the Bible speaks to us. The Psalms speak for us."⁷

Psalms of Lament give us words to express our own experiences with God. We see inspired authors grappling with their emotions as they talk with God about their disappointments, dreams, and failures. Listening to their words helps us find our own.

1. *God wants us to come to him for help.*

Look at the psalmist doing this in Psalm 42:1,2; 43:1,3! He understands that God is life itself and yearns for him.

We turn to many things for comfort in a time of despair: shopping, eating, escaping into books, movies, video games, etc. Of course, none of these pursuits are wrong in and of themselves, but they are an empty place to seek solace and refuge.

Escaping from our problems is a legitimate desire. C. S. Lewis used to joke that the usual enemies of escape are jailors. God wants to set us free, but too often we turn to other solutions that lead to further bondage. The Psalmists remind us to place our hope in God:

(Psalm 121:1-2) "I lift my eyes to the hills- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."

⁷ Athanasius was Bishop of Alexandria (297-373 A.D.).

2. God wants us to relate *honestly* with him.

Nearly all the Psalms involve an honest interaction with God. Look at the range of emotions expressed in these verses:

Reverence and respect: (Psalm 5:7) “But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence I will bow down toward your holy temple.”

Shame: (Psalm 44:15a) “My disgrace is before me all day long and my face is covered with shame....”

Anger: (Psalm 109:9-10) “May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow, May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from ruined homes.”

Sorrow: (Psalm 6:6) “I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.”

Doubt: (Psalm 73:3-5) “I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles....Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure; in vain I have washed my hands in innocence.”

See how the Psalmist does this in P. 42:3,4,9,10; 43:2.

This short sampling only scratches the surface of the deep emotions found in the Psalms.

God knows what is going on in your heart. Are you willing to be undignified in prayer and tell God how you really feel?

What does this kind of prayer communicate about who God is and the type of relationship he wants to have with us?

We hope your exposure to the Psalms will help you be less inhibited when you pray. God wants to hear about your anxiety, hopes and dreams, frustrations, desires, anger, joy and disappointments.

3. God wants us to affirm what is true, even in the midst of pain.

While it is necessary and essential to honestly communicate our

feelings to God, we also need to affirm what God says is true. The psalmists are very emotional, but they also teach us how to submit our emotions to truth in God's Word.

For example, in Psalm 42 and 43, we see the repeated refrain:

**(Psalm 42:5) “Why are you in despair, O my soul?
Why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him.
For the help of his presence.”**

The author questions himself and challenges his state of despair: “WHY are you in despair?” Then he focuses on what is praiseworthy about God and reminds himself that God is willing to help.

The temptation to abandon God's truth arises in many situations. Through the Psalms we learn the discipline of talking to ourselves and not taking the counsel of our feelings.

Instructors: You may want to remind students of this quote used in Christian Growth

(D. M. Lloyd Jones) “The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: ‘Why are you cast down’ -- what business have you to be disquieted? ... The essence of this matter is to understand that this self or ours this other man within us, has got to be handled. Do not listen to him; turn on him; speak to him; condemn him; upbraid him; exhort him; encourage him; remind him of what you know, instead of listening placidly to him and allowing him to drag you down & depress you. For that is what he will always do if you allow him to be in control. The devil takes hold of self & uses it in order to depress us. We must stand up as this man did and say: ‘Why are you cast down? Why are you disquieted within me?’ Stop being so! ‘Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance,’ He, ‘who is the health of my countenance and my God.’”⁸

⁸ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 20,21.

4. *We should pray in a balanced way.*

Notice how the author balances requests with appreciation and complaints with expressions of confidence in God.

Proverbs

Definition of a proverb: A proverb is usually *a saying or maxim (rule of thumb) which gives insight into how to live wisely.*⁹

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings: some are fairly long (Proverbs 1-9, 31), but most are “proverbial” sayings—short, memorable statements that convey valuable nuggets of wisdom (chapters 10-30).

The purpose of the book of Proverbs: *to know and understand wisdom.*

Solomon clearly reveals his purpose for writing in **Proverbs 1:1-6**.

Today we have access to 24-hour cable news and learning channels, the internet, and books and magazines on any topic imaginable. But is the glut of information making us wise?

"Diffusion of knowledge is the dominant trend of our time... But knowledge is not the same thing as wisdom. Knowledge can produce equally powerful ways to destroy life, intentionally and unintentionally. It can produce hate and seek destruction. Knowledge does not by itself bring any answer to the ancient Greek question ‘What is a Good Life?’ It does not produce good sense, courage, generosity and tolerance. And most crucially, it does not produce the farsightedness that will allow us all to live together—and grow together—on this world without causing war, chaos and catastrophe. For that we need wisdom.”¹⁰

Learning how to drive a car doesn’t guarantee you’ll make good decisions behind the wheel. We all know well-informed people who frequently make foolish decisions.

Notice how Solomon equates wisdom with “instruction in wise *behavior*.”

⁹ *The New Inductive Study Bible: Updated New American Standard Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2000), p. 1018.

¹⁰ Fareed Zakaria, “The Earth’s Learning Curve,” *Newsweek*, Issues 2006 (see <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10206249/site/newsweek/>)

(Proverbs 1:3) Wisdom involves discernment (1:2), prudence (1:4), discretion (1:4), and understanding.

Wisdom, then, is not just the accumulation of information... wisdom is the skillful use of information.

A key concept in Proverbs: the fear of God.

(Proverbs 1:7) “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Solomon says that fearing God is the pathway to wisdom, but what does it involve?

To fear God is to *humbly entrust yourself to God and align yourself with him.* Contrast this with a dog’s fear of being punished for scattering trash all over the house.

(Proverbs 14:26) “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and his children will have refuge.”

(Proverbs 23:17) “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in the fear of the LORD always. 18 Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”

(Proverbs 8:13a) “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...”

The opposite of fearing God is *being a fool.* We use the word “fool” to refer to someone who makes stupid decisions. But a fool in the biblical sense is someone lives their life with no regard for God.

(Psalm 14:1) The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

Implication for the reader: Solomon’s emphasis on fearing God has obvious implications for the reader... Are you willing to humbly entrust yourself to God’s power and faithfulness? Do you see him as a source of truth, someone whose counsel should be heeded? Are you willing to act on his wisdom and trust him that his way is best?

The book of Proverbs assumes that we need guidance in living wisely. Solomon warns:

(Proverbs 14:12, 16:25) “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

We should search our hearts and ask, “Do I fear God?” as we read these books.

Without the fear of God, we won't benefit from the wisdom they contain.

Job's friends: an example of misusing proverbial wisdom

Job's friends are a good illustration of how proverbial wisdom can be misused in a dogmatic and callous way. They quote maxims to Job...

(Job 11:13,15) "If you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him...you will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by."

(Job 11:20) But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; their hope will become a dying gasp."

...and their implication is obvious: through his sin, Job has brought his suffering on himself. But Job's friends fail to understand the nature of these sayings. They do teach that wise living generally results in a better life. But they don't promise that good and wise people will never suffer. Taking proverbial wisdom in an absolute way was probably behind the disciple's assumption that a man's blindness is due to his sin or the sin of his parents (John 9).

Hurt and angered by their simplistic thinking, Job responds:

(Job 13:4,12a) You... smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you... your maxims are proverbs of ashes.

Don't take proverbs meant to encourage wise living and use them insensitively. With maxims, there is always an exception to the rule.

Memory Verses

Psalm 42 – Lament Psalm**

Psalm 103 – Praise God for His grace!**

Proverbs 1:7* – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”

Assignment

Study for the exam.