



**Sermon Based Small Group  
Leader Discussion Guide**

**Sermon Title: "How to Have a Clear Conscience"**

**Sermon Title: "Faith Expressed Through Clenched Teeth"**

**Sermon by Keith Cogburn  
Week of November 7, 2010**

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<b>Icebreaker</b>	<p>Can you recall a time, either from childhood or more recently, when you hoped for something, deep within your bones, despite everything that was going on around you? Where did that hope come from?</p>
<b>Big Idea</b>	<p>True faith in God is not based on our circumstances. Where reason and understanding fall short, absolute trust in God's goodness and his involvement in our life upholds us</p>
<b>Study Introduction</b>	<p><b>Leader Note:</b> Taken from Nelson's <u>New Illustrated Bible Dictionary</u> The events described in the Book of Job must have occurred many centuries before they were finally written. Job may have lived during the time of the patriarch Abraham, about 2000 B.C. like Abraham, Job's wealth was measured in flocks and herds. In patriarchal fashion, Job's married children were a part of his household, living in separate tents but subject to his rule as leader of the family clan. This story of Job and his misfortunes was probably passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation for several hundred years. Finally, it was put in writing by an unknown author probably during Solomon's time -thus assuring its preservation for all future generations.</p>
	<p><b>Can be read by group participants:</b> The Old Testament book of Job, classified as a Wisdom Book, is stylistically</p>

a dramatic poem. This book is named for its main character, the patriarch Job, and deals with several universal questions, among them why the righteous suffer. Early in the book, Satan assaulted Job, a wealthy, highly respected community leader. These assaults were allowed by God for the purpose of showing that Job's devotion to God is grounded in faith and not prosperity, and resulted in the loss of Job's children, all his possessions, and his health. His wife, offering her best wisdom, told Job to "Curse God and die" (2:9). Then Job's friends visit to comfort him (Job 2:11-13). By the time we get to chapter 19, today's text, we find Job sitting on a dung-heap, scraping his sores with a shard of pottery, engaged in the second of three cycles of debates with his friends over the cause of his suffering. Here is a man in agony, physically and emotionally. Could things get any worse for Job? Yes! Job is also suffering spiritually. Job, like the other characters introduced in this Old Testament book, grew up believing that good things happen to good people. They were all aware of the Israelite law that stated, "Fear God, and be blessed." Conversely, suffering was understood as a clear sign of God's displeasure. He believed that this was the way the world worked because he believed that this was the nature of God. If people made presented their sacrifices to God and worshiped him, worked hard and cared for their family, then God would prevent anything bad from happening to them. Job had faith that if he held up his end of the bargain, God would, too. But we can see that's not what happened. So, in addition to the physical suffering from the boils, on top of the emotional suffering that came from losing his family and everything he'd spent his whole life working for, Job was also suffering because his concept of God, his understanding of the nature of God, is gone. Literally everything Job thought he knew has been proven wrong and perhaps this spiritual suffering was the most painful of all. Sometimes our faith and the reality of our circumstances seem to be in conflict. Yet, in spite of his confusion about his circumstances and what he thought he understood about God, Job repeatedly appealed his case to one who would care, one who could set things to rights. He believed in his own and righteousness in God's power to intervene.

1. While trying to sort through difficult circumstances, have you experienced poor, but well-meaning, advice from friends or loved ones?

**Leader: (follow up question) What are some characteristics of bad advice?**

2. What qualities do you look for in a person with whom you will share your doubts, suffering, and the big questions of life?

3. When I go through hard times I tend to (more than 1 could apply):

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reach out to others as a way of working through issues;</li> <li>b. Share with only a select few that I trust;</li> <li>c. Feel the need to explain my blamelessness;</li> <li>d. Hear that I'm defensive from those with whom I'm sharing;</li> <li>e. Ignore the problems;</li> <li>e. Request prayer support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Job is feeling the sting of his friends' words. He desires an outside party to plea his case, someone to vindicate him and restore his lost honor. Read today's text.</b></p>
<b>Sermon Text</b>	<p>Job 19:23-27a</p> <p><b>23</b> “Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, <b>24</b> that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! <b>25</b> I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. <b>26</b> And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; <b>27</b> I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!</p>
<b>Digging Deeper</b>	<p><b>Learning more about the lesson</b></p> <p><b>Leader Note: word study of Redeemer.</b></p> <p><b><u>From The Oxford Companion to the Bible</u></b></p> <p><b>“The Hebrew verb generally translated “to redeem” is ga'al. Its basic idea involves doing something on behalf of others because they are unable to do it for themselves. The motivation to redeem someone is most often familial obligation. If no relative steps forward, however, the king is expected to take up that person's duty. Whoever the redeemer is, in the act of redemption, he or she is providing for the redeemed as a man would provide for his own immediate family.”</b></p> <p>4. Think of some times when it would be very helpful to have someone like</p>

this in your corner? **Leader: (follow up question) If you have been through a time like this, did you find someone who would stand for you when you longer could?**

Now read Psalm 17:1-3, 6-9, this week's Call to Praise text:

A prayer of David.

**1** Hear me, LORD, my plea is just; listen to my cry. Hear my prayer—it does not rise from deceitful lips. **2** Let my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right. **3** Though you probe my heart, though you examine me at night and test me, you will find that I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed.

**6** I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. **7** Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. **8** Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings **9** from the wicked who are out to destroy me, from my mortal enemies who surround me.

**Leader Note: Between Job's words and those written by King David, we recognize similar images and a common appeal for help. Both men justified themselves as above reproach in order to convince God to take their side. Christians believe that God the Father has justified us as blameless of sin through our faith in Jesus Christ. Christians believe Jesus Christ is our ultimate Redeemer.**

5. List every word David and Job used to describe the Lord's actions to his beloved, to those who call in his name in faith.

6. Have you been the recipient of this kind of action toward you from a loving God?

**Taking It Home**

**How will I live it? Apply it?**

7. Have you ever observed someone going through an ordeal with

“clenched-teeth” faith? Assuming that this made some impact on you, did it affect the way you deal with hardship? With the way you live out your faith?

8. How would knowing that people were watching the way you deal with hard times make a difference to the way you respond to circumstances?

9. What are the blessings or rewards of faithfulness that flow to those who cling to God by faith in hard times? **Leader Note: The idea behind this question is to invite the group members to consider the blessings that flow to those who are given grace to express faith through clenched teeth.**

Reread today’s Big Idea. Two scriptures that confirm the truth of this assertion are found in Hebrews 11:1 (“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see”) and 2 Corinthians 5:7 (“For we live by faith, not by sight”).

**Prayer Focus**

**How can I connect with God and others through prayer?**

<b>Updates</b>	<b>Announcements from:</b> Care Coordinator Outreach Coordinator Social Coordinator