

God does not exempt you from life's problems

Lesson Scripture: Job 2:1-10.

Lesson aims: to realize that following God does not exempt you from life's problems, to understand that during trials God expects us to act with integrity and to hold on to our faith.

Background: The new calendar year begins with a series of study from the book of Job. "Most scholars agree that Job was written during the time of the patriarchs (2100 to 1700 B.C.) since no mention was made of the Law" (Richard's Complete Bible Handbook). The unknown author of this book of wisdom raised the age-old question: Why do the righteous suffer? The journey to the answer is challenging and thought provoking. Job also points out how believers are to handle life's problems.

Chapter 1 introduced us to the three main characters: God, Satan, and Job. The narrative gives a description of



Mildred Peppers

Sunday School Lesson

Job, his family, his wealth, and his piety. Please note that his fear of God is not his motivation but a part of his character. Verses 6-12 record a heavenly court meeting developing where Job becomes the center of the dialogue.

Having the freedom to roam throughout the earth, Satan observes many things. When God suggests that Satan consider Job, the accuser's response is interesting. "If anyone is so blessed (material possessions) by God, why

wouldn't they praise you?" is the accuser's reply. God allows him to destroy Job's possessions but he cannot lay a finger on the man. Satan's first assault is on Job's wealth and his children. Facing all of this destruction, Job's response is found in verses 20-22.

Lesson: The second heavenly court is convened (Chapter 2:2-3), and Job continues to be the focus. Once again God lifts Job up as a blame-

less and upright man. Satan quickly attacks that notion by suggesting if Job's health were at stake, he'd do anything to save himself, including cursing God to his face. God gives Satan permission to touch Job's body but he must spare his life. The second attack of Satan brings a form of leprosy to Job. He breaks out in boils from the crown of his head to the bottom of his feet. UMI Direction Teacher describes the outbreak as a form of elephantiasis that is hideous, loathsome, and quite painful. The disease is so bad that Job sits in ashes and uses discarded pieces of pottery to scrape the boils for minor relief.

Observing everything that has happened, his wife (primary care-giver) suggests to her husband to forget what's right, curse God and die. Job's response is remarkable! He tells her to stop acting foolishly and to accept the good and the bad from God the same way. Scripture records that in all of this, Job remained sin-

less. Satan's prediction failed!

Application: Most of us search for, plan for, and pray for that fairy tale ending: happily ever after. In making that our goal, we fail to realize all the woes, trials, and suffering that go along with it. No, I'm not suggesting that our lives are fairy tales; far from it. But I'm alluding to the idea that heaven is our home but there are some rough spots on the journey. Life has a way of presenting problems (troubles) that actually grow us. We cannot forget that as creations of God, we have choices.

Choice also brings responsibilities. I personally don't feel that I'm equipped* to address God allowing things to happen to us. I am, however, convinced by the Holy Ghost that trouble comes in our lives not because we've always done something

wrong. Satan attacks Job twice and the servant maintains his integrity and faithfulness. Webster says that integrity is "the quality or state of being of sound moral principle, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity." That's a mouthful, to say nothing about living it. Simply put, integrity is standing for your beliefs no matter the circumstances. If God is good (and He is all the time), when bad things start to happen, He is still good! It takes faith to hold on to that!

As we step into 2004 by the grace of God, let's remember who is really in control! We don't know what the year will bring. We can be assured, however, that there will be some "highs" and "lows." Keep the faith! God promised to be with each and every one of us no matter what. Let's pray for one another and for integrity of leaders.



Cece Winans, here performing during a concert, will be one of the gospel stars on hand for the Stellar Awards ceremony.

Stellar

from page B4

move, touch and inspire, said Executive Producer Barbara Wilson. The Stellar Gospel Music Awards is executive-produced by Chicago-based Central City Productions' Don Jackson and produced by Barbara Wilson. Terri McCoy will direct this year's award show, and Jennifer Jackson is the

executive in charge of production. Erma Gray Davis is the president of Central City Productions.

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