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Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our Web site at <http://www.absg.adventist.org>

Principal Contributor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Wendy Marcum

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

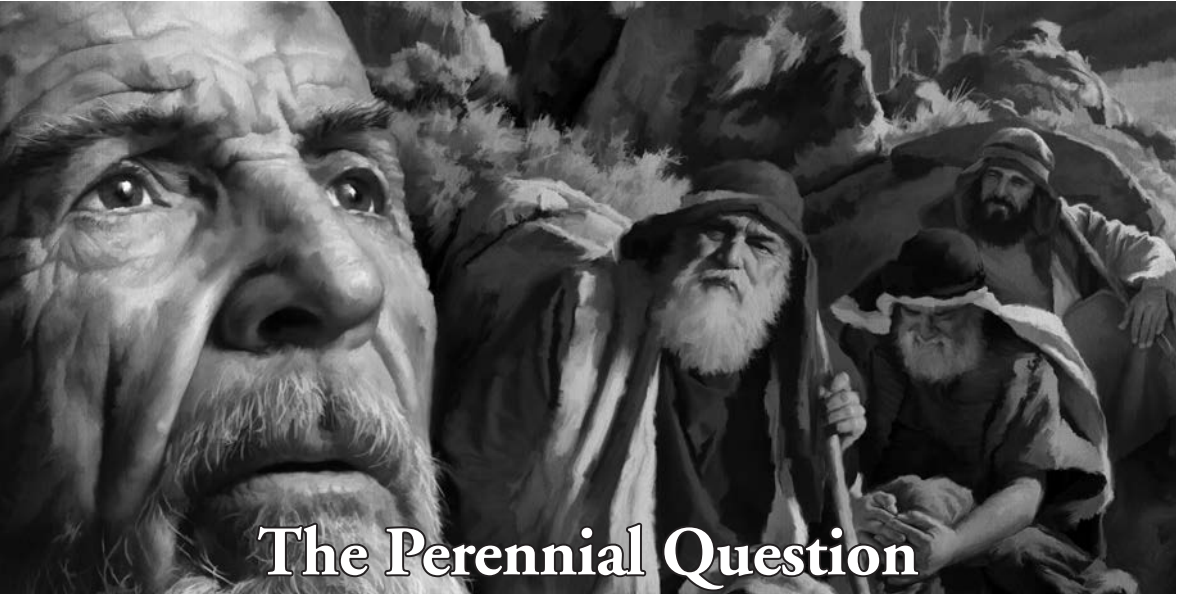
Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Editorial Assistant
Sharon Thomas-Crews

The Teachers Edition components were written by the following:

The Lesson in Brief, Lessons 1-14, and The Learning Cycles, 1-14: Martin G. Klingbeil, DLitt, professor, biblical studies and archaeology, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tenn., U.S.A.; assistant director, Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tenn., U.S.A.

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The Perennial Question

Despite all the popular propaganda to the contrary, Christians have very logical and rational reasons to believe in God. Though assured by some of the “best and brightest” that the evolutionary concepts of “natural selection” and “random mutation” can explain the complexity, wonder, and beauty of life, many people don’t buy it and logically so. And despite the latest “scientific” pronouncements that the universe arose from “nothing,” most people find the idea of an eternally existing God, as opposed to “nothing,” the more logically satisfying explanation for Creation.

And yet, even with logic and reason firmly on our side, there’s still the ever-present problem of evil. And thus the perennial question: *If God exists, and is so good, so loving, and so powerful, why so much suffering?*

Hence, this quarter’s study: the book of Job. How fascinating that Job, which deals with the perennial question, was one of the first books of the Bible written. God gave us, early on, *some* answers to the most difficult of all issues.

Some answers but not all. Probably no one book of the Bible could answer them all; even the Bible as a whole doesn’t. Nevertheless, Job pulls back a veil and reveals to the reader the existence of a reality beyond what our senses, even those aided by scientific devices, could show us. It takes us to a realm that, while far removed from us in one sense, is incredibly close in another. The book of Job shows us what so much of the rest of the Bible does, too: the natural and supernatural are

inseparably linked. Job is a portrayed drama of the principle and warning that Paul expressed ages later: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 6:12, NKJV*).

Though mostly about one man, the book of Job is the story of us all in that we all suffer in ways that often seem to make no sense. And even the story of the four men who come to him reflects our situation, too, for who among us hasn’t tried to come to grips with the sufferings of others?

Yet, we’d miss a crucial point about the book of Job if we limited it only to suffering humanity’s attempts to understand suffering humanity. The story appears in a context, that of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, which is portrayed here in the most literal of terms. And that’s because it’s the most literal of battles, one that began in heaven and is being played out here in the hearts, minds, and bodies of every human being.

Job pulls back a veil and reveals to the reader the existence of a reality beyond what our senses, even those aided by scientific devices, could show us.

This quarter’s studies look at the story of Job, both close up, in the immediate drama of the narrative, and from a distance, in that we know not only how the book ends but also the bigger background in which it unfolds. As readers, then, with the knowledge not only of the book of Job but also of the whole Bible, one crucial issue for us is to try to pull it all together. We try to understand as much as possible, not only why we live in a world of evil, but more important, how we are to live in such a world.

Of course, even after we study Job, even in the context of the rest of the Bible, the perennial question remains. We are assured, though, of the perennial answer: Jesus Christ, in whom “we have redemption through His blood” (*Eph. 1:7, NKJV*)—the One through whom all answers come.

Clifford R. Goldstein is the editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide. He has been at the General Conference since 1984.

How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.