

- 6 *Job 21*
The paradox of God's 'justice'.
The good suffer while the wicked prosper.
Do you believe this to be true?
And, if so, why does life seem to be so often like this?
- 7 *Job 23*
The paradox of God's 'presence'.
He promises to be with us always (*e.g. Matthew 28:20*),
yet sometimes he seems so far away (*e.g. vv.8-9*).
How do you reconcile the promise with the observation?
- 8 *Job 24*
The paradox of God's '(in)action'.
Why is it that God seems to intervene (supernaturally) in
some situations, but not in others?
- 9 *Job 29*
As Job looks back to the past, he realises that his best times
were when God watched over him and by his light he walked
through darkness (*vv.2-3*).
As you look back over events in your life, what characterised
spiritually *your* 'best' times?
- 10 *chapters 30*
Day 30's notes describe CS Lewis' account of the spiral of
his feelings of grief after his wife's death.
Do you recognize this in Job's journey thus far?
What about in your own experience of bereavement or loss?

Closing Prayer

Light a candle, silently watch the flame flicker, reflect on your discussion, and pray for the wisdom and discernment to apply what you've learned in your own spiritual life.

After a few minutes, close by saying together the Lord's Prayer.

SACRED

Group Resources

Month 32

Opening Prayer

O God, we bring you our failure, our hunger,
our disappointment, our despair,
our greed, our aloofness, our loneliness.
When we cling to others in desperation,
or turn from them in fear, strengthen us in love.
Teach us, women and men, to use your power with care.

We turn to you, O God,
we renounce evil, we claim your love,
we choose to be made whole.
Amen.

(The St. Hilda Community)

General Questions

- 1 How have you found the book of *Job* so far?
- 2 As with *Revelation* last month the book certainly shakes us out of our comfort zones! It makes for tough reading! So how do you reconcile trying to live a Christian life, believing that God loves you and longs to bless you, with the reality of the experience of suffering?

Activity

Although *Job*'s example is an extreme one, the book reminds us that even the best of believers experience hardship. As Christians we try at such times to cling onto our faith with all our strength.

This month's activity requires having a supply of wooden holding crosses – carved crosses designed to fit snugly in a clasping hand. Ensure each person has a cross and invite them to hold tightly onto it, listening to some light music, and praying about any difficult situation they may be experiencing. Discuss together afterwards.

Further Ideas

Given the nature and structure of the book of Job, there is inevitably a degree of overlap across the suggested questions below. So allow the discussion to freely move around them.

- 1 *Job 1,2*
The 'conferences' between God and Satan are unique in the Bible. How do you interpret these interchanges? Do you see them as 'real' or 'allegorical' and, if the former, is this actually a one-off or do you think those kinds of conversations are a recurring feature of the spiritual realm? In any case, why did God allow Satan so much leeway and *Job* and his family so much hardship?
- 2 *Job 1,2*
Was *Job* entirely sinless (1:1,2:3)?
- 3 *Job 3 (also 9,10)*
Before we consider how the response of his friends, let's remind ourselves of where *Job* is at emotionally. Read 3:20-23; 9:28-31; 10:20-22. How do you react? Have *you* yourself ever known such feelings of utter helplessness and abandonment? How did you react then? Did your faith hold fast?
- 4 *Job 4-25*
Overall, what were the things the three friends did best as they tried to help *Job*? What were the things they did worst? What will you learn from their example in helping others?
- 5 *Job 17 (amongst other chapters)*
Are there times when *you've* really felt listened to and, if so, what do you remember the listener doing? How did it feel? Did silence play a part (see *chapter 2*)? What are *you* like at listening?