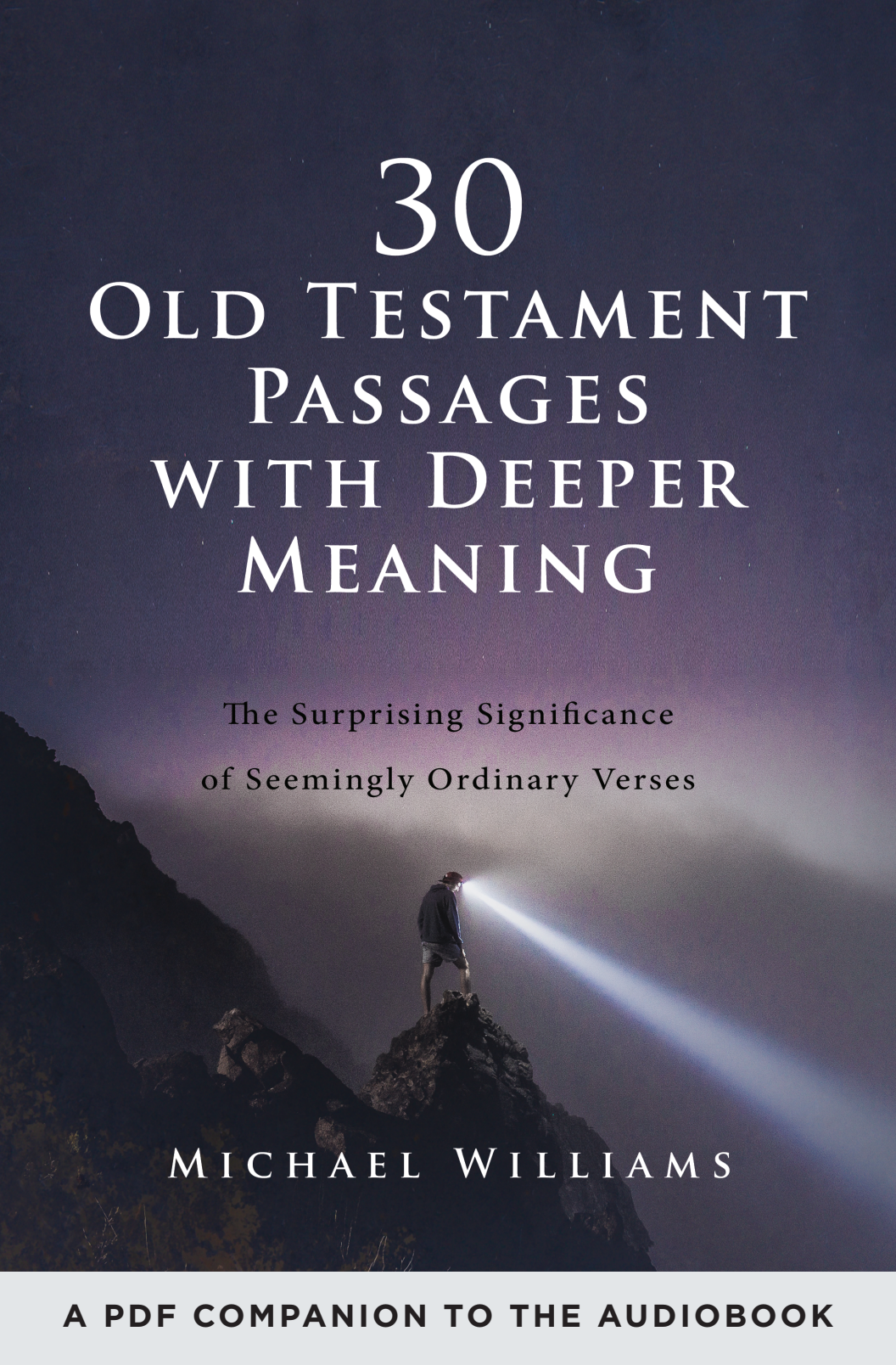


A person stands on a dark, rocky mountain peak at night. A bright beam of light from a flashlight held by the person illuminates the scene, creating a strong contrast with the dark background. The beam of light extends from the person towards the right side of the frame, highlighting the texture of the rocks and the surrounding environment.

30 OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES WITH DEEPER MEANING

The Surprising Significance
of Seemingly Ordinary Verses

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN

30 Old Testament Passages with Deeper Meaning

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Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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ONE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT LIKE THE OTHERS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Would your confidence in God be the same if he were also a part of the created realm? Is eternal life for human beings possible apart from an eternal God? Why or why not? What would human beings lose if God were a created, evolved, or evolving being?
2. Do you have any problem with the fact that Genesis 1:2 seems to be alluding to a creature from Babylonian mythology (Tiamat/*tāhôm*)? When the biblical author (or anyone else) refers to such a mythological creature, does that necessarily imply their belief in its actual existence?
3. Reflect on how God's creative activity in regeneration echoes his creative activity at the beginning of the Bible. How do the words that begin the Gospel of John reinforce this parallel?

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. What has been your understanding of the role of women with respect to men and the role of men with respect to women in society, in the church, in the home? Has this brief investigation into the meaning of *‘ezer kənegdô* modified your view?
2. How does your understanding of the created role of a person of the opposite gender affect the way you interact with that person? How could that interaction be modified to more accurately reflect what you have learned about the meaning of *‘ezer kənegdô*?
3. Do you think the divinely created role of a woman with respect to a man or of a man with respect to a woman can be fulfilled only within a marriage relationship? If not, what are some ways these divinely created roles of men and women can be fulfilled in the broader society outside the marriage relationship?

AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. God used Tamar to bring Judah to a realization that he was on the wrong track. Who has God used in your life to open your eyes to the emptiness of life apart from God? How could God use you to open someone else's eyes?
2. Does it make you feel uncomfortable that God used Tamar's sexual deception of her father-in-law as part of his redemptive plan to bring the Messiah into the world? Is God limited in the means he may use to accomplish his purposes? Are we? Is there a difference between God's moral compass and ours?
3. Tamar risked her life to provide life for her deceased husband. Judah offered his life to preserve the life of Benjamin. Jesus gave his life for us. Is there anything you would be willing to offer your life for? What are you currently giving your life to?

RECOGNIZING “RECOGNIZE”

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. God coordinated the confluence of the shrewdness of Tamar and the moral laxity of Judah to lead to Judah’s self-realization and the beginning of his transformation. How might God be working in the circumstances of your own life to cause you to recognize the truth about yourself?
2. Judah recognized Joseph as “the man who is lord over the land” (Gen 42:30, 33) but not as his brother. Joseph recognized Judah as his brother but didn’t recognize his transformed character. When Jesus came into the world, “the world did not recognize him” (John 1:10). Have you recognized Jesus for who he truly is? How could your recognition improve?
3. When God led Judah to recognize the truth about himself, his character changed dramatically. He became willing to sacrifice himself for another person—even someone who, by the world’s standards, was unjustly favored above him. Since God has led you to recognize the truth about yourself, how has this changed how you value others?

IN YOUR DREAMS

THE NARRATOR'S ACCOUNT OF PHARAOH'S TWO-PART DREAM (41:1-7)

GOOD COWS	GOOD GRAIN	BAD COWS	BAD GRAIN
יפות מראה	בריאות	רעות מראה	דקות
בריאת בשר	טבות	דקות בשר	שדופת קדים
יפת המראה	הבריאות	רעות המראה	דקות
הבריאת	מלאות	דקת הבשר	

PHARAOH'S ACCOUNT OF HIS TWO-PART
DREAM (41:17-24)

GOOD COWS	GOOD GRAIN	BAD COWS	BAD GRAIN
בריאות בשר	מלאת	דלות	צנמות
יפת תאר	טבות	רעות תאר מאד	דקות
בריאית	טבות	רקות בשר	שדפות קדים
		רקות	דקת
		רעות	

JOSEPH'S ACCOUNT OF PHARAOH'S TWO-PART
DREAM (41:25-27)

GOOD COWS	GOOD GRAIN	BAD COWS	BAD GRAIN
טבת	טבת	רקות	רקות
		רעת	שדפות הקדים

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. God placed Joseph in a situation where he was called upon to present the truth, even though that truth could negatively impact his circumstances. His news of a coming famine could have resulted in extended prison time for him or even death. The temptation to limit his message to only good news was surely present. What would you do if you were placed in a similar situation? Have you already experienced a situation like that?
2. Joseph's circumstances for over two years had been miserable. It would be hard enough for an Egyptian in prison, but as a foreigner Joseph would have found his situation even more difficult. He surely questioned why God had allowed those things to happen to him. Only later did he realize how God had used his experiences to accomplish "the saving of many lives." Have you had experiences that you later recognized God had used to accomplish his purposes?
3. Joseph was called to deliver a message to Pharaoh and his officials that would preserve their lives during a coming famine. But these were the very people whose justice system had resulted in his unjust imprisonment. How do you help those in an unjust system without contributing to the perpetuation of injustice?

IMAGE PROBLEMS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Many of us may have concluded that we're satisfying the second commandment by not making idols to worship. But the second commandment doesn't just tell us what we *should not* do, it also reminds us what we *should* be doing to experience life at its fullest, as God intended. How would you rate your progress toward this goal?
2. How do you think most unbelievers would describe a successful human being? Does the way you live your life show them that you think any differently? In what ways could unbelievers see that Christians value their relationship with God above everything else? If they can't see that we value our relationship with God by the way we live, does that mean Christians are guilty of violating the second commandment?
3. Bearing God's image well means nurturing our relationship with him. So what can believers do individually and corporately to deepen our relationship with God? What do we find the disciples and Jesus himself doing in the New Testament?

GRACE IN PLACE

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. God has reconciled believers to himself in Christ, “not counting people’s sin against them” (2 Cor 5:19). Consider how God’s gracious provision for the thief in Leviticus 6:1–5 reflects his gracious provision of Jesus Christ. Do you think the thief deserved the grace extended to him? Do you think we deserve the grace extended to us in Christ?
2. In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray that God would “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt 6:12). In what ways could your treatment of others reflect the forgiveness you have received from God? What wrongs do you have the hardest time forgiving?
3. The biblical provision for the treatment of a thief was strikingly different from the treatment a thief could expect in the surrounding cultures. Does your treatment of other believers, even those who have wronged you (by stealing from you or otherwise mistreating you), differ from the way unbelievers treat one another? How does this behavior advance or hinder the gospel message?

ENDURING WITNESSES

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Jesus has perfectly carried out all the requirements (i.e., the stipulations) of the covenant. So do the laws of Deuteronomy have any significance for believers today? What were those laws intended to achieve? How does that relate to what Christ offers believers? Do any relational obligations remain for believers to fulfill? What happens if believers don't fulfill them?
2. The historical prologue always preceded the stipulations in the ancient suzerain-vassal treaties. How does God's history with you motivate your faithfulness to him? Is God ever unfaithful? How do you explain Jesus's crying out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46).
3. The heavens and the earth testified that Jesus's life and death satisfied all the terms of God's covenant relationship with human beings. Does their testimony strengthen your faith? Can you explain why?

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

SAUL/ASK COMPARISON

Saul	<i>šā'ûl</i>
ask	<i>šā'al</i>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. If you were an Israelite during the time of Samuel (without knowing the end of this biblical story), which person would you want to be king over your nation: Saul, “as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and . . . a head taller than anyone else” (1 Sam 9:2), or David, a shepherd and the youngest son of Jesse (16:11)? Which do you value more in others, external characteristics or internal ones?
2. What are some negative consequences of making decisions that rely entirely on your own understanding, without seeking God’s guidance in prayer or his Word? Do you really believe God knows the best way for you to live? If so, how does your belief that God’s wisdom is greater than yours show up in practical ways in your life?
3. What does it mean to live under the rule of King Jesus? How would you describe this kind of life to a new believer? Does it mean we never get to choose what we want to do anymore? Or conversely, can we choose to do whatever we want and still call Jesus our king? Does our faith require obedience to anyone or anything? Or would that requirement confuse law with grace?

AROUND THE GLASSY SEA

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. The Israelites could hardly imagine any earthly force more powerful than the Mediterranean Sea to their west. And yet the glassy stillness of the Sea among the temple furnishings signifies that even this powerful force is impotent in the presence of an omnipotent God. What is the most fearsome force in your life? Do you believe God is more powerful?
2. The Israelites had the object lesson of the huge basin called the Sea to remind them of God's power and authority over a world that often seemed out of control. What object lesson do you have today to remind you that God still reigns in the midst of apparent chaos? Does the image of the cross accomplish this for you?
3. The waters of chaos and death are ultimately replaced by living water that comes from Jesus (John 4:10) and those who believe in him (7:38). In light of what you've learned about the symbolism of the Sea, what does God's living water mean for you in practical terms? Has it calmed any storms in your life?

THE LAST STRAW

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. King Rehoboam allowed his inexperienced friends to persuade him to go against the advice of the experienced elders who had served his father. What might have motivated him to do this? Have you ever been similarly motivated to go along with your friends instead of following the advice of those who knew better?
2. Because of Rehoboam's rejection of their appeal, ten tribes rejected him as their king and chose Jeroboam as their king instead. However, Jeroboam led those tribes into idolatry and ultimate ruin. How should the church today respond to leaders who abuse their authority like Rehoboam? How can the church avoid the error of following contemporary Jeroboams?
3. Jesus said he "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). What does following the leadership model of Jesus (instead of that of Rehoboam) look like as you exercise leadership in your family, business, community, or church?

A BIRD IN A CAGE

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. The king of Assyria appeared for a while as though he were stronger than God himself. Do any troubles in your life seem stronger than God's ability to deal with them? How might you remind yourself who is ultimately in control?
2. Why do you think God sometimes allows his own people to be confronted with circumstances or antagonists that seem to overwhelm them? Did it appear that circumstances or antagonists had overwhelmed Jesus? Reflect on how God might use these situations to advance his own redemptive purposes.
3. In the face of a great threat to his nation, King Ahaz turned away from his faith in the Lord to faith in the king of Assyria. And even King Hezekiah was willing to compromise his faith to avoid grave danger. Have you compromised your faith for a similar reason? Can you imagine any situation that would lead you to do so?

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Saul's unfinished business, his disobedience to God, resulted not only in harm to himself but ultimately in a threat to the continued existence of the Jewish people. In your own efforts to obey God, are there any areas of unfinished business?
2. Going along with the crowd sometimes seems like the best course of action. If Mordecai had bowed down to Haman along with everyone else, he would not have stirred up Haman's wrath. If Esther had followed custom and rejected Mordecai's instructions to enter the king's presence without being summoned, her life would not have been placed in jeopardy. Are you experiencing pressure from the crowd to "go along to get along"? What do you risk if you go with the crowd? What do you risk if you don't?

3. Although God is not explicitly mentioned in the book of Esther, his providential activity is obvious in Mordecai overhearing the plot on the king's life, in Esther being in a position to make an appeal to the king, in the king's insomnia leading to his reading the account of Mordecai's actions on his behalf, and in many other ways as well. Can you point to a situation in your life where you became aware of God's providential activity on your behalf?

THE CLOUD RIDER

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. When Christians engage with the culture, we must always decide what things from the culture align with our faith, what things must be rejected as contradictory to our faith, and what things can be accepted with modification. In Psalm 68:4, David accepted with (major) modification a description of a deity from Ugaritic mythology. What are some beliefs or practices from the surrounding culture that you believe a Christian can accept with modification? What things must be rejected? How do you deal with Christians who disagree with you about your decisions?
2. In Ugaritic mythology, Baal was credited as the source of natural phenomena such as thunder, lightning, and rain. Who or what do people credit as the source of these phenomena today? Fate? Chance? Mother Nature? What expressions used to describe these sources could you modify to appropriately apply to God?
3. If the Son of God returned today accompanied by powerful meteorological phenomena, would you be happy to see him? Or terrified? Why might that be?

HERE THERE BE DRAGONS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. In our passage (and, as we have seen, other biblical texts as well), Yam was used as a shorthand and metaphorical term to refer to real and present challenges to the authority of God and the well-being of his people. From your perspective, what things in your life or in the life of God's church could be called Yam today?
2. The psalmist used words drawn from Ugaritic mythology to give his readers and hearers a mental picture of God's power, supremacy, and certain victory over the forces of evil. That conceptual framework is understandably lost on most readers of the English Bible today because of their unfamiliarity with Ugaritic culture. What imagery from contemporary culture would you use to communicate the same idea?

3. The end of every enemy of God and his people is coming. Until then, however, the church continues to be under attack. In Revelation 12:9, the architect of these attacks is described in terms once again drawn from Ugaritic mythology: “the great dragon . . . that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.” What resources for spiritual warfare are available to God’s people until their enemies are eradicated?

STREET SMARTS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Have others taken advantage of you in the past? What advice would you give to someone so that they could avoid being taken advantage of in the same way? Your answer to this question will be your own proverb!
2. Knowing that the Hebrew words in Genesis 3:1 and Proverbs 1:4 are different forms of the same word, how would you translate these two verses so that this hidden connection is more obvious?
3. Do you associate naivete or guilelessness with goodness? If so, does Jesus's command to "be as shrewd as snakes" make you uncomfortable? Can a person have street smarts and retain their innocence at the same time?

WE'VE GOT YOUR NUMBER

THE HEBREW ALPHABET AND ITS NUMERICAL VALUES

HEBREW LETTER	NUMERICAL VALUE	HEBREW LETTER	NUMERICAL VALUE	HEBREW LETTER	NUMERICAL VALUE
א	1	י	10	ק	100
ב	2	כ	20	ר	200
ג	3	ל	30	ש	300
ד	4	מ	40	ת	400
ה	5	נ	50	ך	500
ו	6	ס	60	ם	600
ז	7	ע	70	ן	700
ח	8	פ	80	ף	800
ט	9	צ	90	ץ	900

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Is the wisdom described in 10:1–22:16 something that only the people of God can realize? If not, is there a difference between the wisdom of unbelievers and that of believers? If you think there is, can you give an example of each? If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, can those who fear the Lord benefit from the wisdom of those who don't?
2. Do you believe there is a difference between wisdom and holiness or sanctification? If so, how would you describe that difference? How does sin interfere with attaining wisdom? How might sin affect our motives, perceptions, or abilities? What resources do we have for growing in wisdom?
3. Reflect on how Jesus is the fulfillment of wisdom. How did he live in a way that reflects divine wisdom? Because Jesus is both human and divine, is it possible for us to live as he did? What do the commands to be wise found in the New Testament (Matt 10:16; Rom 16:19; 1 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:15; Col 4:5) add to our understanding?

DIVINE DESIGN

PARALLELS BETWEEN AMENEMOPE AND PROVERBS

AMENEMOPE	PROVERBS (22:17–24:22)
Give your ears, hear the sayings, give your heart to understand them; it profits to put them in your heart. . . . Let them rest in the casket of your belly. . . . They'll be a mooring post for your tongue. (III:9–16)	Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. (22:17–18)
Beware of robbing a wretch, of attacking a cripple. (IV:4–5)	Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court. (22:22)
Do not move the markers on the borders of fields. (VII:11)	Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your ancestors. (22:28)
[Riches] made themselves wings like geese, and flew away to the sky. (X:4–5)	Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. (23:5)

AMENEMOPE	PROVERBS (22:17-24:22)
Do not befriend the heated man, nor approach him for conversation. (XI.14)	Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered. (22:24)
The scribe who is skilled in his office, he is found worthy to be a courtier. (XXVII:16-17)	Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank. (22:29)

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Many people, Christians and non-Christians, try to persuade us that their way of life is the “wise” way. They may believe they are guided by insights they have gathered from general revelation. Of course, they may have correctly interpreted general revelation or they may have misinterpreted it. How do we determine which? In other words, what objective check is available to distinguish truth from error?
2. What are some examples of contemporary proverbs learned from observing creation and its creatures that align with truths about God and human responsibility to him that we find in Scripture?
3. Do you think it is possible for someone to come to a saving knowledge of God by general revelation alone, or is special revelation necessary as well? Throughout the history of the church, believers have answered this question differently. What does special revelation say about this issue?

EMBRACING WISDOM

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. How would you describe a wise person? How does the apostle Paul describe a wise person (1 Cor 1:18–31)? Is your description the same as his? Are there different kinds of wisdom? What kind of wisdom do you strive to attain?
2. Look at all the characteristics of wisdom described in Prov 31:10–31. Consider how all these attributes are true of Christ. Which of these attributes are also true of his church? Which are true of you?
3. Is it possible for a Christian to advance in business, academics, entertainment, or other fields in a society that holds an opposing view of what it means to be wise? Where is the line between adapting to the culture and compromising with it?

THE DEATH OF DEATH

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. How does the knowledge that death will ultimately be swallowed up in victory affect the way you face life? What does it mean to be among “those who have been brought from death to life” in Christ (Rom 6:13)?
2. How does the knowledge that death will ultimately be swallowed up in victory affect the way you face death? If Christ defeated death, what does it mean to “die with Christ” (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20)?
3. Does Isaiah’s use of a figure from Canaanite mythology to make his point about God disturb you? Is it okay to use references from popular culture when communicating the good news to other people? Are there any dangers in doing so?

THE PATH OF NO RETURN

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. When Jeremiah prophesied, the Babylonians were the mightiest nation on earth. In human terms, the nation of Judah did not have even a tenth of their power. If you had lived then, who do you think would have had more influence on you? The Babylonians, who had repeatedly attacked and defeated you? Or some religious figure who was at odds with the statements of most religious leaders and espoused views contrary to official government positions?
2. Today, scientific humanism and materialism are the dominant views in society. In human terms, the church does not have a tenth of their influence. Who has more influence on you? Those scientists, educators, and social icons who control every aspect of the culture? Or religious figures who call people back to seemingly antiquarian belief in and obedience to the God of the Bible?

3. Jeremiah's prophecy reminds us that God alone could and did ensure that the conditions of his covenant were finally and fully met by sending his Son to fulfill those conditions for us in a new relationship, a new covenant, that can never be broken. Does this amazing demonstration of God's love for you encourage your own faithful obedience? Or does the fact that Jesus fulfills the covenant on our behalf discourage your own faithful obedience?

BREAK TIME

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Does it trouble you that God directed Jeremiah to use a magical ritual from a foreign nation to get his message across to the Israelites? How might God's use of such an execration ritual be a further indictment of his people's polytheism? How does the place Jeremiah is commanded to perform this ritual corroborate this?
2. If you lived in ancient Egypt and were going to engage in an execration ritual of your own, whose names and what offensive acts would you write down on your clay jar? Might anyone write *your* name or actions on their own clay jar?
3. The names and behaviors of rebels were written on the clay jars to be smashed in the belief that what happened to the jars would happen to the rebels. What does it mean for your name to be written on Christ? What does it mean for his name to be written on you?

THE DESIGNATED DRINKER

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. At the Lord's Supper, when we "eat this bread and drink this cup, [we] proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). Consider how our drinking from the cup is a way of proclaiming to the Lord that we embrace his drinking the cup for us. How could you encourage other believers with this truth?
2. Reflect on what Jesus faced that night as he prayed on the Mount of Olives. It is hard enough to imagine the horrors of eternal judgment against our own sin, much less the judgment against the sin of every human being. But our understanding is impeded by our human limitations. Consider how much more clearly the Son of God understood the full implications of what was in store for him. Does his willingness to go through it anyway inform and strengthen your gratitude?

3. The cup filled with the wine of God's wrath must be drunk by "all who live on the earth" (Jer 25:29). There are only two options available for each human being to accomplish this horrifying task: allow Jesus to be our designated drinker or drink it ourselves. Does knowing this affect the urgency with which you communicate the gospel to your family and friends? Is it possible for you to comprehend the magnitude of what Jesus has done for you and not share this with other people?

THE BIGGER THEY ARE

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. How does it make you feel to know that everyone who opposes God and his people will ultimately experience God's judgment? Do you feel relief? Joy? Sorrow? How does it make you feel to know that we all deserve God's judgment?
2. In Jeremiah's day, by all human standards, Babylon appeared to be the mightiest force on earth and so was a fitting representative of all seemingly insuperable threats to God's people and challenges to God's authority. What do you think best represents those threats today?
3. Imagine you lived among God's people in Jeremiah's day. Do you think you would have been able to continue to believe that God was in control? In your circumstances today, who seems to be in control, Babylon (figuratively speaking) or God? What could encourage you to continue to trust in God, even during the difficult and confusing times?

CRUMBLING INTO CHAOS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. The author of Lamentations mourned the consequences of God's judgment against the nation's faithlessness. Now that Jesus has paid the price for our faithlessness, do you think it is right that Christians should face hardships? Jesus was perfectly faithful. Do you think it was right that *he* faced hardships? How can God's "compassions never fail" (Lam 3:22) while his people suffer?
2. Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). What do you think Jesus meant by that? Do you think it is possible to have peace and trouble at the same time? If so, how? Is it true in your own life?
3. How should a believer pray about their own or others' hardship? In other words, should the lament of a believer today be any different from that of a believer before the crucifixion? How can the Christian community encourage those who are suffering? Would this encouragement look any different or be any more effective (if at all) than what a non-Christian support group could provide?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Through his prophet Hosea, God gave his people a nickname that captured the essence of their character. What nickname do you think captures the essence of the character of God's people today? What nickname do you think captures the essence of your own relationship with God?
2. Do you think God's relentless love obviates the requirement of judgment that sin and rebellion merit? Hosea was speaking to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the days right before they were conquered and exiled by Assyria. How does God's continued love for his people square with what they experienced?
3. Even though God, through Hosea's prophecy, made it abundantly clear that he was aware that "stubbornness" and "Israel" are almost synonymous terms, he nevertheless reasserted his continued love for them. How does this kind of love differ from contemporary understandings of love? As the Holy Spirit transforms Christians to be more like Jesus, what should this kind of love look like in us?

NOMEN EST OMEN

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Does God still judge his people as he did in Micah's day? Have his standards changed? Does the judgment Jesus experienced on behalf of believers change the dynamic of judgment? If so, how?
2. Micah prophesied hope at the same time he prophesied judgment. The towns he listed would all experience hard times before they would see any deliverance. Consider how this historical situation foreshadows Jesus's crucifixion. How might Micah's twofold prophecy be reflected, for example, in Jesus's words at the Last Supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20)?
3. Micah 4:5 says, "All the nations may walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." Considering what you read in this chapter, what do you think it means to "walk in the *name* of the LORD"?

NOWHERE TO RUN, NOWHERE TO HIDE

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. It would have been hard for an Israelite to believe that their tiny nation would outlast the seemingly invincible Assyrians, who had pushed them around for so many years. Yet God had set a limit to their depredations, and he would ultimately remove Assyria from the world stage. What seemingly invincible enemies are you facing? Do you believe God is in control of them?
2. Nahum's name means "comfort" or "comforted" in Hebrew. Does it comfort you to know that one day God will judge all those who oppose him and his people? If so, do you feel guilty for deriving comfort from that knowledge?
3. The Bible says that Christ died for sinners (Rom 5:8) and the unrighteous (1 Pet 3:18), in other words for those who oppose God and his people. But we have received forgiveness and comfort from God instead of the judgment we deserved. How do these truths motivate us to pass this forgiveness and comfort on to others (2 Cor 1:4)?

LEX TALIONIS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. The form of Nahum's prophecy has been carefully constructed to reflect the *lex talionis*, the principle of proportionality between an offense and its punishment. What do you think would be a proportional punishment for the offenses you've committed in your life? Do you think eternal punishment is proportional?
2. Through our faith in Jesus, God forgives our guilt and does not punish us as our sins deserve. Is this a violation of the principle of proportionality? Jesus was perfectly obedient to the Father's will and yet was crucified for our sins. How does this fit with the principle of proportionality? Or doesn't it?
3. In Matthew 5:38–42, Jesus seems to turn the principle of proportionality on its head. He says,

You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

How does the fact that our overwhelming sin has been paid for by Jesus’s death (his experience of overwhelming judgment) on our behalf change the calculation of the principle of proportionality?

FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Does your life reflect God's spiritual DNA? Can people recognize in you, a child of God, any attributes of your Father? Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). What kind of person do people see when they look at you?
2. What area of your life or personality most clearly reflects to others something true about God? What area of your life or personality may lead others to conclude something untrue about God?
3. What does the fragmentation of the Christian church communicate to unbelievers about the God we claim to serve? Does Christian unity trump theological orthodoxy? How does a believer decide what theological or social issues are worth compromising the truth about the unity of God?

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