

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 3, Year 3

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 3, Year 3

Date Completed

____/____/____

Writings

[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments:

____/____/____

Biblical Interpretation:

[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

____/____/____

Personal Devotions:

[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

Participant Signature

Mentor Signature

I: Writings

1. The “Writings” are one of the three main traditional divisions of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is divided into “the Law” or “Torah”, “the Prophets” which includes the remaining narrative books and the Prophetic books. These books carry the story of Israel after Moses, through the exile and the return, including the oracles given to Israel through the prophets before, during and after the exile. The third section is the “Writings” which include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. You can see from the list and intuit from its title that the “Writings” are a bit of a catch-all.
2. Job:
 - a. Skim the book of Job.
 - b. If you page through it you will find spots of narrative and a lot of discussion. The book of Job wrestles with the problem of evil. Different religions deal with the question of evil differently. Paganism and folk religions like to infer easy one to one relationships between bad things happening and their victims culpability. “You must have done something to really upset someone for such a bad thing to happen to you!” Adherents to these religions spend a great deal of time, money, effort and anxiety working the spiritual “system” to avoid calamity and bring prosperity. In these worldviews gods tend to be corrupt, capricious, mischievous, and susceptible to bribery and manipulation. In many pantheistic schemes evil is either part of the illusion of the “reality” we experience or “god play”. The Biblical worldview allows neither of these positions. God is Holy and free. He cannot be manipulated and he certainly not subject to bribery. He also is not a personification of karma where a mechanistic moral machinery deals out good to the good and payback to the evil. The book of Job opens with Satan offering a serious challenge to God’s justice in the world. Satan’s claim is simple: “the good are good because it pays for them.” In other words, “goodness” is a surface act as a means of manipulating God, and God complies. God accepts the challenge, removing “the hedge”, allowing devastation to fall upon Job. The rest of the story is an amazing playing out of issues involved. How can we square a good, all powerful God and the seemingly purposeless suffering of the righteous?
 - c. Answer the following questions:
 - i. Where do Job’s friends come down on the subject?
 - ii. How does Job hold up under the “comfort” of his pals?
 - iii. Where does Job finally go in this journey?
 - iv. When God answer Job, what does he say?
 - v. What do you think is the message of the Book of Job on evil? Do you find it satisfactory?
3. Psalms This is likely the most familiar book of “The Writings” to you. A good, brief introduction to the Psalms can be found in the introduction to the book in the NIV Study Bible. Get a hold of that introduction (if you can’t locate on, let me know and I’ll make a

copy of my own for you) and read it carefully. There is a lot to learn in it. Another good and brief introduction to the Psalms can be found in How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth.

4. Wisdom: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs
 - a. Read the "Wisdom" chapter in How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth.
 - b. Wisdom literature is deeply tied to general revelation. As the chapter in How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth brings out one must avoid taking sayings in these books as and changing them in to promises from God. If you listen carefully you may hear other preachers doing this. Wisdom does not profess to yield "insider information" or turn the Bible into a guidebook for those who desire to become rich and famous. Wisdom seeks to instruct the listener on the prudent and wise course of life that, generally speaking, will yield blessedness and righteousness.
 - c. How does the book of Job balance out the temptation to read Proverbs as a guide to happiness and prosperity?
 - d. In How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth they noted that the two authors (Fee and Stuart) had differing opinions on how to understand the Book of Ecclesiastes. What do you think of the two choices? What is your take?

II. Biblical Interpretation

Write a lesson (or series of lessons) , or preach a sermon (or series of sermons) on something out of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Song of Songs. Write a paragraph or two (no more than one side of a sheet of paper) on the issues you had to deal with in properly understanding the passage as wisdom and how that impacted your sermon or lesson.

III. Personal Devotion

Spend some time talking with your mentor about your devotional life. Talk to him/her about what your devotional discipline looks like. What frustrations are you or have you gone through? What have you found to be fruitful? What does "fruitfulness" look like or feel like? Do you use the Bible exclusively for devotions or are there other books that you use? Ask your mentor about their devotional life. What do they find helpful? What kind of routines do they have? Where? When? Etc.