Memory Text: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:34)

Setting The Stage: Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it."

"Most commentators agree that it is difficult to pinpoint the time and place that the book of Job was written. Ellen G. White mentions that Moses wrote the book of Job during his sojourn in Midian, sometime between 1490 and 1450 B.C., before the exodus from Egypt took place (see SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1140). Rabbinic tradition in the Talmud also suggests Moses as the author (Tractate Baba Bathra 14b).

"However, the story itself could possibly have been much older, and some have connected it with the patriarchal period and the time of Abraham (around 2000 B.C.). The reference to the land of Uz in Job 1:1 has been connected to Lamentations 4:21, in which Jeremiah refers to Uz in parallelism to Edom. The fauna and flora of Edom reflect the imagery used in the book of Job; for example, the mining activities described in Job 28:1–11, which use five different words for gold and thirteen different terms for precious gems and metals...

"Some have also suggested that Job was not a historical person at all and that the book is more a literary wisdom composition than a historical account. While the book is definitely highly literary and poetical in character, there are other biblical authors who refer to Job as a historical character (cp. Ezek. 14:14, 20; James 5:11).

"Nevertheless, geographical and temporal references are sparse throughout the book, resulting in a work with a strong universal and timeless message. At the same time, it is comforting to know that Job was a real person who suffered as many of us do." (Adult Teachers Bible Study Guide, The Book Of Job, pp. 54, 55)

Sunday / God In Nature
Isaiah 1:5, 6, 18; Romans 1:20; Job 12:7-10

I like a good book about interesting facts. I picked one up some years ago entitled, “Life’s Imponderables” by David Feldman. Essentially, it’s a book dedicated to trying to find answers to civilization’s most perplexing questions. An imponderable is simply something difficult to resolve, a problem that is complicated to figure out. Maybe you've sought for the answers to some of life's obvious imponderables: Why do dogs walk around in circles before lying down? Why is the telephone touch-tone
pad arranged differently from the calculator? Why do clocks run clockwise? When do fish sleep? Why don't cats like to swim?

Although some of his answers are fun, he does make a good case with some of his findings. A question he did not seek to answer, however, is one that humanity has grappled with for millennia: Why does God allow suffering? It’s a big question, one with tremendous implications. The story of Job is a story of human suffering. Job represents us all in our suffering.

The suffering we see around us and even our own personal suffering often bring with it questions like: "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?" "Why doesn't God solve our problems?" "Does God actually care?" "Does God even exist?"

I believe it's dangerous to remove God from the picture when discussing human suffering. Firstly, it's a hard job to deny the existence of God.

**Romans 1:20:** "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."

It's hard to escape the notion of an Intelligent Designer when looking at objects in nature. The complexity, detail, and craftsmanship in the smallest and largest of objects all speak of the existence of a Creator. If you walked along the beach one day and came across a sand castle that wasn’t there the last time you walked the same beach, no one would surmise that it just showed up by accident! I like the way the author of the lesson puts it:

“A smartphone...which looks designed, acts designed, reveals design both inside and out, and works only through design is, of course, designed. But a human being, who looks designed, acts designed, reveals design both inside and out, and works only through design is, we are assured, a product of pure chance alone. Sadly, many people are deceived into believing such claims.”

Even though Job suffers greatly (more than many have had to endure physically), does He leave God out of the equation?

**Job 12:7-10:** "But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this, in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?" Even though Job suffered greatly, he didn't deny the existence of God.

Satan's attack on Job is really directed against the character of God. This contention lies at the heart of the great controversy. Resolving the conflict over God’s character
must be derived from what He has revealed about Himself, not through what Satan has made Him out to be.

God reveals Himself through general and special revelation, but because of sin we especially need special revelation, which God provided through His Word and Jesus. While general revelation points to God and does help answer some questions, only God’s special revelation provides true answers.

Monday / Nothing Came From Itself
John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16, 17

British atheist Bertrand Russell told the story of how, in his youth, he wrestled with questions about the existence of God. Up until he was 18 years old, he said he had believed in God, but then found himself confronted with the question of first causes. If everything that came into being had a cause (that something prior to it had created it) then what existed prior to God? From that point on he stopped believing that creation itself showed that God had to exist.

The question, “Who created God?” is misleading. It makes no sense because God by definition always existed. It’s the same as asking why a circle is round. Only two kinds of existence are possible: that which was created (and once didn’t exist) and that which has always existed and, thus was never created. What other options are there?

John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

Colossians 1:16, 17: “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

Can a person really be 100% certain that God doesn’t exist? To say that you are certain is to suggest you know all there is to know in the world and the universe, and that can’t be right. If you knew about 15% of all that there was to know (which would be a pretty impressive feat in and of itself) and you insisted on there being no God, can you be certain that God doesn’t exist in the other 85% of the information you don’t have?

Does God really exist? It is more than reasonable to believe He exists. Don’t let what appears to be perplexing and troubling cause you to lose confidence in His existence. God has good reasons to ask us to believe in Him.
Tuesday / The Earliest Of Books
Matthew 6:34; John 16:33; Matthew 24:7

Sadly there are many who justify their belief in there being no God because of the problem of human suffering and evil. How can God be all-good and all-powerful and let evil exist? This has been a stumbling block to many, even Christians.

Writing about when the book of Job was penned, Ellen White wrote: “The long years amid desert solitudes were not lost. Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.” (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1140)

“What this tells us is that of the first two books of the Bible ever penned, one of them, Job, deals with the universal issue of human pain and suffering. That is, God knew that this would be a big question for humans, and thus, right from the start, in the Word, He had Moses pen the story of Job. God let us know, early on, that we are not left alone in our pain and suffering but that He is there, He knows all about it, and we can have the hope that He will make it right in the end.”

The reality of evil is evident. The Bible writers, and even Jesus Himself, didn’t try to avoid the issue. Jesus reminds us that each day has its own problems (Matt. 6:34), that we would experience tribulation (John 16:33), and that war, disease, and famine would continue unto the end of time (Matt. 24:7). Although there is pain and suffering, these realities aren’t an excuse to believe that God doesn’t exist. Job didn’t disbelieve. Asking why he or why any one of us would have to go through such an ordeal is, however, a fair question.

Wednesday / The Dilemma
Job 6:4-8; 9:1-12; 10:8-12

Because we believe in God and we trust Him, questions/inquiries about why we are going through a difficult situation are reasonable. What would an atheist ask? They already believe life has no meaning, and that their existence is founded on chance. Trials would then not serve any purpose. They would be meaningless. But to someone of faith, we realize there’s a grand design and that there must be a reason for the trials and disappointment we experience. Listen to how Job wrestled with this question:

Job 6:4-8. Job seems to think God is the author of his trouble and this thought greatly adds to his suffering as he can’t understand why God would treat him like this. He believes he has a legitimate argument and contends that God needs to answer.
**Job 9:1-12.** Here Job acknowledges the omnipotence of God as well as his own impotence, and yet launches into another complaint about his afflictions. With the passing of time and the ceaseless effects of pain, Job’s spirits are weakened. Trust has given way to feelings of helplessness. Instead of recognizing God’s wisdom and love, he only sees his weakness.

**Job 10:8-12.** Do you hear the conflict in Job’s speeches? Job recognizes the keeping power of God, from his conception to adulthood, but this recognition only increases the question of why God is dealing with him in this manner.

It’s easy to tell Job to snap out of it. After all, we know some of why he is undergoing this incredible hardship. But why is it so easy to tell someone else to pull up their proverbial socks, and it’s so hard for us to do the same? How can we learn to trust the goodness of God despite what we might be going through?

**Thursday / Theodicy**

Romans 3:1-4, 25, 26; Revelation 15:3

**Romans 3:1-4.** Though the immediate context is the unfaithfulness of some of God’s covenant people, what is the bigger issue that Paul is talking about here? What is Paul saying about God? It has to do with theodicy. Theodicy is the vindication of God’s goodness in view of the existence of evil. Essentially, it’s the theme of great controversy.

Paul quotes from Ps. 51:4 where David expresses his deep repentance for his sin with Bathsheba and acknowledged that God was just in the condemnation and punishment of the sin. Paul appeals to these words in support of his argument in v. 3 that the unfaithfulness of men has by no means nullified the faithfulness of God, but rather has served to establish God’s goodness. On a universal scale, God’s character and justice are on trial before men and angels. Paul argues that ultimately it will be seen that God is good and the devil a liar.

“Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan’s rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan’s own works have condemned him. God’s wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created.” (The Great Controversy, pp. 670, 671)

**Revelation 15:3:** “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!” When it’s all said and done, God’s character will be vindicated.
“Christian writer and apologist C. S. Lewis wrote a book talking about the death of his wife and his struggle to come to terms with that death. In it he wrote, “Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not ‘So there’s no God after all,’ but ‘So this is what God’s really like. Deceive yourself no longer.’” – A Grief Observed (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), pp. 6, 7.

This is the question that Job struggled with. He never doubted God’s existence, but he did struggle with the question of God’s character. He wrestled with the bottom line question: What is God really like? And is this not what the great controversy is really about? The question is not about God’s existence but about His character.

And though so much is involved in resolving the great controversy, there’s no question that the death of Jesus on the cross more than anything else revealed to the cosmos the true character of our Creator. The cross shows us that God is a God in whom we can all trust.

Romans 3:24, 25: “Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Appeal: The character of God lies at the center of the great controversy and also behind most questions of human suffering. The cross is a place we must often visit to remind ourselves of the greatest display of love ever given to mankind.