

## Today's Light Online Discussion Helps

The material here is linked to the September/October issues of *Today's Light*, a bimonthly magazine designed to lead God's people as they read through the Bible in two years.

We've tried to include enough discussion starters for about 45 minutes of study. Feel free to duplicate the questions and use them with *Today's Light* readers.

## Suggestions for Using *Today's Light* Discussion Questions

- You could gather a group of *Today's Light* readers during Sunday morning Bible class time.
- You could invite all *Today's Light* readers in your congregation to a midweek home discussion.
- You could make the questions available to all *Today's Light* readers and encourage them to partner with one or two other people over lunch once a week.

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## Today's Light September-October 2008

### September Week 1 Discussion Questions

#### September 1–7, 2 Chronicles 1–11

1. Solomon asked for wisdom when the Lord told him to “ask for whatever you want Me to give you” (2 Chronicles 1:7). Why did Solomon ask for wisdom? For what would you ask? How does your request compare with Solomon's?

2. Solomon built the temple “for the Name of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 2:1). What would that mean? Give examples of how you might do some task “for the Name of the Lord.” Include your examples in your prayers today.

List some words you would use to describe the temple and its furnishings as Solomon built it (2 Chronicles 3–4). Why did Solomon build the temple in this manner? How might Solomon's example provide a model for us in completing projects that we undertake?

3. Since the Chronicler was writing for exiles who returned from Babylon, what aspect of the description of the dedication of the temple (2 Chronicles 5) would encourage them? What encouragement does this description give you, a member of the “holy Christian church, the communion of saints” (the Apostles' Creed), for your own worship?

4. The Lord appeared to Solomon at night (2 Chronicles 7:12) to talk with Solomon about the prayer that had been offered in the temple. The Lord assured Solomon that when the people prayed, He would listen; when they confessed their sin, He would forgive. These were words of assurance. At what other times has God “appeared at night” with words of assurance for His people? For you?

5. What picture do you get of Solomon in chapters 8 and 9? Does he seem to be growing in faith during these years? The rest of the story is in 1 Kings 11. What warning did God give Solomon (1 Kings 11:11–13)? How might this warning be a blessing to us?

The queen of Sheba received the message that Solomon ruled “because of the love of your God for Israel and His desire to uphold them forever, ... to maintain justice and righteousness” (2 Chronicles 9:8). What message might this picture send to rulers of our own day?

6. At the time of the division of the kingdom, people from throughout Israel “who set their hearts on seeking the Lord” moved to Jerusalem “to be able to offer sacrifices to the Lord” (2 Chronicles 11:16). What changes in their lives did this move entail? What similar changes in their lives do Christians still make, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to worship the Lord? In your prayers, thank God for the strength He has given to people to make such changes.

## September Week 2 Discussion Questions

### September 8–14, 2 Chronicles 12–22

1. The events of 2 Chronicles 12 follow an outline similar to an outline of sections of the worship service. Point out the similarities. Why would church services follow such an outline?
2. What is the common message of these three Scripture passages: 2 Chronicles 13:15; 2 Chronicles 14:12; and Romans 8:31–32?
3. Scriptures use the figure of speech “the eyes of the Lord” to paint a picture of God for us. Hanani painted such a picture for Asa, the king (2 Chronicles 16:9). Moses uses this phrase in Deuteronomy 11:12, the psalmist refers to God’s eyes in Psalm 33:18–19 and Psalm 34:15, Solomon uses this picture in Proverbs 15:3, Jeremiah uses it in Jeremiah 24:6, and Peter refers to it in 1 Peter 3:10–12. What picture of God is painted in all these passages? What message is God conveying to us in these passages?
4. One message for us in 2 Chronicles 17 and 18 is that it is tough to do the Lord’s will and associate with evil at the same time. Even though Jehoshaphat did many good things during his reign, he did ask for trouble. Identify places where he associated with evil. The apostle John recognized this danger to our faith and gave some advice. Skim 1 John 3 and 4. What advice did he give?
5. “See the deliverance the Lord will give you” (2 Chronicles 20:17). What an amazing statement and what an amazing verse this is! Review the circumstances under which God made this promise. Under what circumstances in your own life has (would) this promise brought (bring) you comfort and strength?
6. Review 2 Chronicles 22:10–12. Why was it so important that Josiah be kept alive?

## September Week 3 Discussion Questions

### September 15–21, 2 Chronicles 23–32

1. Note the destructive and godless legacies of Jehoram and Ahaziah and his mother Athaliah. What is the legacy of Jehoiada in all of this (2 Chronicles 23)? Was his legacy good, bad, both, or something else?

As soon as Jehoiada the priest died, Joash the king switched gears. Describe the change in Joash. What caused this change? This change in Joash should be a warning to all of God's faithful people. Read the prayer of Jesus for His people (John 17:6–25) and then pray that you and your family would remain faithful until Jesus takes you home.

2. As you think about true prosperity in connection with your reading of 2 Chronicles 25–26, the question frequently is asked, Why do the wicked prosper? Even the psalmist in Psalm 10 raises the question. Does it seem to you that the wicked prosper? Some religious leaders teach that when you trust the Lord you will be rich. Is there a difference between being prosperous and being rich? If so, what is the difference? Look at these Scripture passages for more insight into prosperity: Deuteronomy 5:33; Ezra 6:14; Proverbs 28:25; and Isaiah 45:7. Then thank the Lord for your prosperity in Christ.

3. How do you respond when you are reprimanded for doing something wrong? Look at the experience of the victorious Israelite soldiers (2 Chronicles 28:6–15). They had won a battle and plundered the losers. Oded confronted them, however (2 Chronicles 28:9–11). Why did he object to this plundering? What did he say should be done? What does this incident in God's Word say to us?

4. How is Hezekiah's action—to "remove all the defilement from the sanctuary" (2 Chronicles 29:5) and to cleanse everything in the temple that was unclean by taking it to the Kidron Valley (2 Chronicles 29:16) to purify—it similar to our own Baptism? Think especially of the answer to the question in Luther's Small Catechism, What does such baptizing with water indicate?

5. As you look at Hezekiah's rule in 2 Chronicles 30–31, identify several aspects of godly administration of a government, a church, or any other entity as exemplified in his administration.

6. After reading the account of how God destroyed the Assyrian army (2 Chronicles 32:21), what

are your thoughts about statements such as "God doesn't take sides in wars"?

## September Week 4 Discussion Questions

September 22–28, 2 Chronicles 33–Ezra 6

1. To turn Manasseh around, the Lord allowed the king of Assyria to “put a hook in his nose” (2 Chronicles 33:11). What kinds of “nose hooks” do you think the Lord uses now to turn His people around, call them to repentance, so that His Word of grace in Jesus will be received?
2. Review 2 Chronicles 35. One recurring sign that Israel was falling away from the Lord was that they neglected the celebrations of the Old Testament festivals, such as Passover. That is why the renewals of the Passover celebration under Hezekiah and Josiah were so significant. Why are celebrations so vital in the lives of God’s people? What particular features of your church’s celebrations help you recall God’s promises and the message of salvation through Jesus our Savior?
3. Viewing the Babylonian exile from a time after the exile, the writer of Chronicles sees the exile as a time of Sabbath rest (2 Chronicles 36:21) for the land and the people. What were the benefits of Sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:1–7; 26:2; Hebrews 4:9)? How might you observe the Sabbath so it is a time of refreshment?
4. Ezra reports that Cyrus, king of Persia, thought that he had been appointed by the Lord, the God of heaven, to build a temple for God at Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2). Here is an example of an unbelieving ruler being used by God to fulfill His Messianic purposes. Does God still use civil authorities to accomplish His purposes? Can you cite some examples?
5. Review Ezra 3:1–13. Another picture of the Lord building His church is in 1 Peter 2:4–12. Who is the “living Stone” (2:4) and the “living stones” (2:5)? How do believers become “living stones” (1 Corinthians 15:45)? According to Peter, what are some things “living stones” do? In your prayers ask the Spirit for the strength to do this.
6. According to the decree issued by King Cyrus regarding the temple of God in Jerusalem, provisions were supplied so that the priest could “offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons” (Ezra 6:10). Relate the practice of prayers for government leaders in Old Testament times to that which is still practiced by God’s people today (see 1 Timothy 2:1–2).

## September Week 5 Discussion Questions

September 29–30, Ezra 7–10

1. Ezra describes the hand of the LORD blessing the people along their way, providing protection from enemies and bandits (Ezra 8:31). What blessing did the Ezra, the leader, receive as the hand of the LORD was upon him (see Ezra 7:28)? See also Joshua 1:9.
  
2. Relate the following segment from Ezra's prayer to yourself and God's other faithful people around you, "O LORD, God of Israel, You are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before You in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in Your presence" (Ezra 9:15).

## October Week 1 Discussion Questions

### October 1–5, Nehemiah 1–8

1. Upon learning of the deplorable conditions in Jerusalem, Nehemiah comes before God in repentant prayer. According to Nehemiah 1:10, what is the relationship between God's people and God? How was this relationship established?
2. Review Nehemiah 2:1–20. For what purpose and to what effect did Nehemiah speak the words described in verse 18?
3. God's people continued in their labor to repair the walls of Jerusalem, though threatened by enemies and fatigue. With what words did Nehemiah encourage the people (Nehemiah 4:14)?
4. Upon hearing God's Word, the people were instructed by Nehemiah, Ezra, and the other leaders, "Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10c). At which times in your life might these words from Nehemiah be especially meaningful to you?

## October Week 2 Discussion Questions

### October 6–12, Nehemiah 9–Esther 10

1. Explain words of Nehemiah 9:33 in light of your own life and experience.
2. Read again Nehemiah 12. Imagine the beautiful celebration of God and His goodness. Note especially the scene described in verse 43. Of what future occurrence may this event remind us? See Revelation 7:9–17).
3. What evidence does Esther 2:19–23 provide that Esther and Mordecai sought to obey God with respect to the Fourth Commandment?
4. Mordecai encouraged Queen Esther with the words, “And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14b)? Apply these words to your own life. What opportunities for service to God are available to you at “such a time as this”?
5. To approach the king uninvited in ancient Persia was to risk death. Yet, when Esther came before the king under such conditions, the king was pleased with her and welcomed her into his presence, asking that he might grant her request (Esther 5:1–2). Under what conditions does God similarly welcome us before His throne of grace? See Hebrews 4:14–16. Ultimately, Esther asked for a request on behalf of her people. What requests on behalf of others might you make today in Jesus' name?
6. Review Esther 8–10. Acting upon Esther's request, King Xerxes granted God's people rights and privileges in his kingdom. What rights and privileges in God's eternal kingdom are ours through faith in Christ Jesus? See Galatians 4:5–7.

## October Week 3 Discussion Questions

October 13-19, Job 1–12

1. Describe Job's approach to life as you consider his words in Job 1:21.
2. Explain Job's words recorded in Job 2:10 in light of Hebrews 12:5–11.
3. Why do you think Christians sometimes face periods of hardship, illness, and disappointment with the same type of reasoning as Job's friend Eliphaz explains in Job 4:3–8?
4. Compare Job 6:14–15 with the directive of God's Word found in Galatians 6:1–2. How can we as God's people faithfully serve our friends during their times of spiritual struggle or disillusionment?
5. What answer to Job's question recorded in Job 9:2 is provided in Romans 5:17–21?
6. To what qualities of Almighty God does Zophar refer (Job 11:7–9)? Compare Zophar's words with those of Paul, recorded in Ephesians 3:18–19?

## October Week 4 Discussion Questions

### October 20–26, Job 13–28

1. Contrast the description of our natural human condition in Job 14:1 with God's will for those who belong to Him through faith in Christ Jesus described in 2 Corinthians 5:15.
2. Job's words, recorded in Job 16:19–22 remind us of Romans 8:26–27. Who promises to intercede for the people of God when we, like Job of old, feel weak and incapable?
3. Explain Job's confession of faith, recorded in Job 19:25–27.
4. Consider Job's description of the wicked in Job 21:7–16. How according to Matthew 5:43–48 would God have us treat the unrighteous?
5. In Job 23:10 Job observes, "But He knows the way that I take when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold." What perspective on human suffering does 1 Peter 1:3–7 provide?
6. Job 28:20–28 records Job's thoughts on wisdom. Identify the core of true wisdom for the believer. See 1 Corinthians 1:30.

## October Week 5 Discussion Questions

October 27–31, Job 29–42

1. Review Job 29–31. Under Christ-controlled conditions, yes, suffering can set off a chain of events that helps us grow as God's children. But suffering itself cannot do that. What does? (See Romans 5:3–5.)
2. Each of us can relate to the words of Job 33:27, "I sinned, and perverted what was right, but I did not get what I deserved." See Romans 5:17–19 and explain.
3. Consider the following words of Elihu to Job, "If you sin, how does that affect Him? If your sins are many, what does that do to Him (Job 35:6)?" See 1 Corinthians 15:3.
4. Reflect on the introductory words of God's response to Job recorded in Job 38:3–8 in light of a similar theme found in Isaiah 55:6–11. What conclusion can we draw about God even as we consider His greatness and magnificent power?
5. Comment on Job's reply to the LORD (Job 42:1–2) in light of God's plans for you and for your salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

## Leaders Notes

Many of the questions call for group participants to share personal insights, examples, or life experiences and applications. Answers to these questions will vary. If no one answers right away, allow a moment or two of silence so that everyone has time to think through the question. Other questions call for specific factual or analytical responses. Suggested answers for these appear below.

### September Week 1 Leaders Notes

#### September 1–7, 2 Chronicles 1–11

1. Solomon asked for wisdom so that he would be better able to build the temple and rule God's people wisely (2 Chronicles 1:10). Responses of your people will vary. Encourage each other to think more of how God's kingdom might be served in what you request than in how you can request what you personally want for yourself in your prayer. You might ask, How might a prayer for healing be worded in order to pray that this healing can benefit God's kingdom? How might prayers for guidance or some other situations be worded to be more like Solomon's prayer?

2. Doing something "for the Name of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 2:1) dedicates that task to the Lord. Doing a task "for the Name of the Lord" prompts us to do that task excellently, in an honest manner, and with a servant heart. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross for our salvation to bring honor to His Father in heaven.

Words such as opulent, beautiful, impressive, and first-class might describe Solomon's temple. He models giving the best to the Lord as He is moved to do so by the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the means of grace. People in your group might mention giving their best to the Lord as they do excellent work on their jobs and as they support their families, provide excellent facilities for the Lord's work in congregations, and provide excellent programs of ministry to proclaim the Gospel and serve people.

3. The focus of the worship that Solomon led at the dedication of the temple was not the beauty of the temple, the hard work of the builders, or the leadership skills of the king in completing the temple, but it was on God who had been faithful and loving toward His people. This same message of a loving God who cares for His people would encourage the exiles as they rebuilt their homes and the temple. We, too, are members of this "communion of saints" who can see a longer history of God's care for His people, especially as we know by faith that God has kept His promises and sent Jesus to be our Savior and that because of Him our sins are forgiven.

4. God sent the angels at night to the shepherds to announce "a Savior has been born to you" (Luke 2:8–11). Others instances that people may mention include Jacob wrestling with God at night, Jesus coming to the disciples on the water at night, or God sending His angel to deliver Peter from jail at night. Of course, God comes to help His people at any time of the day. When we grieve over our own sin, fret about our health or the health of a loved one, are concerned

about the faith of a relative, or worry about many other situations in life, the Lord comes to us in these “nights” with His Word of hope: “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you” (Jeremiah 1:8) and “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

5. During these 20 years Solomon becomes rich and known throughout the ancient world. His land becomes a center of trade and commerce. Nothing is mentioned in Chronicles about Solomon's growth in faith. 1 Kings 11 details how Solomon “turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel” (1 Kings 11:9). Too often we become angry when someone mentions that they have missed us in church or that we need to get back to our regular daily devotions. These calls to faithfulness are blessings to us, for they remind us again that God is the source of our blessings and our salvation.

Those who serve as rulers, in government positions or positions of authority, will be judged by their efforts to act to achieve justice and righteousness in all situations. It is God's will that all people be treated with justice and righteousness. God calls all citizens in every community to serve in such a way and to choose leaders who will promote these qualities among the people.

6. People probably gave up jobs, homes, and perhaps land so they could move their families to Jerusalem to worship God and “follow in the ways of David and Solomon” (2 Chronicles 11:17). By God's grace, people today still make similar changes in their lives. In the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, people moved from Germany to the United States so they could worship and raise their families in ways that were faithful to God's Word. In our own time, some people have given up jobs so they could become involved in Christian missionary work, families have moved to a new home so they could enroll their children in a Lutheran school, and people have changed their life styles so as to be able to support Christian charities generously.

## September Week 2 Leaders Notes

### September 8–14, 2 Chronicles 12–22

1. The events of 2 Chronicles 12 follow this outline: People abandon the law of the Lord and live in sin; God points out their sin and calls them to repentance; people respond to God's call and repent; God, in mercy, forgives the people. Similarly, sinful people gather together in worship. Here the people confess their sin, acknowledging that they too have abandoned the law of God. In mercy, God forgives their sin and through His Word and Sacraments, strengthens them for faithful living.

2. In all three passages the common message is that God is the one who conquers evil and those who threaten His people. In each case, the odds seemed to be in favor of the opposing army [Abijah's 400,000 troops faced Jeroboam's 800,000 (2 Chronicles 13:3); Asa's 300,000 troops faced Zerah's vast army and 300 chariots (2 Chronicles 14:9); we face a multitude of dangers, including trouble, hardship, famine, demons, death, and the devil (Romans 8:35, 38–39).], yet "God routed Jeroboam" (2 Chronicles 13:15), "the LORD struck down the Cushites (2 Chronicles 14:12), and "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

3. In all of these passages God is pictured as caring for us, as He did the Israelites who were moving into a new land (Deuteronomy 11:12), strengthening those who trust in Him (2 Chronicles 16:9), caring for us especially at the time of our death (Psalm 33:18–19), listening to our prayers (Psalm 34:15), watching out for our good (Jeremiah 24:6), and blessing those who are faithful to Him (1 Peter 3:10–12). These words of Hanani (2 Chronicles 16:9) are especially comforting to those who undergo suffering of any kind.

4. Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahab, king of Israel, who wanted to go to war (2 Chronicles 18:2–3). He joined Ahab in the war in spite of warnings from the prophet Micaiah that the war would be a disaster for Ahab (2 Chronicles 18:22). John warned the Christians of his day against lawlessness, sin, and urged them to "not let anyone lead you astray" (1 John 3:7) and "not believe every spirit" (1 John 4:1). He reminded the people that Jesus came "so that He might take away our sins" (1 John 3:5) and to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). Pray for forgiveness in Jesus and this same strength and wisdom to avoid evil as you conclude your discussion.

5. God made this promise to Jehoshaphat and the people who lived in Judah and Jerusalem at a time when the vast army (2 Chronicles 20:2) of the Moabites and Ammonites threatened them. In His reply to their prayer, God, through Jahaziel, tells the people that they should not be afraid (2 Chronicles 20:15), the battle was God's so they would not have to fight the battle (2 Chronicles 20:17), the Lord would deliver them and be with them. Individual applications of this verse will vary, but God is consistent in His promise to help and support His people.

6. God promised that Jesus the Messiah was to be a descendant of David and the kings of Judah (Genesis 49:10 and 2 Samuel 7:16). He promised David an everlasting kingdom. This promise was fulfilled through Jesus.

## September Week 3 Leaders Notes

### September 15–21, 2 Chronicles 23–32

1. Jehoiada's legacy, through God's mercy, was that he preserved the Davidic line and restored it to the throne in Judah (v. 20); through these actions the Messianic promises were being kept. He placed the Levites in charge of temple worship again (v.18), protected Joash (v. 10) and covenanted with the people and the king that they would be the Lord's people (v. 16). He led the efforts to put to death Athaliah, who wanted to destroy the Davidic line (v. 15) and to rid the land of Baal worship (v. 17). It was a violent effort to uproot violent evil. Identify similar situations in our own time.

Joash no longer supported making repairs to the temple or faithfully worshipping there. Rather he abandoned the temple and allowed a return to the worship of Asherah poles and idols. He would not listen to warning from prophets and had Zedekiah the priest stoned when he condemned this spiritual decay. The only hint at why Joash changed is the comment that he listened to the officials of Judah ((2 Chronicles 24:17). The Chronicler no doubt wanted the returning exiles from Babylon to remain faithful to their Lord. In the face of so many temptations to abandon the faith, we, too, need to heed these warning and pray that the Holy Spirit might preserve us in the faith.

2. Your group will probably be able to cite many instances where the wicked or unbelieving have a good life. In speaking of the wicked, the psalmist laments that it seems "His ways are always prosperous" (Psalm 10:5). God in no way rejoices over the ravages that sin brings to people, nor does He place His blessing on wickedness. Rather, God promises prosperity to those who walk in His ways (Deuteronomy 5:33), who listen to God's Word (Ezra 6:14), and who trust in Him (Proverbs 28:25). God's idea of prosperity is not the same as our idea of being rich. The Lord does bring His prosperity to us (Isaiah 45:7), the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

3. Oded told the Israelites they should not plunder the people and make the soldiers of Judah prisoners for several reasons. God had given them the victory because He was angry with Judah for their unfaithfulness, but that did not give Israel the right to slaughter and plunder them and make them slaves. Israel was also guilty of sins against the Lord. Oded's words moved the Israelites to release the prisoners, to use the plundered goods to provide them with food and clothing, and to return them to Judah. This incident calls us to repent and make amends when we are reprimanded. It highlights the proper use of God's Law, the penitent response of the believer, and opens the way for the hearing of the Gospel of forgiveness in Jesus and the amending of the sinful life in response to the Gospel.

4. To clean up the temple the priests removed all the unclean articles from the temple [Everything had been sullied by the actions of Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:24), either through neglect or through use to worship idols.] and the Levites took them to the Kidron Valley to ritually destroy the evil, cleanse and refurbish them, and return them to the temple. In our Baptism, "by daily contrition

and repentance” our evil nature is drowned and dies “with all sins and evil desires” so that a new person can “daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

5. Some aspects of godly administration evident in Hezekiah's rule that your group identifies may include the following: Hezekiah focused on being faithful to the Lord (30:8); he invited everyone in the country, from both Israel and Judah and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh to participate in the celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem (30:1), he asked the Lord to pardon even those who were ceremonially unclean and were not supposed to participate in the temple celebration (30:18–19), Hezekiah himself contributed to the celebration (30:24; 31:3), he organized and arranged for the generous support of temple officials (31:4), he ensured that the resources contributed by the people were used fairly and wisely (31:11–12, 14), and he did what was good, right, and faithful in the eyes of the Lord (31:20). Pray that our government and church officials may operate in a similar manner.

6. Ideas will vary. Too often such statements are made in connection with athletic contests and similar events. God certainly acts to further His purposes in the world, all of which in New Testament times focus on proclaiming the Gospel and ensuring that all people have an opportunity to hear His Word. God takes care of His people according to His good and gracious will, especially when “He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die” (Luther's Small Catechism, Explanation to the Third Petition).

## September Week 4 Leaders Notes

### September 22–28, 2 Chronicles 33–Ezra 6

1. The writer of 2 Chronicles probably wanted the exiles returning from Babylon to think of their Babylonian Captivity as a “nose hook” used by God to turn them around and be faithful to God. Your group might suggest illness, trying times, drought and famine, unemployment, and other hardships as modern day “nose hooks.” The proclamation of God’s Law is a “nose hook” intended to call us to repentance so that the Lord can free us with His Word of forgiveness through Jesus and empower us to amend our sinful lives.
2. Answers may vary. Celebrations in the church help us teach and review the major events in the story of God providing for the salvation of all people. This is one of the chief benefits of following the church year calendar of festivals. Christmas is a celebration of God the Father, who gave His Son to be the Savior. Lent and Easter is a celebration of God the Son, who gave His life and rose from the dead to assure the forgiveness of our sins and our triumph over Satan. Pentecost is a celebration of the activity of the Holy Spirit, who continually calls people to repentance and works faith in Jesus in the hearts of those who repent and trust the Gospel. During other festivals of the Church Year, such as Epiphany, Transfiguration, and Ascension, other aspects of the salvation story are remembered and celebrated.
3. Leviticus describes the Sabbath year as every 7th year when the land was to lie fallow. Whatever grew could be used, but no crops were to be planted and no regular harvest conducted. Both people and land would rest, yet the Lord promised His care (Leviticus 25:21) through a bountiful 6th year harvest. Hebrews 4:9 suggests that this Sabbath rest is a picture of our own salvation—rest that we receive through faith in Christ rather than through our own hard work to live a perfect life.
4. God still does use civil authorities and many others to accomplish His purposes, but it may be difficult to identify specific actions of civil authorities as fulfilling God’s purposes. God acts to benefit His people and bring the Gospel to all the world, for His will is that all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth that Jesus is the Savior who gave His life that all might live eternally.
5. By the inspiration of the Spirit, Peter says that “the living Stone” is Jesus, “rejected by men but chosen by God” (2:4) who “bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (2:24). Jesus, “the life giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45), creates faith in us and builds us into “a spiritual house” that declares His praises (2:9), abstains from sinful desires (2:11), and does good deeds that glorify God (2:12).
6. Paul writes, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” God blesses us through leaders who protect our rights to the extent that we are free and unhindered in our desire to live our lives as God empowers and directs us through His holy Word.

## September Week 5 Leaders Notes

September 29–30, Ezra 7–10

1. Because the hand of the LORD was upon Ezra, he says he, “took courage and gathered the leading men from Israel to go with me.” Somewhat similarly, God encourage Joshua in his leadership with the words, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God with be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).
2. Such is our condition before our holy and righteous God. Thankfully, because Jesus has paid the penalty we deserve because of our sins, God welcomes us as His dear and redeemed children.

## October Week 1 Leaders Notes

### October 1–5, Nehemiah 1–8

1. Nehemiah describes God's people thus, "They are Your servants and Your people, whom You redeemed by Your great strength and Your mighty hand" (Nehemiah 1:10). God's people are His servants. God established the relationship. He made them His people. He continued to act effectively on their behalf, preserving and saving them, just as when He delivered them from oppression in Egypt.
2. Nehemiah motivated the people with a reminder of God's "gracious hand" upon the labor they were about to undertake.
3. Nehemiah encouraged the people reminding them of God's attributes and of the importance of their mission as they faced their enemies. He said, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes" (Nehemiah 4:14).
4. No matter what circumstance or situation we, the people of God, may find ourselves in, we can know true joy that Jesus is our Savior from sin, death and Satan's power—and we find strength in that joy.

## October Week 2 Leaders Notes

### October 6–12, Nehemiah 9–Esther 10

1. In contrast to human fallibility and unfaithfulness, our God is faithful. His love and desire to save us and to make of us a people dedicated to Him in Christ Jesus never fades or changes. His promises to us are ever sure.
2. The celebration of the people, complete with beautiful choirs and resounding praise and rejoicing reminds us of heaven, where we will never cease to praise God for His grace and goodness to us through Jesus our Lord and Savior.
3. Esther honored her guardian Mordecia's request that she keep her family background and nationality a secret. Mordecia honored the government that held his people captive by reporting to Esther the plot to assassinate the king as he had become aware of it.
4. Answers we vary. Comment that as we seek God's guidance and direction in our lives, He will provide us with opportunities to serve Him.
5. Because we have as our high priest, Jesus, who as true God yet true man can sympathize with our weaknesses, we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence. Here we will find mercy and grace in our time of need. Examples of requests will vary.
6. In Christ Jesus God has made us sons and heirs of His kingdom. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we have the forgiveness of sins, new life, and the inheritance of an eternal home in heaven.

## October Week 3 Leaders Notes

### October 13–19, Job 1–12

1. Job's words indicate His willingness to yield to the Almighty as the one who rules over all things. He praises God for the life cycle He provides him.
2. God uses the hardship and troubles in our life to discipline (disciple) us as His dear children. Through our life's events He works for our good so that we may share in His holiness. Through discipline He produces in us a harvest of righteousness and peace.
3. When troubles, hardships, and burdens come into the life of a believer, a sense of fairness upon reflection of the circumstances brings the thought "how could these things happen to someone who has tried so hard to love and obey God?" Human nature suggests to us that we should always get what we think we have earned. Eliphaz observes, "those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it" (Job 4:8).
4. During his time of trouble, Job's friends were no help or comfort to him. Galatians 6:1–2 encourages us, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."
5. Job's question, "But how can a mortal be righteous before God?" (Job 9:2) is answered by Paul when he wrote, "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). Jesus' righteousness is God's gift to us through faith in Christ Jesus.
6. Zophar refers to the omniscient (all-knowing) quality of God. Paul speaks of expansive dimensions in his description of Christ's love. Paul says that to know this love surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:18–19).

## October Week 4 Leaders Notes

October 20–26, Job 13–28

1. In contrast to Job's description of our natural human condition—"Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble," Paul writes, "And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again" (Romans 5:15). God in Christ blesses His children with a newness of life and purpose.
2. "...The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26–27). These words provide special comfort to those belonging to God through Christ Jesus, who in the depths of despair, grief, or sickness are not able to pray, or adequately to focus on their prayer.
3. Job prophesies about the resurrection of the body in these beautiful words: "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I and not another" (Job 19:25–27). Jesus is the great redeemer who has defeated death for us and who will raise us back to life on the Last Day.
4. Just as God extends His temporal blessings to all people, including those who do not love and believe in Him, His power moves His children to love all people, including our enemies. By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word these unbelievers may also become believers and, by God's grace, our brothers and sisters in Christ.
5. 1 Peter 1:6–7 records, "... now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." These words remind us that as God works in our lives through Word and Sacrament, He strengthens our faith even as we face and endure the trials of life, proving it genuine to the end that we will praise, glorify, and honor God when He comes again to free us forever from all suffering and trial.
6. "Christ Jesus ... has become for us wisdom from God—that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). In Christ can be found the ultimate source of truth. Through faith in Him we receive all we need—His blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

## October Week 5 Leaders Notes

October 27–31, Job 29–42

1. The chain of events described in Romans 5:3–5 is this: suffering—endurance—character—hope. But it is the Holy Spirit who plants and nurtures that Gospel hope. Without the Holy Spirit working in the heart, suffering can produce despair, anger, bitterness, and other evils. There is nothing sacred or holy about suffering itself. Only God can use suffering for His sacred and holy purposes.
2. We deserve nothing but punishment because of our sins. But because of His grace and mercy God sent His Son to live and die in our place. Because of His payment for our sins we receive the blessings that are His. We did not get what we deserved—Jesus took what we deserved upon Himself so that we might receive the blessings of Christ, which we did not deserve.
3. Our sins affected God greatly. The pain, torment, and humiliation Jesus endured during His suffering and death occurred as the result of our sins. Our sins caused His suffering.
4. We can trust that almighty God, whose ways are far beyond our human ability to understand or comprehend, desires to shower us with His grace and mercy. His Word is the means through which He brings these blessings to us.
5. God's plan to save us by grace through faith in Jesus is sure and certain. As Job assures us, "no plan of [God's] can be thwarted" (Job 42:2).