

# Great Heat



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 27

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 22; Job 1:6–2:10; Isaiah 43:1–7; Hosea 2:1–12; 2 Corinthians 1:23–29.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The Lord says, ‘It was my plan to crush him [Jesus] and cause him to suffer. I made his life a guilt offering to pay for sin. But he will see all of his children after him. In fact, he will continue to live. My plan will be brought about through him’ ” (Isaiah 53:10, NIV).

**THE WIFE OF THE FAMOUS CHRISTIAN WRITER C. S. LEWIS WAS DYING.** Lewis wrote, “I don’t [do not] think I am in much danger of no longer believing in God. But the real danger is believing such terrible things about Him. The belief I fear most is not ‘So there’s [there is] no God after all.’ But, instead, ‘So this is what God’s [God is] really like.’ ”—Adapted from *A Grief Observed* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1961), pp. 6, 7.

When things become really painful, some of us refuse to accept God completely. For others like Lewis, there is the temptation<sup>1</sup> to change our view of God. Instead, we imagine all kinds of bad things about Him. The question is Just how hot can it get? How much heat is God willing to put His people through? This is for shaping us into “becoming like [the same as] his Son” (Romans 8:29, NIV).

**THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE:** Why do you think God is willing to be misunderstood by those He wants to know and love Him? How much do you think God is willing to be misunderstood so that He can change you into becoming “like his Son”?

<sup>1</sup> temptation—anything that tries to turn us away from God and tries to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

**SUNDAY—OCTOBER 28****ABRAHAM IN THE CRUCIBLE<sup>2</sup>  
(John 8:56)**

Read Genesis 22. Without explaining why, God suddenly calls Abraham to offer his own child as a burnt offering. Can you imagine how Abraham must have felt? To us humans, it seems strange for a holy God to ask that you sacrifice (give up) your own son. But, spiritually, what about God's promises to give Abraham land and make him a great nation? Without his (Abraham's) son, the promise would be gone.

**Why did God ask Abraham to offer this sacrifice?<sup>3</sup> If God knows everything, what was the point?**

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God's plan was not an accident. God permitted Abraham to go through the deepest possible suffering. For this reason, "God had saved his last, most trying test for Abraham until he was very old, and wanted to rest very much."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,<sup>4</sup> p. 147. Was this the test of a mad God? Not at all,

because "God permitted Abraham to suffer through the dark days of that fearful trial. This was to help Abraham better understand God's great sacrifice for man's salvation."<sup>5</sup>—Page 154, adapted.

This was just a test—God never planned for Abraham to kill his son. This shows something very important about the way God sometimes works. God may ask us to do something that He never lets us finish. He may ask us to go somewhere to which we never arrive. What is important to God is not necessarily the end. What we learn as we are reshaped by the experience is important.

Jesus may have been thinking about Abraham's experience when He said to the Jews, " 'Your father Abraham was filled with joy at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad' " (John 8:56, NIV). Abraham could have missed out on this understanding by refusing to accept that the instructions came from God. Instead, he could have believed they came from Satan. The key to Abraham's success and learning through the whole process was his knowing God's voice.

**How do you know the voice of God? How do you know when God is talking to you? What are the ways He communicates His will to you?**

2. crucible—a boiling pot for purifying metals. It also represents a testing time, or time of suffering, that strengthens character, or who we are.

3. sacrifice—gift or offering given to God.

4. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were leaders in early Bible times, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

5. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.



God never planned for Abraham to kill his son. Sometimes God may ask us to do something He never lets us finish.

## MONDAY—OCTOBER 29

### BACKSLIDING ISRAEL (Hosea 2:1–12)

The story of Hosea has some powerful lessons to teach us. Hosea's situation is very odd. Hosea's wife, Gomer, runs away and has children with other men. Gomer is sleeping around, but God calls Hosea to take his wife back. Hosea is to show his love to her again. This story is meant as a parable (lesson) about God and Israel. The people of Israel had left God and were "whoring" around spiritually with other gods. But God still loved them and wanted to show His love to them. Just look at God's methods!

**What methods in Hosea 2:1–12 does God say He will use to pull Israel back to Himself? What would these experiences have felt like?**

verses 2, 3 \_\_\_\_\_

verses 5–7 \_\_\_\_\_

verses 8, 9 \_\_\_\_\_

verse 10 \_\_\_\_\_

This story brings up two important issues about the way we experience God when He makes us repent (feel sorry for sin and turn away from it). First, we risk not recognizing that God is at work. For example, Israel went through such hard and painful experiences. So it might have been hard for the people of Israel to recognize that their God was working for their salvation. In the same way, our path is blocked by sharp thorns. Or we are walled in so we do not know where we are going (verse 6). We, too, may wonder, Is this God? When the basic things we need disappear or we are embarrassed (verses 9, 10), we wonder, Could our Father (God) be in the middle of it all? The truth is this: No matter what we feel, God is always working to bring us to repentance. This is because He loves us so very much.

Second, we risk misunderstanding God when He is at work. We may recognize that God is at work. But we do



Sometimes our path to God seems blocked by sharp thorns, or we feel walled off from Him. But even then, God is still with us.

not like what He is doing. While we are feeling hurt and embarrassed, it is easy to blame God for being cruel, for not helping, or for not caring. But God is always working to renew us through His promise of love.

**What does Hosea 2:14–23 tell you about God? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if you have been running from God in any area of your life. If you believe that you have been running from God, why wait to go through the crucible (painful experience)? What is stopping you from surrendering (giving) all to the Lord?**

**TUESDAY—OCTOBER 30**

**SURVIVING THROUGH WORSHIP  
(Job 1:6–2:10)**

**What causes Job's suffering in Job 1:6–2:10?**

There is something surprising here. The angels come to visit God, and Satan comes with them. God asks Satan where he has been. Satan answers that he has been “ ‘roaming [wandering] through the earth and going back and forth in it’ ” (verse 7, NIV). Then God asks this question: “ ‘Have you considered my servant Job?’ ” (verse 8, NIV). The question itself is not unusual. What is surprising is the One (God) who asks it. It is not Satan who points out Job as a subject for test, but God. God knows exactly what is going to follow. So He calls Satan's attention to Job. Down on the earth, Job has no idea how hot his crucible (test) will be. It is very clear that it is Satan, not God, who causes Job's suffering. But it is also clear that it is God who gives His clear permission for Satan to destroy Job's property and things, children, and his own physical health. If God is giving permission for Job to suffer, does it really make any difference whether God or Satan is causing the suffering? How can God be righteous (without sin) and holy when He lets Satan cause Job such pain? Is this situation a special case? Or is it the usual way for God to deal with us today?

**In Job 1:20, 21, how does Job answer?**

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Jesus asks Satan, “Have you seen what a good man my servant Job is?” (Job 1:8, adapted).

It is possible to act toward suffering in two ways. We can become bitter and angry. We can turn our backs on a God we believe to be nowhere near us or cruel. Or we can hang on to God more tightly. Job deals with his terrible situation by staying in God’s presence and worshipping Him.

In Job 1:20, 21, we see three parts of worship that may help when in suffering. First, Job accepts his helplessness. He also recognizes that he has no claim to anything. “He said, ‘I was born naked. And I’ll [I will] leave here naked’” (verse 21, NlrV). Second, Job gives God credit for still being in total control: “‘You have given, and You have taken away’” (verse 21, NlrV). Third, Job repeats his belief in the righteous-

ness (goodness) of God. “‘May your name’” be praised (verse 21, NlrV).

**Going through a trial? Follow the steps that Job used. How might they help you, too?**

### WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 31

#### HOLDING ON TO HOPE WHILE GOING THROUGH TROUBLE (2 Corinthians 1:8, 9)

**“We were having a lot of trouble. It was far more than we could stand. We even thought we were going to die. In fact, in our hearts we felt as if we were under the sentence of death. But that happened so that we would not depend on ourselves, but on God. He raises the dead to life” (2 Corinthians 1:8, 9, NlrV).**

As God’s chosen apostle,<sup>6</sup> Paul had more hardships than most people. But Paul was not crushed. Instead, he grew in his praise for God. Read his list of hardships in 2 Corinthians 11:23–29. Now read 2 Corinthians 1:3–11.

**In verse 4, Paul explains the reason for receiving God’s compassion and comfort: “Now we can comfort others when they are in trouble. We ourselves have received comfort from God” (NlrV). How much might a person suffer while working for God? How could**

6. apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.

**we become more alert to the fact that Christians could suffer?**

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God wants to work through us to help people who are hurting. This means that He may first let us experience the same sort of hurts. Then we will offer encouragement from our own real experience of the mercy and comfort of God. This is a principle from Jesus' life (read Hebrews 4:15).

Paul's clear descriptions about his hardships are not to make us feel sorry for him. They help us to know that the Father still can act on giving His mercy and comfort when we suffer. We may suffer so much that we wish to give up or wish even to be killed. But we do not need to fear. This is because God is teaching us to depend on Him. We can trust Him, because our God "raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9, NIV).

Paul continues to preach the gospel. He knows that God will rescue him in the future, too. Paul remains strong for three reasons listed in 2 Corinthians 1:10, 11. First, God has helped him in the past: "He has saved us from deadly dangers. And he will continue to do it [save us]" (verse 10, NIV). Second, Paul's steadfast faith in God Himself: "We have put our hope in Him. He will continue to save us" (verse 10, NIV). Third, the saints' continual prayers: "They will thank God for his kindness

to us in answer to the prayers of many" (verse 11, NIV).

**What can you learn from Paul that can help you not to fall into self-pity in the middle of your own struggles (troubles)?**



**Paul's hardships help us to know that God will comfort us even in times of trouble.**

## **THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 1**

### **GREAT HEAT (Isaiah 43:1–7)**

So far this quarter, we have studied many examples of the crucibles (troubles) that God uses to make us pure and Christlike. But some people may consider these examples and decide that God is cruel and too strict. Sure, some may say, "We know that God wants something good for us. But these examples do not show much

care and love. Instead, God looks more like a bully. He sets out on a purpose that causes us a lot of hard times. And there is nothing we can do about it.”

It is true that while living on this sin-filled earth, we will understand very little of why things happen. In heaven we will understand so much more (1 Corinthians 4:5; 13:12). But for now we will have to live with the belief that God is present and caring for us, no matter how often things fail to feel too good. Isaiah describes this problem very well.

Read Isaiah 43:1–7. In verses 2 and 3, God says that His people will pass through waters and through fire. These are symbols<sup>7</sup> of great dangers. Maybe they hint at the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan, both fearful times. But they are times that paved the way to a new life. You may expect that God might say He would protect His people from these dangers. He also might say He would guide them along an easier route. But like the Shepherd in Psalm 23, God says that when the difficult times come, His people need not be very discouraged, because He is with them.

**Write down the different ways that God promises to comfort His people during the times of water and fire in Isaiah 43:1–7. What does this teach you about God?**

**Which promises can you claim for yourself?**

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We could summarize what we have learned about God’s crucibles in three ways. First, God’s great heat is to destroy our sin, not us. Second, God’s great heat is to make us pure, as we were created to be. Third, God’s care for us through all things is always the same and full of mercy. He will never leave us alone, no matter what happens to us.

**What do Psalm 103:13, 14; Matthew 28:20; 1 Corinthians 10:13; and 1 Peter 1:7 teach you about the actions and character<sup>8</sup> of God? How have you experienced how real these verses are in your own life?**

### FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 2

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Test of Faith,” pp. 145–155, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Praise Ye the Lord,” pp. 315–319, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5.

“God has always tested His people in the furnace of suffering. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dirt [sin] is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the

7. symbols—objects, marks, signs, or persons that stand for, or mean the same thing as, other objects, ideas, or things.

8. character—who a person is; God’s Ten Commandments show us who He is.

test. He knows what is needed to make the valuable metal pure. This is so that it may show the reflection of His love. It is by close tests that God disciplines [trains] His servants. He sees that some have powers which may be used in pushing His work forward. God puts these persons upon trial. Then in His leading God brings them into positions that test their character. . . . He shows them their own weakness. And He teaches them to depend fully on Him. . . . Then His goal is reached. They are educated and trained. They are to fulfill God's purpose with His gifts given to them."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 129, 130.

"If God calls us to suffer through trials, let us accept the Cross and drink the bitter cup. Let us remember that it is a Father's hand that holds the cup to our lips. Let us trust God in the darkness and in the day, too. Will we believe that He will give us everything that is for our good? . . . Even in the night of suffering how can we fail to lift heart and voice in thankful praise while we remember the love to us shown by the Cross?"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, p. 316.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Have someone share with your class his or her own test of faith such as Abraham had. What can you learn from this person's experience—from his or her successes or failures?
- Review the last 24 hours of Christ's life. What great trials did He face? How did He suffer through them? What principles (rules) can we take from His example and use for ourselves when in the midst of our own crucible (suffering)?
- Discuss this week's lesson about how our own suffering helps us to help others who are suffering. This might be true, but what are some of the problems we might have with this idea?
- Ellen G. White wrote above: "Let us trust God in the darkness and in the day, too." That is easier said than done. How can we help each other develop (build) the kind of faith that will help us to do just that? Why is it important to trust God in the bad times?