

dr matthew jacoby

# thrive

NOV'25-JAN'26

Matthew Jacoby (B.Th. B.Litt. Hons, Ph.D.) is the senior pastor at OneHope Church in Geelong, Victoria. He is Lecturer in Christian Thought at the Melbourne School of Theology and he is the lead member of the acclaimed psalms-project band, Sons of Korah.

Matthew is also the author of *Deeper Places* (Baker, 2013), a book that explores the spirituality of the psalms.



Copyright © Five Pty Ltd 2025  
Published 2025 by Five Pty Ltd  
PO Box 3055 Geelong West  
Victoria 3218 Australia

Executive Editor - Deb Lynn  
Development and marketing - Five Pty Ltd  
Design and layout - Stephen Cooling  
Printed in Singapore by KHL Printing Co. Pte Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing of Five Pty Ltd.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

# THIS ISSUE

# thrive

NOV'25-JAN'26

## JOB, ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SOLOMON

— the path to wisdom

In this edition of Thrive we will turn to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and read through Job and Ecclesiastes. These books are truly profound and give us something quite unique to themselves. They look to orient the reader with a perspective on life that will make firm ground for the changing circumstances of everyday experience. The book of Job in particular has been an important basis for me as a student and teacher of philosophy and has personally impacted me in significant ways. I hope to reflect what I have gained from this book. So, join me in this edition of Thrive as we read through these amazing works of biblical philosophy.

MJ

## The Practice of the Presence of God – Romans **5:1-5**

In this issue of Thrive, with an emphasis on wisdom literature, I will be sharing valuable insights each weekend that I have collected over the years from various authors. Today, some gleanings from a humble lay monk called Brother Lawrence who served in the kitchen of a Carmelite monastery in Paris in the seventeenth century:

*He said that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God's Presence by continually communing with Him. He said that we ought to relate to God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, and imploring His assistance in our affairs as they happen. In his experience, God never failed to grant help. The same was true of his work in the kitchen (to which he had a natural aversion). He proceeded to do everything there for the love of God, praying continually for God's grace to do his work well. In this manner he had found everything easy during the fifteen years that he had been employed there.*

*The set times of prayer were no different for him than other times. He secluded himself to pray, according to the directions of his Superior. But he did not need such solitude, nor did he ask for it. Even the busiest work did not distract him from his communion with God.*

Brother Lawrence reminds me that God does not want an intermittent relationship with us, but a constant one. He is speaking to you all the time.

Read Romans 5:1-5. Ask God to make you more aware of his presence throughout your day.

We don't know when the book of Job was written or who wrote it, but it is a masterpiece of ancient Jewish wisdom literature. Solomon tells us: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). The book of Job is the outworking of this principle in the harrowing story of this mysterious figure, Job. Job found the fear of the Lord. He found himself trembling in awe before the majesty of the Holy God from whom even the angels hide their face. And in that experience was ultimate wisdom for Job. Unless we know God, we know nothing. God is the fundamental ground of all reality and therefore all knowledge is grounded in a knowledge of God. Solomon also wrote: "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom, though it cost all you have" (Proverbs 4:7). Job got wisdom and it did indeed cost all he had. He was stripped of everything and left with God alone. Sometimes it is not until God is all you have that you realise God is all you need. Job didn't get a reason from God for his suffering, but he met with God himself. Job went to a very dark place and in that dark place of suffering and grief he encountered the light of God. The light shines brightest in the darkest places and so it was for Job. Are you in a dark place? If you are, then you are in the best place to meet with God.

Read Job 1 and 2

Ask God to reveal himself to you.

# THE HEAVENLY CHALLENGE

TUESDAY

4 NOV

## Job 1

When you read Job 1 yesterday you gained a perspective that Job himself was not given. Job was in the centre of a great spiritual battle and all the angels of heaven were looking on. At stake was nothing less than the glory of God. Satan claimed free reign over the earth. He gained this free reign because the stewards of the earth, mankind, had yielded to him and given him refuge in the realm that God had given them to rule over (Genesis 1:26). Satan was now 'the prince of this world' (John 12:31) due to man's allegiance and so he boasted about that before God. Man's authority over the earth was real and therefore so too was the right that Satan gained, by deception, from mankind, to rule the earth. God does not revoke his gifts and calling (Romans 11:29). What man decreed for himself was therefore what he got, and God did not interfere and take back man's authority. If man chose to give that authority away, so be it. Human beings got the oppressive overlord that they chose, and so it was that Satan could boast before God and not be destroyed. In response, God points to Job as if to say, "You don't rule over this one". Even one person not yielded to Satan is a threat to his dominion on earth and so the challenge was serious. How does heaven look upon your life? Can God boast in you? Are you overcoming evil by the grace given to you in Jesus Christ and by the power of his Spirit? You can, but are you?

Read Job 1 again

Reflect on how God sees you and ask him to strengthen you to stand against the devil's schemes.

WEDNESDAY

5 NOV

TO NEED GOD

Job 1, Psalm 27 & Psalm 73

Job worshipped. That is how he responded when he lost everything. I find this to be one of the most stunning and profound moments recorded in the whole Bible. Job lost everything but he would not lose God. He refused to live without God. This singleheartedness is the foundation of wisdom. And that is what this book is about: the attainment of wisdom. Wisdom is not just a matter of knowing *about* truth. It involves a deep spiritual alignment with reality. And the reality is that we need God in the most fundamental sense. To feel this need is, therefore, to be spiritually aligned with reality; and that is true wisdom. We see a similar singleheartedness expressed by David, in a similarly low point in his life, in Psalm 27:4: “One thing I ask, one thing I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:4). The psalmist, Asaph, also declared, in the midst of his suffering: “Whom have I in heaven but you, and the earth has nothing I desire apart from you” (Psalm 73:25). These men discovered what Job knew in this moment: God is all we need. There are many things we may want and many people that we love, but God is the only one we *need*. With God we have everything; without him we have nothing. Sit still for a while and let every thought be taken captive to this one simple truth: you need God. Let no other desire or thought enter your mind, for without God everything you might otherwise think about is futile.

Read Psalm 27 and Psalm 73 in the light of Job 1  
Be still and desire God above all.

It got worse for Job. It didn't get better, it got worse. He was faithful, he worshipped God, and yet it only got worse. Have you ever had this experience? You seek God in your distress, you worship God; perhaps you even find him in that place. You expect, then, that things will get better because, after all, you are with God. But things get worse. God goes with you, but the road goes deeper into darkness just when you thought there was no deeper place to go. This was Job's experience. He had lost all his possessions and even his children. Already, when I read this much, I barely want to imagine the suffering of this man. But it got worse. Job himself was struck with a terrible, painful skin disease. At this point, even his wife turned on him and Job was alone, very alone, in that terrible isolation that suffering creates. So, Job suffered. And all of heaven looked on in tense silence, waiting for his response. "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" That is what Job said to his wife. In other words: "Shall we not let God be God?" Never was there a moment in which God was glorified in a person more than this; never, except on one occasion. For God himself would become a man, Jesus Christ, and, in him, would suffer even more grievously than Job. And he did this to save us from the greatest suffering of all: the consequences of our sin.

Read Job 2 again

Christ died so that you could know God. Ask God to give you what he paid so dearly for.

Job never knew what was happening in heaven. He never knew that he was at the centre of a great heavenly battle. This perspective would not have provided an adequate explanation for his suffering, but it may have helped him through. Job didn't know he was at the centre of a heavenly battle, but *we do know* that about ourselves. We are told this in the Bible (Ephesians 6:10ff). There is more spiritual activity around your life right now than you could even begin to imagine. Principalities and powers are at war over you. Heaven is watching you all the time, at times grieving and at times rejoicing. There is more to life than work and play. There is much more. "Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness," said Jesus (Matthew 6:33). You are a portal of God's kingdom on earth. Your life is a light in dark places. You are a vessel of the glory of God sent to shine in dark places. And, yes, God may take you to dark places. Like Job, it is your worship and your desire for him that makes you shine. As God was glorified in Job's determination to hold onto God so he wants you to shine. Our lives are determined and distinguished by what we pursue. You are shaped by what you pursue. If you seek the light of God's presence, then you will be filled with light and you will shine in the darkness. It's better to have hardship and be filled with light than have pleasure and be filled with darkness.

Read Job 1 and 2 again

Reflect on those parts that you have found most impacting.