



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Praise Him in the Storm

WHEN LIFE FALLS APART

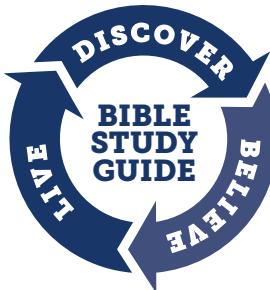
A STUDY OF JOB

Craig West

Benny Bryant

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Dallas, Texas

*Praise Him in the Storm: When Life Falls Apart—
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide*

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 8-9 and on the first page of each lesson.
 - Make and post a chart that indicates the date each lesson will be studied.
 - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.gc2press.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.gc2press.org under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- E. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.
- F. You can receive the lesson preview each week by signing up for the Baptist Standard weekly newsletter at no cost.
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Do you use a Kindle?

This Connect 360 *Bible Study Guide*, along with several other studies, is available in a Kindle edition. The easiest way to find these materials is to search for "GC2 Press" or "BaptistWay" on your Kindle or go to www.amazon.com/kindle and do a search for "GC2 Press" or "Baptistway." The Kindle edition can be studied not only on a Kindle but also on your smartphone or tablet using the Kindle app available free from amazon.com/kindle.

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Praise Him in the Storm

When Life Falls Apart

A Study of Job

<i>How to Make the Best Use of This Issue</i>	3
<i>Writers for This Study Guide</i>	6
<i>Introducing GC2 Press</i>	10
<i>Introducing “Praise Him in the Storm”</i>	11

DATE OF STUDY

LESSON 1	_____	Living by Genuine Faith	16
		JOB 1:1-12	
LESSON 2	_____	When Everything Falls Apart	25
		JOB 1:13-22	
LESSON 3	_____	Life or Death?	34
		JOB 2:1-10; 3:11, 20-26	
LESSON 4	_____	When Friends Fail	43
		JOB 2:11-13; 22:5-6, 9-11	
LESSON 5	_____	Why Me Lord?	52
		JOB 7:1-21	
LESSON 6	_____	Even Faith Needs a Mediator	60
		JOB 9:32-35	
LESSON 7	_____	Hope on Display	67
		JOB 13:15-16; 14:1-2, 14-17	
<i>Ministry Promotions</i>			75

LESSON 8	I Am Not Alone	79
	JOB 19:13-19	
LESSON 9	I Know That My Redeemer Lives	87
	JOB 19:20-27	
LESSON 10	The Wisdom of Youth	94
	JOB 32:1-10; 33:2-4, 22-30; 35:9-10; 37:14-24	
LESSON 11	Hearing God in the Storm	103
	JOB 38:1-7; 40:1-5	
LESSON 12	When Answers Are Not Enough	112
	JOB 40:6-9, 15-19; 41:1-7, 10-11; 42:1-6	
LESSON 13	Saving the Best for Last	121
	JOB 42:5-17	
BONUS EASTER LESSON	The God of Restoration	Online Only (gc2press.org)
	JOHN 21:15-23	
 <i>Prayer for This Study</i>		129
<i>Our Next New Study</i>		130
<i>How to Order More Bible Study Materials</i>		132

Introduction to GC2 Press

BWP has now become GC2 Press. The name change reflects the alignment with our state convention's (BGCT) recently updated mission statement. **GC2** is a movement of God's people to share Christ and show love. Our driving passion is to follow the Lord's call to fulfill the Great Commission "to share Christ" and the Great Commandment "to show love." The Great Commission and the Great Commandment form the two "GCs," or GC2.

GC2 Press will continue to publish the undated **CONNECT 360** quarterly Bible study curriculum. **Connect 360** has gained a reputation for solid biblical teaching and will continue to be published as an undated quarterly study available in book form and/or digital downloads. **Connect 360** is currently being distributed in 38 states and 16 countries and has been translated into seven different languages.

For more information, please go to our website at www.gc2press.org.



Introducing

Praise Him in the Storm *When Life Falls Apart*

A STUDY OF JOB

Background

The book of Job is primarily a book of poetry bookended by sections of prose. Commentators throughout history have identified the book of Job as one of the most remarkable books known to humankind. Its 42 chapters tell the story of God at work in the life of one great man, Job, and Job's response to God's activities. The date of writing and the identity of the author is unknown. However, some scholars suggest that Job was most likely a contemporary of Abraham (2000 BC). For many, the uncertainty of the authorship and date of writing add to the book's value as issues of Hebrew history do not impact its readers.

Job is most often associated with the problem of suffering. The big question has been, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Generally, Old Testament wisdom literature, the genre of Job, leads to clear answers to some of life's most important questions. In Job's case, there is no clear solution to why good people suffer. Job does teach us how to suffer well, that is, how to suffer and not sin. Additionally, the writer of Job wants his readers to understand the sufficiency of God in times of distress. The tragic experiences of Job help us know that God can be trusted in every circumstance of life.

In the story of Job, contemporary believers may find encouragement when faced with unbearable suffering and loss. The Lord limited the power of Satan in his pursuit of God's "perfect man." So too, He has limited the power of the adversary in our world.

Dr. Michael Davis

The Book of Job in Our Day

Job was a righteous man. He had great wealth. He had a wonderful family. At a gathering in Heaven, Satan alleged before God that the only reason Job served God was because he was so blessed. Satan charged that if Job lost it all, he would curse God to His face. God gave Satan permission to test his theory to demonstrate to Satan and all the angels, that Job's faith was real. Satan went to work, and Job suffered greatly but never lost his faith. In the end, God restored to Job everything he had lost and more.

The Bible says when you go through trials and tribulations; it is a testing of your faith. Since God already knows the quality of your faith, the testing of your faith is to show you what kind *of faith you have. Only real, genuine faith will sustain you when life falls apart.*

Is your faith strong enough to praise Him in the storm?

Praise Him in the Storm

When Life Falls Apart

A Study of Job

Lesson 1	Living by Genuine Faith	Job 1:1-12
Lesson 2	When Everything Falls Apart	Job 1:13-22
Lesson 3	Life or Death?	Job 2:1-10; 3:11; 20-26
Lesson 4	When Friends Fail	Job 2:11-13; 22:5-6, 9-11
Lesson 5	Why Me Lord?	Job 7:1-21
Lesson 6	Even Faith Needs a Mediator	Job 9:32-35
Lesson 7	Hope on Display	Job 13:15-16; 14:1-2, 14-17
Lesson 8	I Am Not Alone	Job 19:13-19
Lesson 9	I Know That My Redeemer Lives	Job 19:20-27
Lesson 10	The Wisdom of Youth	Job 32:1-10; 33:2-4, 22-30; 35:9-10; 37:14-24
Lesson 11	Hearing God in the Storm	Job 38:1-7; 40:1-5
Lesson 12	When Answers Are Not Enough	Job 40:6-9, 15-19; 41:1-7, 10-11; 42:1-6
Lesson 13	Saving the Best for Last	Job 42:5-17
Easter	The God of Restoration (Online Only)	John 21:15-23

Additional Resources for Studying the Book of Job

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NOTES _____

¹ Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writer or GC2 Press with all its comments.

lesson 1

Living by Genuine Faith

MAIN IDEA

We are human beings, but the Bible teaches that there are an innumerable host of heavenly beings called angels that God has created, both good and bad.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

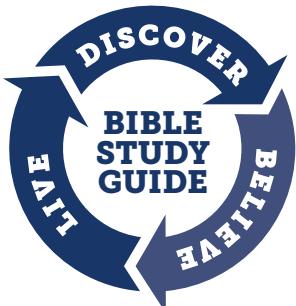
Why did God create me?

STUDY AIM

To understand there is a huge amount of spiritual warfare, and spiritual activity going on around us that we cannot see

QUICK READ

Job and his family had each other, good health, and an abundance of wealth. After God's conversation with Satan, the devil set out to prove Job only feared God because he had been so blessed.



Introduction

In 2008, British pilot Jim O'Neill was halfway through a 350-mile solo flight from Scotland to England when he suddenly lost his sight. Unable to see the instruments, his first thought was that the sun had blinded him. He soon realized that it was much worse; at the height of 5,000 feet, Jim had suffered a stroke.

After fumbling about to find the radio, Jim issued a Mayday alert and called for help. A Royal Air Force nearby received his distress call and dispatched the base's chief flying instructor, Wing Cmdr. Paul Gerrard, to provide assistance. Flying his own aircraft just 150 feet away, Gerrard spoke encouraging words for more than thirty minutes, guiding the blinded O'Neill through the process of safely landing the airplane.

Can you relate to the feeling of flying blind? Perhaps not in midair, but have you been faced with a shocking change that occurred mid-semester, mid-career, or mid-life? It might not have been a stroke, but perhaps you know the shock and fear accompanying divorce papers, a diagnosis of inoperable cancer, or the crippling grip of enormous debt.

It took Jim O'Neill eight attempts before he safely landed his airplane; Paul Gerrard never stopped speaking to him. Through this study of the book of Job, it is my prayer that your faith will be strengthened to persevere when life falls apart. When the unseen difficulties of life bring you to a season of suffering, be encouraged...God has not stopped speaking to His people.

Job 1:1-12

¹ There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. ² There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³ He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. ⁴ His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all.

For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

A Man of Prosperity (1:1-5)

I love a great story; what about you? I feel the best ones stick with you long after the last page is read. Memorable stories include elements of mystery and revelation, action and dialogue, peaks and troughs. A great story has all of the above, but also has relatable characters. After all, why would you remember a story, if you could not see yourself in the narrative? The book of Job has each of those elements, but also something more: a place for the reader to enter the story.

The author of the book of Job is unknown, but the events it records appear to have occurred during the "Patriarchal period" (between the lives of Noah and Moses, 3000-2000 B.C.). There are no allusions to Mosaic Law in the text, but there is a mention of a flood (22:16). Job serves in a priestly role for his family (1:5), much like Abraham (Genesis 12:7-8). Job's longevity is also typical of this period (42:16; cf. Genesis 11:22-26, 32).

This book is not primarily an accounting of one man's suffering, nor is Job's problem one based upon financial, relational, or social misbehaving.

The central problem in the Book of Job is theological: Job must deal with the fact that Almighty God does not act as one thinks He should.

The narrative begins with an introduction to our protagonist Job, a resident of “the land of Uz” (verse 1). Uz is a place of uncertain location, but likely near Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea (Jeremiah 25:20-21; Lamentations 4:21). During this time where a person’s worth was measured by their possessions and the size of their family, Job stood above his contemporaries (1:2-4). Compare Job’s life with Proverbs 10:22, and it is easily evident that he was enjoying the favor of Yahweh. It’s interesting to note that Job’s genealogy is not presented here, like most major Old Testament persons. His piety, or moral character, is the focus of the text (1:1, 5).

Job is described as being “blameless and upright” (1:1, 8; 2:3), and even made sacrifices on behalf of his children, just in case they might have sinned in a moment of thoughtlessness (1:5). This is not to say that Job was perfect; Job was sinful, just like you and me (Romans 3:23). Sin is connected to a vertical relationship; blameless to a horizontal one. Job enjoyed a good reputation among those in his neighborhood.

Job appeared to possess a high, holy understanding of God, and separated himself from evil by choice. He seemed to understand that true godliness originates from the heart, and it involves the heart (Proverbs 4:23). Yahweh commended his behavior among all the inhabitants of the land (1:8).

A Menace to Humanity (1:6-7)

As the scene rises from earth to the throne room of heaven, new characters appear (1:6). The phrase “sons of God” describes angels surrounding their Creator (Genesis 6:1-4; Job 38:7). In the midst of presenting themselves before Him, they are joined by the antagonist of this story, Satan. It seems his presence was not a usual occurrence, for the Lord asked for an account of his activity (1:7). The sarcastic response given was essentially, “nowhere in particular and everywhere in general.”

The Hebrew word translated satan means “adversary,” and it’s an apt name. He stood before the Lord, having been “walking up and down” on the earth, seeking out someone to destroy (1 Peter 5:8-10). The Old Testament books of Ezekiel and Isaiah describe him as once being a welcomed, esteemed

member of God's court, now separated from their ranks by arrogance and pride (Ezekiel 28:11-18; Isaiah 14). Today, the adversary questions God's Truth (Genesis 3:1, 4-5), resists God's rule (Revelation 12:9; 20:2, 7-8), and seeks to lead God's people to destruction (Luke 22:31).

Appearing with other created beings, Satan's status and level of importance are made clear. He is not a being equal with God, caught in some eternal struggle of good versus evil. Throughout history, culture has tried to give more weight and substance to this fallen angel; the Book of Job makes it crystal clear that Satan is a mere creature, and as such, is subject to the rule of the Sovereign Lord of Heaven.

Under Attack

The Hebrew noun (satan) means "adversary" or "accuser." If the dialogue in verses 6-12 were likened to a courtroom, then Satan would be the prosecuting attorney, or the one who accuses a person of having committed a crime. Satan is always looking for a weakened soul to devour (1 Peter 5:8), and his methods seek out weak spots in our spiritual defenses (Ephesians 6:10-13).

The term appears in Job 1-2 as a title of an adversarial being in the heavenly court (Job 1:6-9, 12; 2:1-7; cf. Zechariah 3:1). By the time of the New Testament's writing, this Hebrew word had come into Greek as (Sātan), a name for the Devil (e.g., Luke 13:16).

This enemy of God moves about the earth, is in the spiritual realms (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8), and is working to deceive the world (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4) before his time of judgment arrives (Revelation 20:10ff).

In the New Testament, Paul told the church at Ephesus that the battle we face as followers of God is a struggle "against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12b). Earlier in the same letter, he cautioned the church to "give no opportunity to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). We allow the adversary to find weak spots in our lives and cause destruction when we: hold grudges against one another, speak lies or exaggerated statements about fellow believers, withhold forgiveness, and nurse our anger and bitterness. I have been unfortunate enough to have attended churches whose

members did not protect the unity of the local Body (Ephesians 4:1-3), but by their actions and statements, invited the enemy into their midst!

A Challenge of Adversity (1:8-12)

Responding to Satan's vague answer, the Lord asked, "Have you set your heart on anyone?" (1:8a). Answering His own query, the Lord gave the enemy a target by stating that Job was unique among all other men (1:8b). Mirroring the description given in verse 1, the Lord stated that Job was a "blameless and upright man," and he "turns away from evil" (1:8b). God was not comparing Job's righteousness to His own, but to others on the earth. Perhaps it is the uniqueness of Job's status as a wealthy landowner coupled with his righteous actions that set him apart. Regardless, the Lord allowed Job to be Satan's next target.

Notice that the Lord made this declaration of approval not in private, but before the entire host of His angels, the assembly of the sons of God (1:6). This public acknowledgement of Job was the equivalent of the public affirmation of Jesus at the time of His baptism when the Father declared He was pleased with His Son (Matthew 3:17). I once heard a sermon where the speaker commented, "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted." During this heavenly conversation, it wasn't the adversary who called out Job's name; God initiated this dialogue. That is a clue to the reader that God had a plan to both silence the enemy and honor Himself through Job's life. Yahweh was certain of Job's faithfulness; He knew that Job could be trusted.

Now Satan asked a question of immense importance (1:9); this question can be considered the heart of the Book of Job. Satan ultimately asked if God was worthy to be worshiped. Does Yahweh receive praise because of His character, or because He "buys" His worshipers' affection through bribing them with gifts and blessings? This question is beneficial in evaluating one's own faith: would I fear God if there were no blessings to be received from Him?

Satan all but slandered Job and the Lord of Heaven with his words, and he pressed the point in verse 10: "Sure, Job loves you. Haven't you protected his family, blessed his work, and given him possessions? Who wouldn't love you?" It's almost as if the enemy tried to get to Job but failed because of God's supernatural protection over Job's life. Here is an incredibly encourag-

ing truth! God is the protector of His people (cf. Psalm 91; 121; 1 Corinthians 10:13). He continues to watch over and protect His children as they live out their days before Him (John 10:27-30).

Satan challenged God to remove the protection from Job's life and then see what would happen.

Much like a child complains to a parent about unfairness with a sibling, Satan told the Lord that Job's actions would be different without God's influence (1:11). Satan believed Job's piety to be skin-deep, and not an authentic representation of the man. The piety Job exhibited would turn to apathy if God's blessings were removed.

Satan's purpose was to disprove God's claim that Job was a true servant; God's purpose was to show that Job's devotion remained steadfast. This confirmation can only be accomplished through testing, so God granted permission for the adversary to test Job's devotion (1:12). This response is monumental in its restriction: Satan can do whatever he wants up to a point. Satan is powerful, but God is sovereign. Jesus indicated to Peter that Satan wanted to harm Peter much more than God would allow because of a similar type of protection (Luke 22:31-32). There is a limit to the damage that can be done to God's people, and whatever we encounter will be used for His glory and our transformation (Romans 8:29).

Satan went out from the presence of the Lord with malicious intent; God allowed him to bring about something altogether different. This heavenly scene reveals to us what James meant when he commented upon the "steadfastness of Job," and "the purpose of the Lord" (James 5:11). God used one man's life as an object lesson to instruct the angels about the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10-11). The spiritual warfare shown in Job 1-2 would ultimately find its resolution at the Cross of Calvary (John 19:30; Colossians 2:9-15).

Sometimes the trials we face are a direct result of our sinful, prideful actions. There are times, however, when a challenging event is allowed to come into our lives for a heavenly purpose. It is in this moment that suffering is not a consequence of sinful acts, nor a correction for righteousness' sake. God may exercise His divine prerogative to test our devotion to verify its genuineness.

Is Opportunity Knocking?

Ephesians 4:27 admonishes Christians to "not give the devil an opportunity" to get a foothold in their lives. Job lived out this principle by choosing to move away from evil during his time.

Evaluate your spiritual health by checking to see if you might be allowing the enemy an opportunity to attack in these areas:

- Home
- Social Media
- Language
- Work
- Friendships
- Finances
- School
- Internet History
- Other _____

What things did you identify? Commit to remove these things by the end of this study.

Implications and Actions

Do you remember when I said earlier that the reader can enter the story of Job? We enter Job's story during the painful moments of life. How God's people respond when suffering is of vital importance for believers today. It's quite possible that we allow our cries and laments during those moments to drown out an important reality: God is still sovereign! Nothing takes Him by surprise, and nothing is beyond His reach.

I believe it is perfectly fine during those painful moments to ask God, "Why is this happening?"

I think He welcomes such questions, for they do not question His character or assign blame to Him. Job's repetitive godly actions laid a strong foundation of faith, so when the unthinkable storm occurred, he stood on solid ground.

When we face hardship or struggle, are we rooted in God's Word and communication with Him so deeply that it can sustain us and allow our faith to be seen? As a part of God's creation, I can be assured that the Creator is aware of my pain, and orchestrates events behind the scenes, even allowing painful events to bring glory to Himself and for my benefit (Romans 8:28).

Questions

1. In what ways did Satan's accusation disparage both Job and God?

2. What can you learn from God's handling of Satan's charges? Why do you think God didn't just kick the adversary out of the throne room?

3. Describe in your own words the attitudes (toward self, God, circumstances) you feel Job displayed in 1:20-22. When facing adverse situations in life, how do your attitudes compare to Job's?

4. What could you change this month to better align your attitudes with those that honor God?

5. Suppose you had a friend who was in a season of suffering. Would it be a good thing to sit silently with them to sympathize with them? Why or why not?

6. Who do you know that is presently ill or bereaved? Name two things you can do that would help comfort that person this week.

lesson 2

When Everything Falls Apart

MAIN IDEA

If our sense of worth and joy is based upon a loving relationship with a living God, there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from that love.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

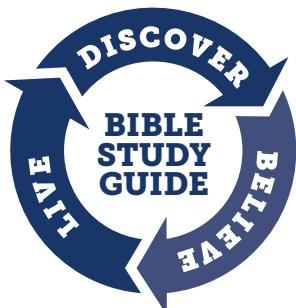
How do I express my grief?

STUDY AIM

To understand that God may take something away from us without giving a reason

QUICK READ

When we suffer, we immediately look for someone to blame. Job, despite his pain, never blamed God.



Introduction

You've heard of Murphy's Law, right? Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. What about these? Murphy's Law of Finance: A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well. Murphy's Law of Highway Construction: The most heavily traveled streets spend the most time under repair. Murphy's Law of Mechanical Repair: As soon as your hands are covered in grease, your nose will itch.¹

Job's life illustrates an extension of Murphy's Law: Nothing is so bad that it cannot get worse.

In one morning, everything changed in Job's life...and not for the better. All the things for which he was revered had now been removed. It's not an exaggeration to say that he was devastated by this turn of events. What he did in response to these tragedies is remarkable.

Like Job, we sometimes face destructive, painful moments in life. When that occurs—and it really is a matter of when, not if—will we let it defeat us? Will we sink into a pit of despair? Or will we take the time to deepen our relationship with God and seek His comfort? When everything falls apart, how will you grieve?

Job 1:13-22

¹³ Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁶ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made

a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind

came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY; BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

The First Two Reports (1:13-16)

Narrative literature in the Old Testament consistently focuses on dialogue and action rather than description. Much like a newscast presents a factual, succinct report for its viewers, the text shows us the messengers presenting their catastrophic accounts without description of Job’s emotional reactions or responses.

Having received God’s permission to attack, the day arrived when Satan’s evil plans against Job unfolded (1:13). Without any warning, Job’s financial and material standing were removed as a tranquil, peaceful scene turned into a chaotic, violent calamity. The first messenger told Job that “the oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them” when they were attacked out of nowhere (1:14-15). The Sabeans, a nomadic people from southern Arabia, killed the servants tending the animals and fled with their plunder. Given the number of animals described earlier (1:3), we must assume that the human contingent working with them was significant.

As the last words were coming out of this servant’s mouth, a second messenger appeared with a more horrific report (1:16). The “fire of God” came down upon Job’s flock of sheep, killing them and the servants assigned to their care. Whether this was a lighting strike that caused a fire or a literal series of flames falling onto the group, Satan was the cause of the destruction, not Yahweh. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that the “prince of the power of the air” is indeed capable of such wrathful action.

Both servants who reported these losses to Job ended their statements with the same refrain: “I alone have escaped to tell you” (1:15-16). The He-

brew phrase indicates that the servants have gotten away by the skin of their teeth: “Only me! I am the only one who escaped!” (emphasis mine). This would become a familiar phrase to Job before the day was finished.

The Second Two Reports (1:17-19)

On the heels of the second messenger’s report, a third man appeared (1:17) to tell Job that the Chaldeans had formed raiding parties and absconded with the camels, killing the servants in charge of the animals. This calamity corresponded with the first, as they both occurred at the hands of other human beings. As with the earlier messengers, this lone survivor escaped to bring sorrowful tidings to Job.

The Chaldeans were a people group from Mesopotamia who came to power during the first millennium B.C. They would have come from the northeast of Job’s lands, whereas the Sabeans would have come from the southwest. King Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 B.C.) was the Chaldean responsible for the siege and capture of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24–25), the Babylonian Exile of the Hebrew people (587/6–539 BC) and referred to as the Babylonian King in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 1:1).

The last catastrophe was the worst, and it carries greater detail (1:18-19). As happened twice before, this news came before the prior messenger was finished with his report. The statement that Job’s sons and daughters were feasting “in their oldest brother’s house” lets the reader know that these four terrible events occurred within the timing of one feast (cf. 1:4, 13).

Similar to the second event, this “great wind” from the wilderness struck the son’s house at the four corners, killing all those inside the structure. The homes of this region would be much different from what we in the West encounter in our communities. A home in Job’s period would likely have been made from wooden planks or small tree trunks, with a thatched roof of reeds.²

The likelihood of such a dwelling having enough weight to kill ten young people would be very low; the completeness of such an action would indicate a supernatural cause.

One final time, the phrase “I alone have escaped to tell you,” was voiced by a messenger (1:19b). The present scene opened with Job’s children feast-

ing and it ended with their deaths, along with numerous servants, all in the space of a single day.

Pain Into Purpose

Of the losses suffered by Job, none hurt as deeply as the last, for those lost were his own flesh and blood. It might be possible to regain wealth and livestock, given enough time and wise business practices, but children are in a category altogether different: a gift from God (Psalm 127:3). How will Job respond? How would we respond to such a tragedy?

Consider Horatio Spafford (1828-1888), who, in November 1873, sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to England, intending to meet them after completing some business in Chicago. Halfway across the Atlantic, the ship collided with another vessel and sank. The 226 who perished included the couple's four daughters.

Horatio followed on another ship, and as it reached the approximate location where the first boat sank, Spafford received comfort from God that inspired him to write the lyrics to one of the most encouraging hymns of hope, "It is Well With My Soul." Like Job, Horatio Spafford let his pain become a purpose to honor the Lord.³

The Response of God's Servant (1:20-22)

Job didn't complain. He didn't cry out, "This is totally unfair! Why is this happening to me?" He did, however, respond in a manner consistent with his culture: he "tore his robe and shaved his head" (1:20). These Near Eastern demonstrations of grief were common in the Old Testament. David did these things when he received the news of his son Amnon's death (2 Samuel 13:31). Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos all speak of shaved heads during times of great mourning (Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 7:29; Ezekiel 7:18; Amos 8:10). You would expect anyone to respond the same way after such a "horrible, terrible, no good, very bad day."

What Job did next illustrated what God saw in him that Satan could not: a heart of submission (1:1, 8). Through falling to the ground (bowing) and

worshiping, Job shows humility, submission, and trust in God's unseen purpose. Job realized there was nothing he brought with him at his birth, and he would carry nothing with him beyond the moment of his death (1:21a). He acknowledged that God had brought wealth to his household; God had the right to remove it, if He saw fit (1:21b).

Job's final declaration is a picture of faith in the sovereignty of the Almighty. "The Lord gave" is an easy thing to say. "The Lord has taken away" is a little more difficult to utter, for God might not be the active source of the removal (but the statement still shows a submission to His sovereign nature). "Blessed be the name of the Lord" takes faith in Him to say in truth. Anyone can speak the words as a form of mockery. In the faith of such horrific adversity, blessing God for being God is something that believers today might find challenging. Is our faith in the sovereignty of God as strong as Job's?

Currently, I serve as a hospice chaplain. In the past year, I have had conversations with people who have blamed God for not intervening for the benefit of a family member, and I have also had conversations with people who stated that they were trusting in God's perfect timing and grace for their loved one. The interesting thing is that both conversations came from the mouths of persons who stated they were followers of Christ! Surely both positions cannot be correct.

Job had no idea that his life was the battleground on which a spiritual skirmish was taking place. Regardless, he clearly showed that he was up for the task of suffering. It was not his wealth that made him blameless and upright, but rather, his fear of the Lord and desire to keep himself from the evil in his world. Instead of raging against God and throwing a tantrum, Job offered thanks for the blessings he had received and the time in which he enjoyed them. His response made the score, God, 1; Satan, 0.

It is at this point that we again have the opportunity to enter the story and participate in the action. As you and I face pain and suffering, we will never truly know the reasoning or what exactly is at stake in those moments. The spiritual skirmishes still occur, and even though the outcome of the overall campaign has been decided (cf. Revelation 21–22), our responses to pain and suffering can lead to increasing the score for the Lord—or for Satan.

The Bible rarely pulls back the curtain so we can see "behind the scenes" of our lives or view the spiritual influences upon our world. Instead, it consis-

tently presents the truth that the spiritual world is indeed in conflict, and we are affected by the struggle (Ephesians 6:12). Scripture provides examples of godly, everyday people hurting and expressing their deeply felt pain to God (cf. Psalms 3, 13, 22, 42, and 142). Whether we pray for eyes to see the forces of Heaven who fight for us in our battles (2 Kings 6:17) or pray for the wisdom and success of a nation (Daniel 10), followers of Christ cannot sit idly by and hope for the best.

Christians today can still express great faith in moments of grief. Servants who honor the Lord feel the pain of these moments and take that pain to the Lord. We must act in ways that express a faith in God's sovereignty.

Advice During Suffering

From principles in today's lesson, how would you advise someone who was suffering:

- Poor health because of their life choices
- Loss of job due to poor company finances
- Persecution at school because of ethnicity
- COVID-related illness or hospitalization
- Death of loved one during pandemic and not able to say goodbye

Write one specific thing that you would say to someone experiencing grief that would both validate or acknowledge their emotion as well as honor the Lord.

Which one of these examples (or one not stated here) most resembles a recent time of suffering in your life? How did you respond?

Implications and Actions

In college, I worked at a local bookstore with the name Christian in its title. The owner's actions were not very godly. As people expressed their displeasure at various times in the store, I constantly worried over how I could make things better. I remember very vividly calling home one night, almost in tears because of the stress. My father advised me not to worry about things out-

side of my control, but instead give time and energy to the things that I could control. In his righteous response, Job exemplified that advice.

In case you didn't know, there was more to come Job's way—much more. By the time we are through with this study, the layers of Job's life will be peeled away like the layers of an onion. Job will learn things about himself, and the Lord, that he never dreamed were true. Job will see how much God wants to accomplish in his life during the heartache. And as we journey alongside Job, we will discover how God desires his children to walk with Him, so the times of pain and suffering will have meaning beyond the moment.

Questions

1. Can you relate to Job's catastrophes? How so?
 2. The Book of Job uses several names of God: *Yahweh* (Lord), *El Shaddai* (Almighty), *Eloah* (God Who Raises Up)—which name is most encouraging to you? Why?
 3. What principles can you learn from the passage today to apply as you walk with Christ?

4. Does Job's worship prove or disprove Satan's claim in 1:9? How?

5. How should Job's example guide your worship in moments of great or tragic loss?

NOTES

¹ Taken from www.funny-jokes.com/murphys-law-jokes; accessed 09-08-2021.

² Spence-Jones, H. D. M., and Joseph S. Exell. "Chapter 1." Essay. In *The Pulpit Commentary*. New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1950.

³ Osbeck, Kenneth W. Essay. In *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010.

FOCAL TEXT

Job 2:1-10; 3:11, 20-26

BACKGROUND

1 Kings 19:4-8;
Jeremiah 20:14-18

lesson 3

Life or Death?

MAIN IDEA

Satan was persistent in his attack against Job, and he is still attacking God's servants today.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

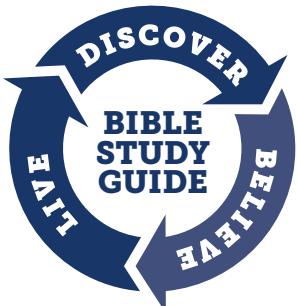
When I'm under attack, does that make me better or bitter?

STUDY AIM

To understand that even God's faithful servants may sometimes feel like quitting

QUICK READ

Job has experienced so much pain and trouble that he insists he would be better off dead.



Introduction

A boy from the country went to visit a friend in New York City. The streets were filled with people, cars were honking their horns, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening as they walked downtown. The country boy suddenly stopped and said, “I hear a cricket chirping.” His friend said, “Yeah, right. You couldn’t possibly hear that in all of this noise.” The country boy listened and said again, “I hear a cricket chirping.” Listening for a moment, the country boy then walked across the street to a cement planter filled with bushes. He looked into their branches, then reached inside and pulled out a cricket. “That’s incredible! You must have superhuman hearing,” said the city boy. “No,” said the country boy, “My ears are no different than yours. It just depends on what you are listening for.”

The soundscape during suffering can sometimes be overwhelming. In this lesson, Job was confronted with sounds of physical pain and bad advice. At first, his ears were able to keep his eyes upon Yahweh. Before the day was over, Job’s ears had caused his eyes to look inward and not upward, and his attitude changed.

When spiritual challenges occur in your life, whose voice is loudest in your ear?

Job 2:1-10

¹ Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ² And the LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ³ And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.” ⁴ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” ⁶ And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

⁹ Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." ¹⁰ But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job 3:11, 20-26

¹¹ "Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?

²⁰ "Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, ²¹ who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, ²² who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave? ²³ Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? ²⁴ For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water. ²⁵ For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. ²⁶ I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes."

Back to Square One (Job 2:1-6)

There is a technique in storytelling called repetition and variation. A story or event is told with a slight change or repeated modification in its presentation (e.g., Goldilocks and the Three Bears). Ancient biblical storytellers utilized this method (cf. 1 Samuel 3:1-14; 2 Kings 1:1-16; 2:1-8), and in Job 2:1-10, the narrator repeated with significant variations what was previously shared in 1:6-22.

The adversary was again present when the "sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (2:1). The conversation between Yahweh and the adversary in verses 2-3 was exactly the same as 1:6-8, with one significant difference. In this second encounter, Satan was charged with inciting God to destroy Job for no apparent reason. The verb *incite* is the same word used in 1

Chronicles 21:1 when Satan spurred David to take a census of Israel, knowing it would anger the Lord.

Yahweh persisted in praising His champion, stating that Job won the first battle; his integrity was unblemished in spite of the adversary's attack. Satan was not swayed by the Lord, and in fact was ready for a second chance to take on God's example of piety. The enemy attempted another lie against God's highest created form: a man will do anything to save his own skin (verse 4). The implication was that Job would not feel the importance of this challenge until his own physical well-being was at stake. Like he has always done, the adversary was trying to change the rules in the middle of the contest so he could achieve a victory. Deceit and underhandedness are tools in the adversary's toolbox, and he wields them effectively.

Satan asserts that mankind selfishly cares more about their own skin than they do about their family, their possessions, or their servants. In other words, Job's love for God was only out of self-interest. Satan asserted that Job would "curse you to your face" if the Lord would but allow Job's body to actually feel pain (1:5). He was essentially telling God that the first encounter wasn't fair because God allowed a hedge to remain around Job's body. Satan intended to affect Job not only in the physical ("flesh") but also his inner person ("bones"). The enemy sought to attack Job's body, soul, and mind.

Verse 6, while allowing difficulty for Job, offers a great truth for believers today. The enemy only has the power God has allowed and nothing more. As strong as spiritual attacks against us may be, they are not all-powerful. In stating "only spare his life," the Sovereign King was showing the adversary that evil has its limits. The enemy cannot function independently of God's authority. Killing Job would actually prove nothing and would benefit neither party.

Back on the Offensive (2:7-10)

When the adversary departed from the presence of the Lord in verse 7, it was the last we hear of him in the narrative. The evil work to strike Job with "loathsome sores" over the surface of his body likely resulted in a great deal of pain and an unsightly appearance (cf. Job 7:5; 16:16; 30:30). This would be a horrible experience for anyone, but it wasn't all Job endured in this attack.

Besides the constant itching that was relieved with the broken pottery, Job also had to live with bad breath (19:17), weight loss (19:20), chills and fever (30:30), and more.

It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to think that Job was near his wit's end. It would be reasonable to think that family would be a source of strength and endurance in such a trial; this was not to be the case for Job. His wife made her only appearance in the book to counsel Job to cut his losses to ease his pain (2:9). Whether as an observer she feels that God had abandoned Job, or she spoke from a loss of faith due to her own pain and losses in her children and wealth, the counsel Job received from his wife was anything but supportive.

By the way, did you notice the subterfuge of the adversary? Job's wife was trying to get Job to do what Satan wanted Job to do! Much like in the Garden of Eden, ungodly advice to persons in crisis, brought by loving family and friends, can actually serve the purposes of the enemy! Although not possessed by Satan, people can unknowingly allow his influence to be felt through their words and actions that fail to seek out the Lord's Will, thus promoting a human scheme for the resolution of their crisis (Genesis 3:6, 12; Genesis 16; Matthew 16:22-23; Acts 21:10-14).

In verse 10, we see that Job still holds on to his faith, and he doesn't take the bait from the adversary's trap. Job rebuked his wife, saying that her advice was foolish. It was not a personal or hurtful response; Job was simply saying that she was speaking like someone who did not know God. Christians ought to be selective in advice and counsel they give during moments of pain and heartache in the lives of others (James 1:19). Do pray for wisdom and discernment, meet a specific physical or emotional need, or simply be present for the ones hurting. Don't offer empty platitudes that fail to address the person's pain or confuse them about reasons for their pain.

Job's response to his wife also showed grace and an encouragement to re-establish her faith. Job did not give up on his faith nor on his integrity. To do so would have been a sort of rebellion against God, taking matters into Job's own hands. "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" is a rhetorical question, and it is not intended to suggest that God is the source of evil. Even though Job did not have access to this information,

the first two chapters have already shown us that God permits the enemy to work against His people.

When Pain Is Too Great

Throughout Scripture, “Why me, Lord?” has been raised to Heaven by more than just Job. Jeremiah expressed similar emotions, lamenting the pain and sorrow he experienced (Jeremiah 20:14-18). Although “Why, me, Lord?” does question the painful experience; saying “I wish I was dead” challenged the goodness of God that brought forth life. While Job did verbalize this thought (Job 6:9; 7:15-16; 14:13), he never once spoke about ending his own life.

Pain in the present makes us forget the joys of the past and blinds us to the possibility of joy in the future. When a friend or neighbor feels overwhelmed by life’s pain, as followers of Christ, we should be prepared to walk with those who are hurting. We should, without judgment or prejudice, endeavor to help them find a place of trusting God’s care in the midst of their experience (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Backed Into a Corner (3:11, 20-26)

Chapter Three begins with a change in the written text. Thus far, we have seen the text in the form of a narrative; from this point until chapter 42, the text is poetry. With a narrator in the first two chapters, readers could have the action interpreted for them. Without the narrator, the words within the dialogues must be heard clearly to understand their importance.

Following a full week of silence, Job’s emotions boiled over and he spat them out (2:13-3:1). He did not curse God (as Satan had claimed), but he did curse the day he was born (3:1, 11). His lament turned from cursing to questioning, positing a series of rhetorical questions we will see the speakers in the rest of the book attempt to answer.

When you are in pain, you sometimes say and do things you later regret. The pain is so overwhelming that Job forgot the blessings God had bestowed upon him and his family. His deep level of frustration lead him to an expression that showed an ignorance of God’s activity in the world. This cry of “Why

me?” has been raised to God many times by many who believe in God but do not understand His workings in their world. Job’s thought was that if he was born to experience such suffering, why did he have to live this long? If I had died right after my birth, I could have missed out on all this suffering!

Verses 20-26 illustrate the thoughts of many people today: “What benefit is there to me to keep living? Life is not worth living.” Many people feel as though their life has no purpose and therefore, they will not ever experience fulfillment or a sense of satisfaction in life. Job’s cries in these verses indicated he would rather die and be at rest than live and continue to experience the misery and pain that gripped him.

For a godly man to wish his own death is not surprising, scripturally speaking. Moses asked God to take his life (Numbers 11:10-15); after he escaped from Jezebel, so did Elijah (1 Kings 19). One encouraging thing is found in verse 21, where even though Job speaks of his death, he did not indicate that he would do anything to see it happen. There is no clear evidence that he ever contemplated it or acted upon it.

In the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes), the term “way” refers to God’s path that leads to life. In verse 23, Job asked why is it that life was given to a man whose way was hidden and could not understand where his life was leading him. Satan charged that God protected Job with a “hedge around him and his house and all that he has” (1:10). Although he recognized the blessings of the Almighty, Job essentially agreed with the adversary’s assessment, stating that God confined him or imprisoned him, but Job could not understand why.

It’s interesting to note that in his final words of this lament, Job did not mention his external losses, the possessions or people taken from him (3:25-26). The focus of his discourse was upon the struggle within, a turmoil that sought to devour him. At the moment, Job could not reconcile what he knew in his heart about God with what he was experiencing in his life. He was under attack, and he could not find a reason that satisfied his questioning.

Like many people today, his situation left Job perplexed and uncertain of God’s presence.

At this point, Job was as low as he would ever be in this season of suffering. We have the blessing of a more complete understanding: suffering can

work for us, and not against us...when we submit our lives to God (2 Corinthians 3:7-5:9). Be patient; God is still Sovereign and at work!

When Things Don't Add Up

Job's agony in the moment came largely from the conflict between what he had been taught about God and what he was experiencing. Can you relate to that type of disconnect?

When we suffer, we should remember:

- Everyone's life experience includes moments of suffering.
- Sometimes the cause is known; other times it is hidden.
- Open, emotion-filled prayers of lament are perfectly acceptable and should not be discouraged. As we pray and empty ourselves of emotion and the baggage they can bring, then we can hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.
- God is greater than the things that cause our suffering.

Implications and Actions

As the prologue of Job's suffering comes to a close, here are several observations for believers:

First, our walk of faith with Christ is a marathon journey. It will take us through peaks and valley experiences that will challenge and deepen our faith and trust in Him. Second, we ought not be surprised when suffering comes to us. Jesus told followers up front that life would not always be a pot-luck dinner where there's enough chocolate cake for everyone (John 16:33). Third, while sin and evil have consequences, not every instance of suffering we face is because of a personal sin. Finally, we should use the times of fair winds and calm seas to prepare us for the storms that will inevitably arrive. If we're not taking consistent steps to grow closer to Christ, we will drift away from Him.

Just as Job did, we should realize there are things about the Lord that forever remain unknown (Isaiah 55:8-9). I need a constant reminder I am in no position to call God into account for the things I do not understand. What

I can do is to spend my time and energy focusing on His trustworthiness and love. He truly has our best interests at heart (Romans 8:28).

Questions

1. How can knowing what went on in the heavenly realm in Job's case affect your response to circumstances?
 2. Satan predicted that Job would curse God (see 2:5). Does Job do this? Explain your answer.
 3. To what extent can you identify with Job right now, and why?
 4. Job was honest with God as he expressed his feelings in Chapter 3. On a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1= "Not at All" and 10="100% of the time"), how frequently are you honest with God about your feelings in difficult circumstances? What keeps you from being more honest with God? What about being honest with other Christians?

lesson 4

When Friends Fail

MAIN IDEA

Job refused to become bitter about his friends' false accusations.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

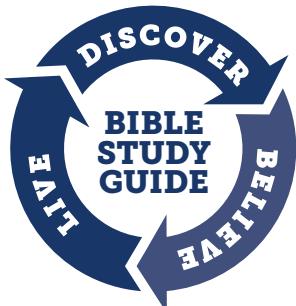
Why do good people suffer?

STUDY AIM

To learn that sometimes your friends and family will fail you, but Jesus never will

QUICK READ

Job's friends assumed only bad people suffer. So, since Job was suffering, they concluded he was hiding some deep, dark sin. Instead of helping him, their words only added to his misery.



Introduction

It happens every December, even though I promise myself each year I will be strong and resist the temptation. Some channel inevitably shows *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). I swear to myself that I will not watch it (again), yet I find myself sitting in front of a screen with a bowl of popcorn, drawn in by the story (again).

In this holiday classic, George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart) is a well-respected and loved citizen of Bedford Falls. He is unjustly accused of embezzlement by Mr. Potter, and his life totally unravels before his eyes. Even though George knows the truth about himself, he fails to keep his head about him and listens to the inaccurate character judgment provided by Mr. Potter. Bailey also succumbs to false reasoning about himself, despite the best efforts of his family and friends.

When your life threatens to unravel, whose voice resonates loudest in your ear? Do you, like George Bailey, listen to the voice of the critic, even though the critic does not know the truth of your heart and your actions? What if your closest friend believed the lies and accused you? When falsely accused of wrongdoing, how will we respond?

Job 2:11-13

¹¹ Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. ¹² And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. ¹³ And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

22:5-6, 9-11

⁵ Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities. ⁶ For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing.

⁹You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. ¹⁰Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you,¹¹ or darkness, so that you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you.

Sitting in Silence (2:11-13)

By this point in the narrative, Job's plight is almost unbearable. We find ourselves sympathizing with him, for we can see the whole picture and not just his moments of great pain and grief. Enter three of Job's friends; contemporaries in his world, yet they have been heretofore absent in his losses and pain.

The names of these men and their respective places of origin have been the cause of speculation throughout history. The proper name "Teman" is mentioned in Genesis 36:11 as a grandson of Esau, father of the Edomites. Eliphaz is an Edomite name, and the Edomite city of Teman would have been located southeast of the Dead Sea, more than 100 miles from Job's location. Bildad is only found in the Bible in the book of Job. Shuah is the name of one of Abraham's sons by his concubine Keturah (Genesis 25:2; 1 Chronicles 1:32). As a geographical place, the location of Shuah is unknown to this day. Zophar is in a similar position; his name only appears in Job, and there is little information about Naamath as a city or region.

With the introduction of these new characters into the narrative, perhaps Job will receive some resolution or salve for his emotional turmoil. The three men had some form of contact with one another prior to their traveling to Job (2:11b) and came together to visit their friend. They had heard of his suffering and wanted to serve as a comfort to him. The Hebrew word for sympathy (*nud*) indicates a shaking of the head or body back and forth as a manner of taking grief or pain off another.¹ Friends ought to support each other through difficult and challenging times and Christians can provide immeasurable comfort and support to one another (cf. Galatians 6:2; 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Romans 12:15).

The beginning of verse 12 indicates that as they approached Job, "they did not recognize him." Job's suffering and his physical malady left him unrecognizable to his contemporaries. He was likely much thinner than normal,

his head was shaved (1:20), and undoubtedly his skin was affected horribly by the sores he endured. Job was sitting on a heap of ashes (2:8), and he would not normally be in this position. It was only natural that the three men did not know him.

Verse 13 shows us that the friends sat with Job “on the ground for seven days and seven nights,” not speaking to him. The very fact that these men lived in a society where they could sit for such a period of time saying nothing speaks to the difference in society from their day until today. Perhaps their lives endured longer periods of time because they moved at a much slower pace? Regardless, the fact that they spoke nothing for such a long period indicates that it was noteworthy even then.

Good Grief

The fact that these men came to Job’s ash heap and chose to keep silent (at least at first) were similar to the actions of a person mourning at a funeral (cf. Genesis 50:10). They would possibly speak to one another, or to a servant, but not to Job (2:13) out of respect for his pain.

A seven-day mourning period was appropriate for this culture (1 Samuel 31:13; Ezekiel 3:15). The Jewish culture has a tradition of mourning following a funeral known as *Shiva* (“seven”). In this practice, persons grieving over a family member’s death follow a seven-day period in which they receive comfort from visitors to their homes.

Mourners remain inside their homes and traditionally sit on a low chair or a low box, signifying being “brought low” by their loss. Typically, though not always, mourners wear a torn garment during *Shiva*. Once the period is completed, mourners leave their home and re-enter society. “Sitting *Shiva*” allows a mourner to begin the process of grieving productively.²

When I was in college, I attended a weeknight Bible Study offered through the BSU (Baptist Student Union) on campus. We happened to be studying Job that term, and I remember the leader saying he believed that the men remained quiet for seven days not because they were showing their grief, but because they were going to accuse Job of being sinful. While I do not share

that particular perspective, regardless of their motive, they certainly did not create trouble until they opened their mouths. Their prolonged silence suggests their dialogues are not a response to Job's suffering but rather a response to Job's verbal protest against the treatment he has received.

Speaking in Ignorance (22:5-6, 9-11)

Eliphaz was evidently a man who took obedience to God extremely seriously, and perhaps even had a good sense of theology. As he spoke throughout the dialogues, the narrator painted a picture of a man pressuring Job to honesty, hammering him with claim after claim, with no chance to respond. Attempting to undermine Job's sense of innocence, Eliphaz posited an argument that no human being could be found without error before the Lord (4:7-9, 17-19; 15:14-16).

Just like a prosecuting attorney prepares for his cross-examination of the accused, Eliphaz is prepared for this moment with Job. His question in verse 5 reveals Eliphaz's estimation of Job's character: "suffering is a result of sin; therefore, Job, you are guilty." God cannot be stopped from bringing justice, and Job was trapped by his sin. He commented that "there is no end" to the possibilities of Job's sinfulness. If this was true, then God's punishment must have been commensurate. Eliphaz's certainty over Job's wickedness stood in stark contrast to God's assessment of the man (1:8).

Verse 6 details the purported sins Job had committed: demanding pledges or security from his brothers and going to extreme lengths to see that debt was paid in full. Deuteronomy 24:6 prohibited anyone from taking the source of a person's livelihood as security (such as millstones), as that would prevent the borrower from working to pay the debt. Eliphaz accused Job of then stripping a person of their clothing in a last-ditch attempt to recoup what was loaned. Exodus 22:25-27 called for the exact opposite when dealing with fellow Israelites. A person's cloak must be given back to them before sunset so they would have a manner of keeping warm in the night. Job was essentially being accused of covetousness.

I find it interesting that Eliphaz, a man who didn't live anywhere near Job, had sufficient insight regarding Job's dealing with his neighbors to make such an accusation. Perhaps stories of Job's alleged heinous activities trav-

eled to where Eliphaz lived and were his basis for speaking against Job. Maybe one of Job's enemies in a prior business deal started a rumor that made its way to the ears of Eliphaz. After all, "Good news travels fast; bad news travels faster." A possible inference is that, in the absence of fact, Eliphaz created fiction. Unfortunately, this type of behavior still occurs in our world today.

Eliphaz made one final allegation against Job in verses 9-11. He stated that Job "sent widows away empty" and mistreated orphans in his supposed lack of mercy (22:9). Throughout the Old Testament, God's heart was especially touched by the plight of those who cannot help themselves; specifically, His prophet's anger at those who oppressed widows and orphans (cf. Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 27:19; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6). Job was charged with turning a deaf ear to those who needed his help the most.

These false accusations from Eliphaz contradicted his own words commending Job earlier in the text (4:3-4). The lens Eliphaz had over his eyes was rooted in retribution theology; as a result, his focus was not on showing sympathy and comfort to Job (2:11). This belief system centers on the tenet that you get from God what your behavior deserves. Jesus countered this mistaken idea in John 9 when he addressed the disciples' questions about the man born blind. He stated that it was for God's purposes the man was born blind, and not because of a particular sin or sinner (John 9:3).

Consider for a moment what the outcome would have been if Job admitted to the accusations Eliphaz had spoken. What implications would there have been for Job in his relationship to God? Would Satan have won the encounter between him and the Lord? If we, in our weakness, falsely cry out against injustice from Heaven, we would be guilty of damaging our relationship with the God of righteousness.

The interaction between Job and his friends illustrates several ironies. First, we have the revealed knowledge that Job's suffering is actually a contest between the Lord and Satan, although Job and his three friends were confused about why it was happening. Second, the three friends' opinion that misfortune was a result of evil actions stood in opposition to the fact that God saw Job as both "blameless and upright." Third, Job's friends tried to encourage him when in fact, they were actually ignoring his pain. Finally, the attempt by all four to try to explain God's nature with their limited infor-

mation and understanding, as God spoke from the whirlwind, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (38:2).

There is a lesson not to be missed in this chapter, for it reveals to the reader that the three friends were unknowingly advancing Satan’s agenda to destroy Job. As we face trials and tribulations in our lives, we again enter the story of Job and the heavenly conflict around him. In our own personal stories, the adversary pushes us to blame God and accuse Him of being unfair and unjust.

Whether it comes after a pharisaic browbeating or a false accusation from a close friend, if we succumb to their attack and curse God to His face, the enemy wins. When we are faced with false claims from others, let us look to Jesus as the example of the appropriate response (Hebrews 12:2-3). Difficult though it may be, sometimes the best response is not to respond.

Lean on Me?

Job’s three friends provide us with a case study of sorts as we encounter people who are hurting in this world. To which of the following actions can you most relate?

- Sitting quietly with someone in their pain without comments (sometimes called the “Ministry of Presence”)
- Questioning or criticizing their actions or responses
- Speaking to them to provide answers
- Avoiding the person or situation altogether
- Offering Bible passages to support your view

Which of these actions most reflects God’s heart? How can you apply this to a hurting believer? A hurting non-believer?

Implications and Actions

Several years ago, a popular phrase made its way into our cultural lexicon: “check yourself before you wreck yourself.” As weird as it may sound, that phrase actually carries implications for believers today. Suffering is not al-

ways a result of personal sin. It can be, though; it is always appropriate to check and see if there is unconfessed sin in your life (Psalm 139:23-24).

Suffering can also be the result of another's sin, or because of an unseen force. It is in this moment, if we speak out of ignorance, we can potentially wreck our witness to others or harm a relationship unnecessarily.

Job's three friends started well by sitting with Job in his pain, but they ended up hurting him as they began to speak their own beliefs into his experience. When we say more than we should, about something which we know little or nothing, we end up taking the hurting heart back to the ash heap. Since we have two ears and one mouth, let us act accordingly (James 1:19).

Questions

1. Job's three friends made plans to see him; what was their motive? Did their shock and grief imply anything about what they expected to find? How so?
 2. Read Romans 12:9-16. Using these verses, find three actions that would be appropriate when ministering to a hurting friend.
 3. In Chapter 22, what are some of the sins Eliphaz accused Job of committing? Knowing what you know about Job's life, describe a response you would make in Job's defense.

4. What have you learned from Job's interaction with his friends that is significant or relevant to your life?
 5. How would you respond to someone who accuses you falsely, as Eliphaz did to Job?

ENDNOTES

¹ Wilson, Gerald S. "Silent Comfort: Job's Three Friends." Section 6. *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series: Job*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.

² www.shiva.com—The resource for Jewish mourning, accessed 09-14-2021.

FOCAL TEXT

Job 7: 1-21

BACKGROUND

2 Corinthians 12:7-10;
Psalm 4:8;
Matthew 8:24-26

lesson 5

Why Me Lord?

MAIN IDEA

You will never be able to deal with all the demands life throws your way without having the strength of Christ in your life.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

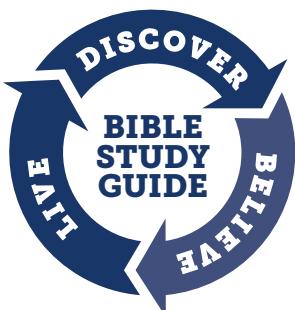
When I can't sleep, do I listen for God's voice?

STUDY AIM

To understand that sometimes God will calm the storms, but most often He calms the hearts of those in the storm

QUICK READ

In the middle of the night when he couldn't sleep, Job uttered some strong complaints to the Lord.



Introduction

By no means are we perfect beings. Jesus was the only perfect man who lived on the earth. Although we are not perfect people, we love God, and most importantly, He loves us. Amid our imperfections, we choose the spirit of God in our lives over carnality every day. We strive to live upright and develop ourselves to be pleasing before God. However, our experiences and circumstances are sometimes entirely out of our control, feeling caught up in a whirlwind of loneliness and asking God, "why?" For example, during an already difficult time in my life, I was falsely accused by a friend of having a godless relationship. The accusation broke my heart deeply because it was from a friend. The idea of being falsely accused by a friend was devastating. I cried out to God in my distress. He was my comfort during this heartbreaking time. She soon apologized, and I forgave my friend.

Without knowing the reason, Job experienced the significant loss of his ten children and all his possessions. He quietly sat on a heap of ashes and contemplated what he had done to deserve such devastation. Finally, Job's friend Eliphaz, who offered no comfort, falsely accused him of a sinful life.

Job 7:1-21

¹ "Is a person not forced to labor on earth, And are his days not like the days of a hired worker? ² As a slave pants for the shade, And as a hired worker who eagerly waits for his wages, ³ So I am allotted worthless months, And nights of trouble are apportioned to me. ⁴ When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise?' But the night continues, And I am continually tossing until dawn. ⁵ My flesh is clothed with maggots and a crust of dirt, My skin hardens and oozes. ⁶ My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And they come to an end without hope.

⁷ "Remember that my life is a mere breath; My eye will not see goodness again. ⁸ The eye of him who sees me will no longer look at me; Your eyes will be on me, but I will not exist. ⁹ When a cloud vanishes, it is gone; In the same way one who goes down to Sheol does not come up. ¹⁰ He will not return to his house again, Nor will his place know about him anymore.

¹¹ "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. ¹² Am I the sea, or

the sea monster, That You set a guard over me? ¹³ If I say, 'My couch will comfort me, My bed will ease my complaint,' ¹⁴ Then You frighten me with dreams, And terrify me by visions, ¹⁵ So that my soul would choose suffocation, Death rather than my pains. ¹⁶ I waste away; I will not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are *only* a breath. ¹⁷ What is man that You exalt him, And that You are concerned about him, ¹⁸ That You examine him every morning And put him to the test every moment? ¹⁹ Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, Nor leave me alone until I swallow my spittle? ²⁰ Have I sinned? What have I done to You, Watcher of mankind? Why have You made me Your target, So that I am a burden to myself? ²¹ Why then do You not forgive my wrongdoing And take away my guilt? For now I will lie down in the dust; And You will search for me, but I will no longer exist."

No Rest for the Weary (7:1-10)

In this passage of Scripture, Job responded to Eliphaz, who accused him of wrong. Job intensely expressed his sufferings, and in his pain, cried out to God. He declared that man without choice worked all his days. His work was as challenging as that of a hired worker. Unfortunately, a hired worker did not have much to look forward to in life but to seek labor day-by-day. Before that day was over, the worker's focus turned to the hope of work the next day. Job said even the hired worker could grab moments of rest in the shade from their hard chores. They looked forward to the meager wages they earned. In other words, their lives are not much more than hard labor repeated day after day. In Job's pain, he asked God why he wasn't even at the level of a hired worker.

There was no immediate relief from his pain and suffering, but it had been months of going through the pain and nights of trouble. In stressful times, we welcome sleep because it offers a moment of relief from our problems. When sickness plagues our bodies or distress invades our minds, we seek solace and comfort in sleep. We hope that sleep will restore our bodies and give us strength. We pray that we can rest our minds and wake to a better outcome or situation with sleep. Job found no rest in sleep. He said, "But the night continues, and I am continually tossing until dawn" (7:4b). Even

at night, sleep did not offer comfort to Job. In the meantime, Job could not understand why God had become so very disenchanted with him.

Imagine yourself in Job's place. His skin was hard from the dusty scabs, and worms oozed from the sore boils all over his body. This condition presented intense pain. Job thought this had to be the end of his days. He said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope" (7:6). A weaver's shuttle is a tool that weaves yarn by going back and forth very quickly to incorporate a thin thread. When the weaving is complete, the weaver cuts the yarn or thread from the shuttle. Job compared his life to the swiftness of the shuttle's movement. He despaired and believed his life had come to a swift and devastating end.

Job could not see past the moment. He did not believe that he would see good in his life ever again. Our circumstances often appear so dark that we do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. It seems as if the current trouble will not pass. As a result, we make decisions in a vacuum. Job did not understand his suffering, but he thought the end had arrived with his loss and decaying body. Job concluded that God would take his breath from him and see him, but not on earth. In death, there is no return to home or the pleasures of life.

Sufficient Grace

Job believed this was the end of the road for his life. He not only suffered from pain and significant loss, but he had no idea why an attack seemed to come out of nowhere. We know suffering is never easy or welcomed but understanding a reason for our punishment helps us be more accepting. In other words, we bear our suffering with the minor complaint when we know we are wrong. The pain is still penetrating, but we know we are guilty.

On the other hand, when we believe we are innocent and suffering comes, the pain can be excruciating. Our minds tell us we don't deserve to suffer because we are innocent. Job was a good man, an upright man before God, but he suffered excruciating pain and distress.

Nothing to Lose (7:11-21)

At this point, Job did not refrain as he expressed what was in his heart before his friend Eliphaz and more so to God. Job knew God was aware of his inner thoughts and heard him as he cried out in anguish. In his despair, Job felt the need to reach deep inside himself and put into words the depth of his misery. He wanted God to hear his complaint. At this point, Job believed he had nothing more to lose; he had already lost it all. It was time to meet his Maker. How dark can a trial be in our lives? If we do not trust God in our difficult times, we will easily despair and may even become despondent. However, we are blessed to live in days of grace and Holy Spirit power under the blood of Jesus Christ. We are covered!

Job asked God if he was so unruly and out of control that He had to restrain him like the sea or the sea monster.

In verse 13, Job thought he would find comfort and solace in sleep; however, he assumed God sent him dreams and visions that terrified him. We call them nightmares. The night can be long, restless, and even fearful when we see images that scare us every time we close our eyes. The dreams were so intense for Job that he said, suffocate me and let me die. At that moment, Job invited death to replace his pain. Job knew he would not live forever, and his life naturally was as short as a breath.

We learn from Job that trials and troubles are not reserved only for wrongdoers. No, even those who worship and serve God have moments of suffering, times of testing, and experience tribulations. Equally important, we know we have an advocate in our Heavenly Father. However, we must remember that whatever God allows in our lives, He can bring us through victoriously. When we try to sleep, and our trials steal our rest and sleep, remember David's words, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). God alone has all power, He alone is sovereign in our lives, and in Him alone is where we place our trust.

Beginning in verse 17, the greatness and magnitude of God flooded Job's mind that he asked, what is it about humanity that You settled Your heart on us? Why God are you so concerned and care about us? You look upon us every morning and examine our every moment. Will You ever look away and give me time alone to swallow the spit in my mouth? Job's story conveyed that

God's all-knowing eye is always watching. He does not observe and chase us as a fugitive trying to escape Him because we know we cannot escape God. On the contrary, He is ever observant for our good because He knows our hearts, thoughts, and motives. Job knew this about God.

Over and over in his mind and heart, Job anguished and finally asked, "have I sinned," what have I done to make me your target and a burden to myself? Even we find ourselves talking to God and asking questions like, why is this happening to me, Father? Remember, Job still had no idea of his attack; he thought God was the maker of his pain. Many times, in our suffering, we blame Satan, or we blame God. In other words, we want to blame someone or something besides ourselves. Of course, we know that Satan is the enemy of our souls, and he wants to cause us to stumble or give up hope in God. God wants us to have victory in our lives, which is why He sacrificed His Son, Jesus the Christ. However, God may allow the storm to come to us to teach us to trust Him in the middle of the storm. No matter what it looks like around us, we must seek the peace of God, which passes all understanding through Christ Jesus.

Job admitted he was a sinner as he never claimed to be guilt-free. We know this because Job asked God to forgive his sins and remove his guilt. By now, Job had become despondent. According to Vernon McGee, this test damaged Job's integrity. When a man's integrity is damaged or nearly destroyed, he is at a low point in his life. As a result, he is more susceptible to the attacks of Satan. For instance, some do not seek to draw close to God but instead seek refuge in the world system.¹ Ultimately, we know God is our only refuge, and He is our strength.

God's Grace Is Sufficient!

Paul had a thorn in his side, but the Holy Spirit did not inspire the writers to tell us precisely what the nature of the thorn was in his side. Paul asked God three times to remove the thorn. Finally, Paul said about the thorn in his side, "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Like Job, Paul realized that God's grace is sufficient for us, period.

Implications and Actions

You hear stories, or maybe even in your life, of complex challenges to overcome to live a productive life. I am always encouraged to see a life where a person trusts God completely, kicks self-pity to the curb, and lives an abundant life before the Lord. Job taught us that we have no control over what storms come into our lives, but God has all power. He reminded us that life is short, like a breath. If we take a “big picture” look at life, we have much work to do for God and no time to leave Him out of our daily living. We cannot sail the stormy seas alone, but with God, as our Captain, we can trust that we will not shipwreck even in the storm.

Trust God when you do not understand what is going on in your life. He never sleeps nor slumbers and is aware of your every move. So, seek His face and His peace, for He has given us the victory in our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Questions

1. In his response to Eliphaz, why did Job ask questions to which only God knew the answer?
 2. When you have sleepless nights, what is the first thing you do? What should we do when we cannot sleep?

3. What do you believe is the reason God did not tell us what Paul's thorn was?
 4. Have you ever suffered persecution and you did not understand the reason? What did you do, and what was the outcome?

NOTES

¹ *Thru The Bible With J. Vernon McGee* (Vol II. Joshua—Psalms). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers, 1982. (p. 601) ISBN 0-8407-4974-0.

lesson 6

Even Faith Needs a Mediator

MAIN IDEA

We desperately need a spiritual umpire.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

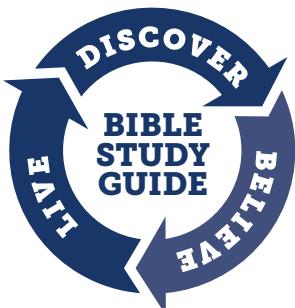
Is Jesus my spiritual mediator?

STUDY AIM

To understand that religion is man reaching out for God: Christianity is God reaching out to man in the person of Jesus Christ

QUICK READ

Jesus is our exclusive mediator because He claimed to be the only way to God. Jesus is not the best way to Heaven. He is the only way.



Introduction

The Cowboys football team is well known as America's team. Many of my family members are Cowboy fans, and it does not matter to them if the football team is winning or losing games. On the other hand, I am not a Cowboy fan. One reason I am not a Cowboy fan is that I am not a sports fan. However, I indeed love people, especially my family and friends. Therefore, when my friends and family members gather to enjoy a game, I am in the middle of the action.

Game watchers know that without players, there is no game to watch, period. However, without referees calling the game, favorable or not, the game would be complete chaos. The referees are officials who enforce the rules and help the players adhere to the game's rules. In our lives, we are like the players in that we need a referee, or a mediator, to help us understand the guidelines for a victorious life in Christ, who reconciles us to God. "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Job 9:32-35

³² For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him—That we may go to court together! ³³ There is no arbitrator between us, Who can place his hand upon us both. ³⁴ Let Him remove His rod from me, And let not the dread of Him terrify me. ³⁵ Then I would speak and not fear Him; But I am not like that in myself.

No Mediator for Job (9: 32-33)

Unfortunately, Job's friends accused him of sin in his and his children's lives. Job was an upright man with integrity and blameless before God; for this reason, he had no idea why he suffered so severely (Job 2:3). Job realized and understood that God was not like humanity, but He was the one true living God. Job wanted to be judged before God for what was going on with him and plead his case. Job said God was not like a man he could take to court to prove his innocence (9:32). There was a chasm between God and humanity and no

mediator to bridge the relationship and restore wholeness between people and God. Later, God sacrificed His Son for our sin in His grace and because of His mercy for humanity. Not to mention, Job understood there was no mediator to reconcile him to God.

We can live because Jesus came to give us victory in our everyday lives and hope for eternal life. Above all, Jesus comforted His disciples and us and did not want them troubled about the cares of this world. Jesus assured us of our mediator when He said in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” In other words, we do not have the ability within us to reconcile ourselves to God; Jesus is the only way to the Father. Job experienced the feeling of what it was like to be separated and not reconciled to God. In addition, and equally important, he recognized that he, as a man, could not be compared to God. Job teaches us through his suffering that we should revere and honor God going through our troubles. I know certain circumstances are excruciating; we cannot believe our righteous God is amid them. On the contrary, God is always with us and loves us, so He sacrificed His Son so we could reconcile to Him.

Our Mediator

The word mediator describes one who intervenes between two parties. This term originally applied to Christ, who mediated between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus continues to intercede on our behalf today.

My sister and I are very close relationally, and she was the youngest until I was born. My sister loved me and taught me many invaluable lessons. We are both grateful for our relationship and cannot imagine being without each other. A few years ago, we had a rift in our relationship for a reason neither of us could explain. I was miserable without our regular communication. I thought of her all the time. One day, I called to say how much I missed her and how much our relationship meant to me. Shortly after, we restored our relationship when my sister expressed the same sentiments for me. In this case, no mediator was necessary. However, in our spiritual walk, walking with Jesus is most critical.

Job understood that he needed a mediator between him and God; he knew he could not go to God independently. However, Job opened his heart to his friend to share what he believed about God, that God is not man, nor is He like a man. Considering his situation, Job wanted a mediator to connect him to God. Thankfully, we have Jesus, who is our mediator and reconciles us to God, our Father.

Consequently, without Jesus, we are not fulfilled, and we will not have a right relationship with God. We see in our lives that without Jesus, it is impossible for restoration to God. When we call on Jesus to restore us to His Father, we receive peace in our hearts and our spirits.

The Hand of Correction (9:34-35)

When we think of the rod of punishment, we think about parents exercising their authority over their children. The child knows without question that the parent is the one who can administer punishment and the same one who can withhold punishment. Here, Job acknowledged God's authority in his life. He believed God was the One who held the rod over his life and the only One who could remove it. Job said if he only had a mediator, someone who could connect him with the Almighty, he would state his case without fear (9:35, NIV).

Jesus had not died on the cross yet; therefore, Job did not have a mediator to help him reconcile to God. We know that Jesus was the only perfect man sent by God to reconcile us to God and show us we could live a victorious life in Christ. I believe the hand of correction from God has a design within the discipline to help us straighten up and keep from doing wrong. The hand of God is also to show us our true character when we face trouble. God is omnipotent and knows all.

Conversely, Satan means to harm us and present permanent danger in our lives, and he does not have our good as his interest. In John 10:10, Jesus said, "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly." Gratefully, when we embrace the character of Christ, even when life is hard, we do what is right. Because of the love of God for His people, He sent Jesus as a bridge between Him and us.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6). It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can remain faithful like Job when bad things happen to us, or when we have been accused falsely. It appears that it wasn't God's time for Jesus to come during Job's life.

Job was not fearful of God. On the contrary, he knew God was his source and his Lord. We see in Job's life that without the hand of God, we will have no fruit in our lives. For us, and above all, without a relationship with Jesus, life is hard. Imagine those who forge through life thinking they are successful or are managing their conflicts on their own. Job wanted a mediator! He longed for someone who could bridge the gap between him and God. In summary, God gives us a choice; we can be religious or relational.

For this reason, we know for ourselves and share with others that Jesus is the only way to receive salvation. He is our mediator. We do not always understand why we suffer, but we know who controls every aspect of our lives. We have Jesus on the right hand of God, pleading on our behalf. Jesus alone is our advocate, our mediator.

While Job maintained his innocence, he desperately wanted God to remove His rod from his life. He had no ungodly fear or terror of God. Conversely, the circumstances overtook Job that he believed came from the hand of God (Psalm 39:10). Job did not know God had boasted to Satan about Job's integrity and faithfulness. All Job knew was that he was suffering, and in his suffering, he needed divine help.

Implications and Actions

Life brings to our doorstep circumstances in which we have no control, such as a broken relationship, the loss of a job or personal possessions, sickness, or even death. Of course, we do not want to open our doors and invite heartache into our dwelling, but do we always have a choice? What happens to us, God allows. There are occasions when even disappointment seems to be more than we can bear. Job showed us that we could ask God questions if our motive does not question His sovereignty. Job also showed us how blessed we are to have Jesus as our mediator. As a result, we can take all our concerns

to God through Jesus and trust His direction in our lives. When we pray and give thanks to God no matter the situation, we receive the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:6-7). Only in Christ can we bear our trials and temptations. Jesus pleads to God as our spiritual umpire connected to God and those who allow Him to abide.

Be Angry but Sin Not (9:32-33)

Many years ago, my boss laid me off from my job of more than 17 years; I was perplexed about the lay-off. I didn't understand why he made that decision. My boss did not have an explanation, except that the company was going in a different direction. Even with this loss and not understanding the reason, I knew God's hand was in these circumstances and on my life. Even if He didn't bring this loss to me, He allowed me to experience it and not without purpose. Job realized it was the hand of God that allowed his suffering. Although Job understood God's sovereign hand in his life, it did not stop his anger because of the accusations.

Moreover, Job knew he was innocent of any wrong. From his story, we know Job had a healthy and holy fear of God. If we haven't, it will do us well to cultivate a holy and healthy fear of God as Job had. Notwithstanding, God allowed Job to express his anger; however, he did not sin in his expressions.

Questions

1. How do you imagine Job felt as he realized there was no mediator between him and God?
 2. Have you suffered a loss or a devastating event and wondered where God was during it all?

3. Job never accused Satan of his trials. So why do you think he directed his thoughts toward God?
 4. Looking at your life right now, can God brag to Satan about you? Do you think you can survive the enemy attacks while maintaining your faith and trust in God?
 5. How can you fortify your faith and your relationship with God against Satan's attacks? What steps are required?

lesson 7

Hope on Display

MAIN IDEA

When we are suffering and trying to find hope, Job's testimony in 13:15 will make the difference between victory and defeat.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

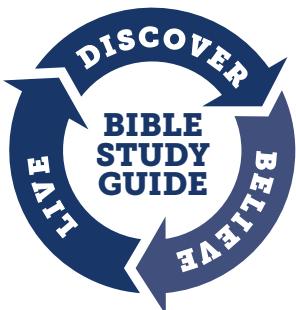
When I die, will I live again?

STUDY AIM

To learn that the devil's chief tool to discourage God's servants is fear

QUICK READ

Job shows us it is possible to have hope even during pain. It is this hope for the future that provides us with the strength to carry on and not quit.



Introduction

I marvel at the unfettered love young couples exhibit when they stand at the wedding altar. They exchange their vows of love and honor with plans to spend the rest of their lives in this marital bliss. At that moment, they never imagine anything going wrong in their relationship. Many years ago, I was the one at the altar full of hope in our future and the love we shared. I believed that God blessed our union, and we were delighted! However, as time progressed and true to nature, the years walked by at a steady pace. The years were not without their challenges and disappointments. After spending time in pleading prayers, counseling, and hoping against hope, my marriage failed. I was heartbroken and disappointed in my new life status. Where did I go wrong? Was a path missed that I could have taken? Why did this happen to me, God? Yet, through the hurt and mistreatment, I still loved my spouse.

Life is not without disappointment and pain. We live in a world full of sin, and the enemy of our souls wants us to despair and give up hope. Although Job lost all his children and possessions and boils covered his body, he did not lose hope in God (13:15).

Job 13:15-16; 14:1-2, 14-17

¹⁵ Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. ¹⁶ This also *will be* my salvation, For a godless person cannot come before His presence.

¹ "Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. ² Like a flower he comes out and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.

¹⁴ If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my relief comes. ¹⁵ You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. ¹⁶ For now You number my steps, You do not observe my sin. ¹⁷ My wrongdoing is sealed up in a bag, And You cover over my guilt.

Have Hope and Live! (13:15-16)

“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him” (Job 13:15a). How many of us will utter those words out loud and without fear? First, we do not care for being slain in any fashion. Correct? Especially if our faith is not yet solid in Jesus Christ. Job said, although you kill me God or cut me off from all You provided, I did not surrender the hope I have in You, God. Job looked at his circumstances through the lens of trusting God. He did not place his trust in what he saw going on around him through physical eyesight. Job trusted the One he could not see with natural eyes. As students of the Word of God, it will benefit us to learn to trust God through every situation, whether good or bad. We cannot rely on what we see, but Christians walk by faith and the knowledge of God through Christ Jesus.

Job continued his defense to Zophar because he knew the strength of his integrity. He knew himself so well that Job thought he could stand before God and defend himself. “Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him” (13:15b). Here Job was speaking as a person who would protect oneself in a court of law with zero knowledge of the court’s inner workings and without knowledge of the law. That person will be found guilty.

Additionally, a person who thinks they can stand before a Holy God to defend themselves has already lost their case. We all are sinners (Romans 3:23). When we go before God, it should be in great humility and reverence for who He is, not defending ourselves, even in innocence. We are reminded, “Holy, Holy, Holy is The Lord God, The Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come” (Revelation 4:8b).

To illustrate Job’s experience, have you ever been wrongly accused? And of all the people, the accuser was a friend? Once you get past the shock and hurt, how do you think you would respond? Before we jump to conclusions to judge Job, listen to his conviction in verse 16a, “This also will be my salvation.” Job understood that God was his salvation. No other source are we saved except in God. Are you confident of the basis of your salvation? Do you know for sure that you are saved and will live eternally with our Father? David informed us that “He alone is my rock and my salvation” (Psalm 62:2a). When our physical bodies no longer live, the essence of who we are continues to live. Only God is our salvation, and only in Him will we have life eter-

nal. Living in God through Christ is our hope. In the final analysis, a person who has not surrendered their heart to God will not stand in His presence (16). Therefore, we must place our focus on God and forgive our friends who wrongfully accuse us. God forgives us, and we must forgive others.

The Temporary Life (Job 14:1-2)

The world is not as large as it was approximately 30 years ago. When the World Wide Web (WWW) became available to the public, the Internet shared information on people, places, and things in the world as it had never been before. Our society slowly became familiar with the Internet and its uses. We learned of celebrations around the globe as well as tragedies in our country and other countries. Many people began to self-diagnose their illnesses from medical information found online and connected with family and friends worldwide. A variety of educational classes were made available, people formed relationships and transacted business. The speed of time seemed to have increased, and the days began to go by quickly. One of my mother's regular sayings was, "the older we become, the faster time goes." The older we become, we gain wisdom, and we learn to value the time God has given us.

In Job's day, he did not have the Internet at his fingertips, nor did he fly the skies from country to country as a world traveler. However, without all this information available to him, Job had a keen observation of time. Job understood that no matter how long a person lived, the number of years is short compared to eternity. Job referred to life as short-lived and full of turmoil. The truth is that people will always have trouble.

We cannot avoid trouble in any way, even when we hide our lives in Christ. Consequently, trouble may not last, but undoubtedly it will come to us, and it will come unannounced. In this passage of scripture, Job turned his attention from his friends and talked to God about death. Keep in mind that every word recorded in the Bible is for our learning and increasing our faith. As children of God, we have no reason to fear the end of life as we know it now. The enemy of our souls wants us to be distracted from God and what is good. Satan uses fear tactics to discourage us, but we know, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). God sent Jesus to reconcile us to Him and live eternally in faith, not fear.

During the last days of my mother's life, her sight was not very clear. Colors were blurred, and what she could see was hazy. It was her joy to be driven through the gardens that grew large and beautiful. She couldn't see the beautiful flowers, but she could smell them. She said, "these flowers smell lovely. I so love this season, and soon they will be gone." Job said we are like these flowers that bloom forth and then wither away. I'm wondering, what fragrance are you releasing in your season of life? Can others enjoy your scent? I am not referring to the lovely smells we purchase at the department stores. Instead, I am referring to the scent of the love of God. In the first letter of John, it sounds like a plea, "Beloved, let's love one another; for love is from God; and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Real Love

A long time ago, I read a book titled Finding True Love. The author wrote about ways to invite love into your life for those seeking marriage. In reading this book, the term I learned prompted me in my memory even today. The Latin term is a sine qua non (SQN). Sine qua non (without which, not) is that one thing without which the relationship would not exist.¹ In our earthly relationships, we place boundaries or limitations on the love we share; we determine the behaviors without which we can or cannot live.

In contrast to our earthly relationships, God loves us unconditionally, even sacrificing His Son, Jesus, so we can have forgiveness of sin and experience eternal life. Job understood this love God had for him and the love and reverence he had for God. For us, Jesus is our SQN, and He is the One without which a relationship with God would not exist.

Waiting For Change (Job 14:14-17)

Job asked the question that plagues many people's minds today; when we die, will we live again? Thank God we are on the other side of the cross which Jesus gave His life for us to have eternal life. Because we have a relationship with Jesus, we will see God. Job said He would wait for those days, the

day when the Lord would call him home. Job believed that when he died, he would see God. Paul said, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). Job knew his body would change, and he would answer God’s call. God’s hands would transform his body and Job would be changed and made perfect.

Job poured out his heart in this passage of Scripture regarding death. He understood that this life would pass. Job also knew he would see God. He knew his Redeemer lived and would take His stand on the earth. Job felt strongly deep within his heart (19:25, 27). At the same time, we can have the same conviction as Job. Paul said, “Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Like Job, we are living day by day and waiting for our change. However, we do not go through each day dreading the end of our lives. On the contrary, the end of the life we know now is only the beginning of eternal life for Christians. “The gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23b). This gift is free to all who receive it, but our Lord and Savior paid the ultimate price. Jesus is our hope.

Who Am I?

Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you yourselves say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Our relationship with Jesus should be solid and immovable, without any doubt of who He is. When we are walking with Christ, He says, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19a). With this, your life on earth will mimic kingdom living. He said whatever you are doing on earth will already have been done in Heaven.

Whom do you say Jesus is? Do you believe what you say? Do you tell others who Jesus is to you?

As God did for Job, He does for us and numbers our steps. What this means, as we seek Him in prayer and Bible study, is that He responds and

directs our lives and knows the end. I always said my father was a man before his time because of his insight and wisdom. I can say the same for Job, as he was a man before his time. Job knew he would live beyond his physical life and be with God eternally. He also knew his sins were bound together, covered, and forgotten. During Job's lifetime, Jesus had not yet died on the cross, but Job trusted entirely in God.

Implications and Actions

We will have trouble in our lives. It may be relational, personal, professional, or financial, but trouble will enter our lives in some shape or fashion. Nevertheless, we must trust God in every circumstance and place our hope in Him through Jesus. God is the only One who has complete control of our lives. In the end, we will reap our heavenly reward if we remain faithful.

Job incites us to understand just how fleeting life is. Make good use of your days by making prayer and Bible study a priority. We will not get a do-over for this life; we must give our life to Christ while we can. We will live after we die. Are you confident in your eternal destination? Trust God and have hope in Jesus. No matter what happens, do not give up hope!

Questions

1. How did Job know he would change after death?
 2. Do you fall apart when tragedy or trouble strikes? What is the first action you take when something terrible happens?

3. Is God prioritized in your life? If so, how? What do you do daily in your relationship with God?
 4. What made Job continue to trust God and hope in Him even when he said, “Though He slay me?”
 5. Do you believe you are waiting for your change? What do you do while you wait?

NOTES

¹ Kingma, Daphne R. *Finding True Love: The Four Essential Keys to Discovering the Love of Your Life*. Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1996.

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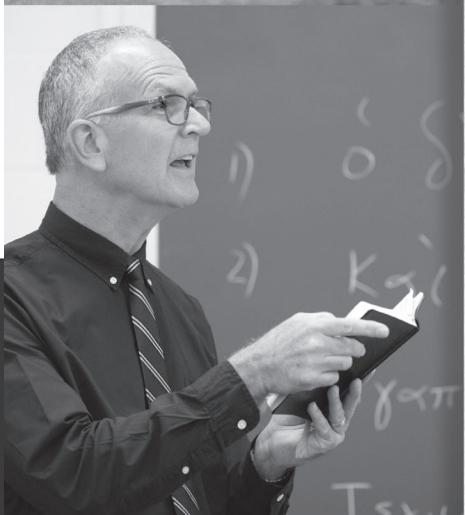
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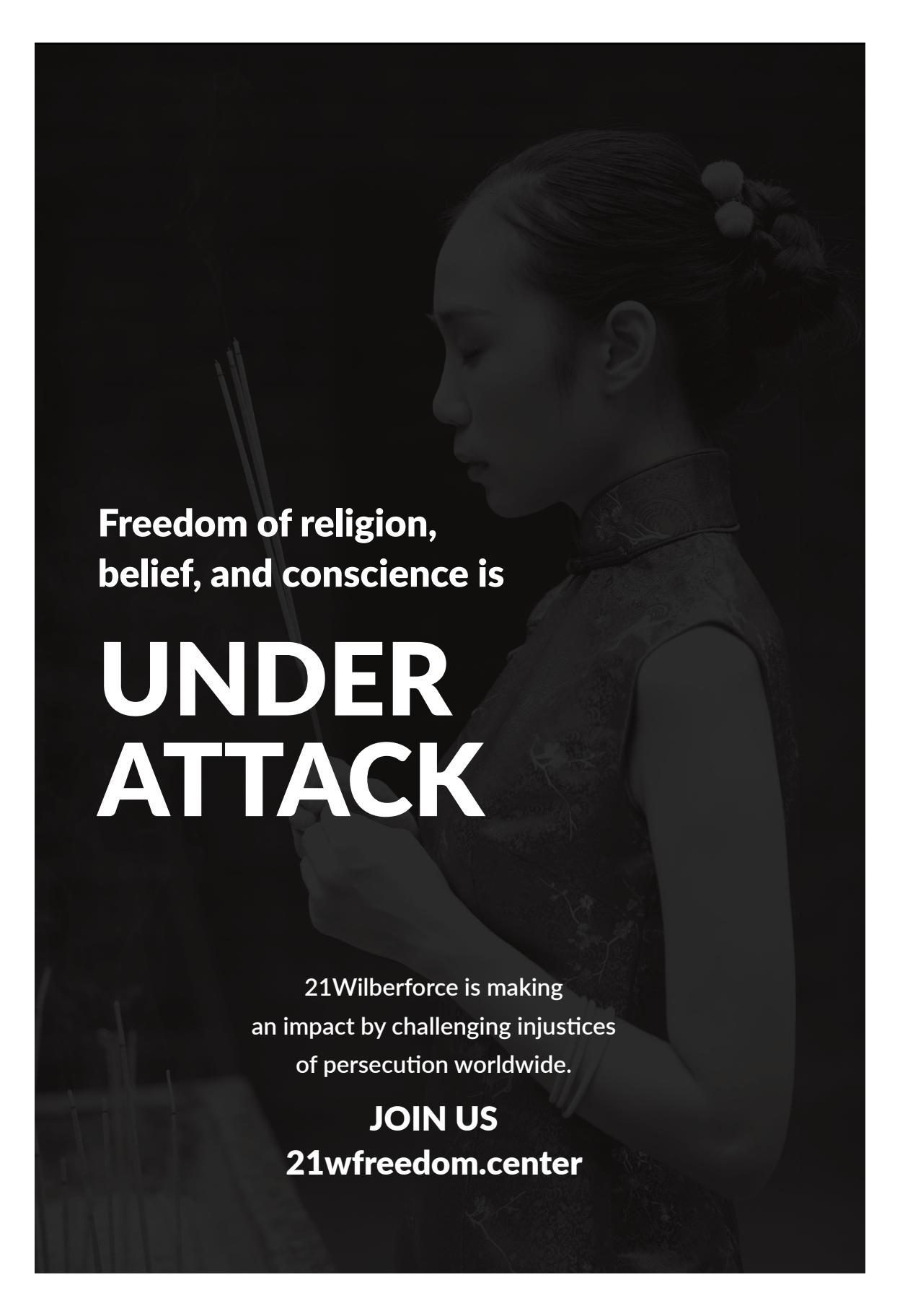
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FOCAL TEXT

Job 19:13-19

BACKGROUND

**Psalm 68:4-6;
Romans 8:38-39**

lesson 8

I Am Not Alone

MAIN IDEA

Loneliness is one of the most painful human conditions.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

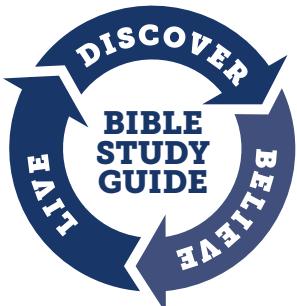
Does Jesus understand my loneliness?

STUDY AIM

To learn that we don't have to be alone to suffer from loneliness

QUICK READ

Job wasn't alone. He was surrounded by people, yet his heart cried out with a sense of loneliness.



Introduction

Loneliness is a visitor who shows up unannounced complete with extended-stay luggage. The unwelcomed intruder invades our experiences with depression and anxiety. Thus, we feel empty, isolated, and hollow. Loneliness represents the fact we are uniquely human. Even as children of God, loneliness creeps up on us and we end up where Job finds himself in our lesson: feeling isolated, unloved, and alone.

In this lesson, Job investigated the actions of his inner circle: Starting with his family, then moving out to those who worked for him, Job spoke about how his friends and neighbors viewed him personally. Job was not alone, but he *felt* alone. Have you ever felt that way; have you ever looked around a crowded room only to discover you...and only you understood what was really going on? This was Job's problem in our lesson today.

Job 19:13-19

¹³ "He has alienated my family from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. ¹⁴ My relatives have gone away; my closest friends have forgotten me. ¹⁵ My guests and my female servants count me a foreigner; they look on me as on a stranger. ¹⁶ I summon my servant, but he does not answer, though I beg him with my own mouth.¹⁷ My breath is offensive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own family. ¹⁸ Even the little boys scorn me; when I appear, they ridicule me. ¹⁹ All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me.

The Evidence of Loneliness (19:13-14)

Job had a problem: everything he had was gone. Everything. His fortune. His children. His friends. His standing in the community; everything was all gone except his life. Initially, Job had lived through the agony and pain of losing his wealth, children, livestock, servants, and his reputation. All his wealth was gone. Yet Job kept his faith in God. The Bible reader today gets the benefit of seeing behind the curtain of Job's experiences: Satan was up to

no good. Since Satan could not entice Job enough to disown God; he upped the ante and asked God for permission to touch Job's body (2:5).

With God's permission, Satan launched a physical attack on Job. Now with open sores, painful boils, and with atrophy setting in; Job's problem was compounded by the fact that no one could pinpoint the source of his misfortune. God knew. Satan knew. But Job and all those participating in the narrative that is the Book of Job...did not know. In Old Testament thinking, if a person fell on hard times, it was because the person had committed a great sin. Such was Job's case. Everyone around him believed he had a hidden sin problem and God was punishing him.

The Problem of Evil

Why do bad things happen to good people? If God is God and He loves me, why do I suffer from loneliness. Where was God when mom or dad died? These questions and many more seek to hold God accountable for the actions of a fallen world. The sovereignty of God demands we as humans exercise our freedom to do good...or to do evil; and sometimes we choose moral evil. Then there are times when natural disasters occur with devastating consequences. In all instances whether moral or natural, we can trust God. This is our *theodicy*. Instead of attempting to hold God accountable by blaming Him, believers can embrace a *theodicy*. The term theodicy is a compound word meaning God-justice. When we acknowledge the justice of God, the acknowledgment itself (*theodicy*) grants us the peace to know God is in control and nothing happens outside of His permission or His allowance. Job 1:21 helps us understand this: "...the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

Throughout history, humankind has had questions concerning pain and suffering. No wonder God included the book of Job in the Canon. Much has been written concerning the problem of pain, suffering, and evil. In biblical thought, suffering is traced back to man's fall in Genesis 3. God told Adam, "...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Genesis 2:17). Eve was tricked by Satan and Adam was groomed into believing the lies of the serpent instead of the steadfastness of God's instructions. As a result of Adam and Eve's failure,

mankind has been dying ever since. Suffering leads to pain and pain leads to a sense of loneliness. Adam and Eve must have experienced loneliness in their fall from a right relationship with God.

Job knew he had done no wrong in his dealings with others or in his relationship with God (1:1). But the loneliness brought on by hardship was too much for Job to bear. Someone had to be responsible for all these horrific events; so, Job blamed God. Can you see Job on his bed of affliction surrounded by people who cared for him; can you understand why Job's heart felt so betrayed and isolated? The sights, sounds, smells, and atmosphere of near-death permeated Job's room. Job actually believed God had forsaken him. As Job described his pain, notice how he attached descriptions or evidence of abandonment from his closest relatives. Can you feel Job's pain? By Job's account, his relatives had deserted him, and his closest friends had forgotten about him. No one will ever be able to argue your perception because your perception is reality...in your own thinking. Job's observations of alienation, estrangement, and abandonment were real to him.

The Agony of Loneliness (19:15-16)

Job was a leader in his community. The events surrounding Job's ordeal must have made the local news. See the broadcast: "Job falls hard: losses are mounting—News at 11." Have you been there? Something catastrophic happens in your life and people begin to change their behavior patterns around you? Job's family had already distanced themselves from him, now the people on payroll, his servants, had begun to negatively react to his pain. The sense of Job's pain places him on an island. Imagine going from riches to rags overnight.

Since most people believed sin and wickedness accompanied misfortune, those working for Job wanted nothing to do with him. Job thought the ones on payroll would be duty-bound to continue serving. This was Job's plight; and it is our problem as well. How do I overcome so much loss plus the agony of people drawing conclusions about me based on my current state of being?

Job's pain was real to him. One cannot dismiss the presence of Job's workers and the seemingly downward spiral of Job's fall from grace. Notice the vivid, painful language Job used to describe the actions of his closest al-

lies. Surely his female servants would have had compassion on him, but they considered him a foreigner—a person from a distant land—a stranger—someone they never knew. So, Job turned to his one of his male servants—seeking a favor—and begged him for compassion, but his male servant did not respond.

Loneliness brings about a sense of anxiety. A feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. We all fall down in life. Can you see Job wondering where have all the people I helped gone? Have you ever wondered the same question? Where is my spouse and children when I need them the most; where is my church family; where are my co-workers, friends, and neighbors? The statements Job made concerning his support group were all born out of anxiety, nervousness, angst, tension, and anger.

As we consider Job's plight, let us not neglect the idea that we are reading *Job's* perspective of what was going on in his life. While we acknowledge Job's perspective, we must also consider Job's pain. Pain can and will distort the realities of even the most seasoned of saints. No wonder we can look to Jesus as the One who knows and cares about the matters of all those who call His name. The pain, agony, and evidence of loneliness are hard to ignore. The book of Job reminds believers the advantage of having a relationship with Jesus Christ. God promises, "I'll never leave you..." (Joshua 1:5). Faith in God demands we trust Him...when we cannot trace Him. Believers must understand what Job came to understand: **God uses the pains of life like loneliness, anxiety, and depression to show us that He, and He alone, can take the worst of life and transform it into the best for us.**

The Perseverance of Loneliness (19:17-19)

How long is long enough? Job's family and close associates disdained him. Then his personal entourage disowned him. The family that survived the accident looked down on him as someone worthless, repugnant, detestable, and revolting. Job's neighbors disrespected him. Even the little children in the neighborhood scorned him by taunting, ridiculing, and making sport of his condition. As an ex-respected citizen in the community, the constant and complete taunting was unbearable. The pain associated with loneliness made Job's distress more painful.

Most times, when loneliness arrives, it often does so with no intent of leaving soon. Notice the extent to which the feelings of loneliness and despair persevered in Job's life. He sought compassion and relief from his surviving immediate family, he also turned to those who served on his payroll, but no one responded. No doubt they abandoned him when his finances ran out. Job had been reduced to the status of a beggar, for no one in his inner circle would respond.

The community in which Job used to be upstanding and upright had started to treat him as less than foreigner. We do not know how long Job suffered. But the testimony in these verses paint a sad and painful season in Job's life. Perhaps you have had dark seasons in your life. A time when it seemed all hope was lost, and no one cared. Songstress Aretha Franklin took an old hymn of the church and put her unique style to "What a friend we have in Jesus." The sound may be different, but the message in the music rings clear: We do have a friend in Jesus, and He makes it possible to have a conversation with God. God can dispel all feelings of loneliness. Certainly, we have a friend in Jesus.

Pray & Praise

When calamity strikes you or your family, pay attention to what is going on.

- Is there a sin to confess (as Jonah confessed), or is God preparing me for something greater through this trial?
- Ask God, through prayer, to help you.
- Ask God, through prayer, to show you the way forward.
- Remember the faith of your ancestors for strength to persevere.
- Praise God with spiritual songs and hymns as you go through your trial.

There is One who knows how you feel. Scripture describes Him as a Man of Sorrow, acquainted with grief—even Job's grief—especially your grief. Our society will continue to argue the pros and cons of pain and suffering. Like Job and his friends, we will continue to ask questions only God can answer, but we *still* have a friend in Jesus. Job is down, but he's not out. This lesson highlights the mortality of our flesh and the humanity in our frame. The les-

son text also reminds us of the need for Jesus in our life. We are reminded in Scripture, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Believers are not alone, even when we *feel* alone; we can remember our Lord Christ suffered in every way, but He did not give in. This gives us hope and encouragement to carry on.

Implications and Actions

Job's experiences in our lesson teaches us loneliness is one of the most painful of life's realities. But God through the person of Jesus Christ, takes the pain of loneliness and produces an unusual usefulness of loneliness that brings great joy to those who choose to keep going...even through the loneliness. You can make the choice and determine to live and learn through your pain. As your story unfolds; recognize and rehearse your history with the Divine: nothing will be able to come between you and God. Yes, loneliness is painful and shows up unannounced, but God gives us all grace, mercy, and humility to praise Him in the storm, even when life *seems to be* falling apart.

Questions

1. How would you encourage a lonely friend?
 2. How does a relationship with Jesus help us deal with pain and suffering in our lives?

3. In what ways can you serve in your local church ministry to help others who may be experiencing the pain of loneliness?
 4. How would you paraphrase Jeremiah 29:11?

lesson 9

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

MAIN IDEA

In the midst of Job's uncertainty, he proclaimed there was one thing he did know.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

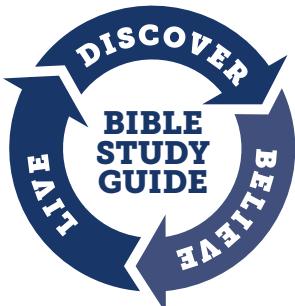
Is Jesus my Lord?

STUDY AIM

To understand that the only relationship that won't be changed by death is our relationship with Jesus

QUICK READ

While Job was suffering in this world, there was another world that he couldn't see with his physical eyes. But he knew that one day he would see his Redeemer face to face.



Introduction

The Book of Job is one of five wisdom books in the Bible. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). If we look inward, we can see Job's life played out similarly in our own experiences: We have hopes, dreams, and aspirations for ourselves, children, and grandchildren. We work hard to build a complete life that ends with a retirement account, a healthy lineage, and a legacy worth remembering. Then a catastrophic event happens: a terminal illness, a child dies, a divorce happens, the employer files for bankruptcy, or the stock market crashes, and the 401-K goes insolvent. Seemingly overnight, our life is turned inside out, and our world comes crumbling down, just like Job's. Job gives believers insight on how to respond when all the years of sweat and tears are reduced to a few paragraphs on a memorial program. Job reminds us that our end is only the beginning for God's resources. Believers can reconcile the losses of this world with the acknowledgment of a far better place.

Job 19:20-27

²⁰ I am nothing but skin and bones; I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth. ²¹ "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. ²² Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh? ²³ Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, ²⁴ that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! ²⁵ I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; ²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Job's Physical Affliction (19:20-22)

Job was a realist. He looked at himself and made a statement of fact concerning his physical condition. The losses kept mounting. The events surrounding Job's fall involved the tragic loss of his children, the loss of some of his workers, the sudden loss of vast wealth, and his loss of standing within his

own community (4:3-4). At last Job settled in the reality of his condition. His lifestyle and body ravaged by Satanic attack; he experienced severe pain and feelings of utter desperation. Job said, “I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth” (19:20). Job concluded nothing is left but skin and bones. As Job looked at the frailness of his sad, hopeless body, he turned to his friends for mercy.

Notice Job’s resolve was to live out his days validating his side of the story. Job, once a leader among his peers had been reduced to the lifestyle of a beggar asking for mercy. In Job’s day, it was believed a person reaped what they sowed. Job had tried to convince his friends of his innocence, but the evidence spoke for itself: everything Job had was gone, except for his life, his wife, and a few friends who implored Job to confess his sin. Eliphaz the Temanite, had earlier reminded Job that “...those who sow trouble reap it” (4:7-8). Bildad the Shuhite, labeled Job an evildoer (8:20), and Zophar the Naamathite, encouraged Job to turn from his wicked ways (11:14-15).

“Have you considered My servant, _____?”

(Your Name Goes Here)

When hard times hit, one should ask several questions of him/herself:

1. Is there a sin to confess?
2. Is there a wrong to right?
3. Is God up to something big in my life?

It is very possible you are going through difficulty because God thinks highly of you and your trust in Him. So, He asked, Satan, “Have you considered My servant, _____.”

(Your Name Goes Here)

You and I can join Job in his resolve: For we know our Redeemer lives!

Job even tried to switch the blame of his suffering on his friends. The same ones who accused Job of wrongdoing were now being accused by Job for pouncing on him in his lowest hour. Maybe Job was attempting to find some mental relief from his misery by placing blame on his friends. But Job’s dilemma did not subside. His friends accused him of being a hypocrite. Job

would have to understand God is more than our problems. Even when it seems like God has forgotten and abandoned us, Scripture teaches us better. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Job's Prayerful Reflection (19:23-24)

Notice the evidence of grief that enveloped Job's life. Job went from happiness to grief at the loss of his prosperity, but when Job turned from his friends toward God, he began his rebound from the hands of Satanic attack. This was Job's turning point: Job prayed. The wisdom of Job began to take form even though Job did not understand the reason behind his turmoil, but he did understand what he knew about God...and so Job spoke to God. The wisdom of Job is on full display, and he knew his words were worth recording.

Job wanted his story to always be remembered, so he prayed his heart's desire. Job's prayer had prophetic undertones. Prophecy is not predicting the future, but rather speaking truth so boldly in real time that it becomes truth for times in the future. Job's fall at the hands of Satan was an epic fall. In Job's lifetime, the prevailing theological belief concluded no one suffered as Job did without a sin to confess or some wicked behavior from which to turn. This was the argument of his three visitors, but Job knew others coming behind him would need a truth on which to hold. Job did not want to leave his story to the inconsistencies of oral tradition.

The genre of storytelling can change over time if it's not written down... so Job prayed his story would be recorded. Job then focused his prayer to include how he wanted his words recorded: (1) written on a scroll—Job requested his words be written in a book. Books would outlast him and would be a written record of his ailments; (2) inscribed with an iron tool on lead—ironworks has characteristics that cannot be changed easily; and (3) engraved in rock—chiseled in stone. Books, iron, and stone are three ways to capture and keep history. Job wanted his story to outlive him.

Certainly, Job's prayer request has come to pass. Throughout biblical history, Job's story of success, failure, pain, suffering, redemption, and vindication has encouraged the masses. There is nothing in contemporary theology

to suggest that Satan is no longer wreaking havoc on the lives of people everywhere. Jesus taught, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). But we also see the faithfulness of God in Job’s story. Although Job was hurting, he maintained the mindset to pray. Observe the perseverance Job had to impact all those who would live long after he was gone. Job suffered great loss, but Job knew his relationship with God, his determination to trust in the Ancient of Days, and his eventual vindication (salvation) would be a source of comfort, hope, and help for generations to come.

Redeemer

The term redeemer is a major theme running through both the Old and New Testaments. In the former, the redeemer would be a someone who aided a family who had no heir. In the case of Ruth, the redeemer was a relative of a descendant or kinsman. The redeemer in those days was more of a deliverer who saved the family from sure and certain trouble from those who could take advantage of a grieving widow and orphans. In the New Testament, Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer. The central idea in the New Testament is that of Predestined Rescuer. Someone who would save us from the ravages of sin, so God sent His Son, Jesus to rescue us from our sins thus securing our redemption from the penalty of sin. As children of God, Jesus Christ is our Kinsman Redeemer, our Rescuer.

Job’s Redeemer: Tried and True (19:25-27)

Job had been harassed by his wife, ridiculed by the community kids, accused by his friends, grief-stricken by the death of his children and servants, agonized by open sores and loss of physical health, and confused by the silence of God to his requests for an explanation for so much discomfort in his life. Job’s life had become the perfect picture for pain and suffering. But Job possessed something on the inside that would forever etch his experience into the annals of biblical history: Job knew God. In spite of all Job lost, he recognized the temporal nature of material things...even relationships (1:21). Job

lived out his conviction to remain close to God, even when it felt like God had abandoned him.

When feelings abandon us, we must, like Job, rely on what we know even in the face of uncertainty. Job called God, *my redeemer*. Job got personal. Job understood only One Person could ultimately save him. Only One Person could take all the heartache and heartbreak and transform it into something worth redeeming. Job also made a statement of physical and spiritual importance. Job acknowledged what we all must acknowledge: Our youth will fade, our skin will wrinkle, our steps will grow shorter, eyesight will grow dim, and one day, our time on this planet will be no more.

Believers understand that life on this planet will not last forever. There is one thing that will transcend life on Earth, however, and that is our relationship with Christ. He is our Redeemer. He is our Savior; the One who delivers us from certain death. Jesus came to save us from Satan, ourselves, and our sins. One day we all will die, but death is not the end. There is a spiritual reality that carries and keeps children of the Most High God: One day, when we die in the Lord, we will be raised in the same manner Jesus was raised from the grave. Job had no money, no resources, no reputation, and no one else to whom he could turn. So, he turned to God. Jesus Himself is our guarantor (Hebrews 7:22).

Job's bold declaration marked the place in his story where his spiritual life turned for the better. He had given up on the need to have people and things determine his relationship with God. Job said, "I myself will see Him with my own eyes" (19:27). Job looked forward to the day when he would stand before his Creator and Redeemer. Grief is painful and Job's grief brought him within reach of God. Job yearned to reunite with God. Job longed for a place better than this one. An invisible place, a spiritual place, a heavenly place. A place of no more pain, suffering, ridicule, and no more longing. The yearning of Job's heart placed a premium on that place, eternal in the heavens. Eternity with God is a beautiful place of praise, worship, glory, and beauty. The peace Job sought could not be attained in this world, but Job's words are as real today as they were the day he spoke them, and we know our Redeemer lives.

Implications and Actions

Life is filled with pain, suffering, heartache, and heart break. We are living in perilous times. Parents and pastors have made that statement since we were children. But somehow, God moves on the altars of our hearts, thus transforming our fears into a faith that leans on what is known versus what is unknown. In Romans 8:28, the Apostle Paul agrees with Job's reassuring "Redeemer" statement. Paul says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him..." Yes, times may be perilous, but the book of Job teaches all believers to recognize and acknowledge God in all circumstances. Paul also reminded believers in Ephesians 6:12—There is both a physical and a spiritual realm where we are not wrestling with flesh and blood but there is another continuum that comes to bear on our lives. So, Paul encourages all to, "put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11).

Questions

1. How can a focus on God help us when we are going through difficult seasons in our lives?

2. How has your life changed since you believed Jesus has saved your life?

3. What difference did prayer make for Job when feeling his lowest?

4. As a result of studying this lesson, how would you advise a friend who's going through a difficult season in their life?

FOCAL TEXT

Job 32:1-10; 33:2-4, 22-30;
35:9-10; 37:14-24

BACKGROUND

Ephesians 2:8-9;
Acts 16:25-30

lesson 10

The Wisdom of Youth

MAIN IDEA

There's more wisdom in a Spirit-filled young person than in older people who express their own opinion.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Does God give me what I need or what I deserve?

STUDY AIM

To understand that wisdom comes from God—age only seasons it

QUICK READ

Elihu was young but spoke under the leadership of the Spirit of God and because of this he expressed more wisdom than the other three friends combined.



Introduction

We have followed Job's plight. Job's story unfolded before our eyes, and we knew Satan was responsible for the pain and loss Job endured. But God allowed the agony, permitted the pain, and sanctioned the soreness that emitted from Job's testimony. Why would God allow so much distress to come upon one who had a reputation for being upright? Why does God allow any of us to suffer from the loss of loved ones, employment, health, relationships, finances, or peace of mind?

Job's three friends had come to his aid. Their advice: confess your sins before God and trust in His faithfulness to forgive your unrighteousness and return you to your community. But there was another friend. We all need at least one friend who will not judge nor condemn us but will *remind* us of God's truth. Meet Elihu, a younger man and friend of Job. Elihu represented the salvation we all need in the midst of our painful experiences. Elihu spoke with divine simplicity, compassion, confidence, creativity, and caring. His words are the words we all need when our lives seem to be falling apart. Listen for the praise of God as Elihu spoke to Job in the midst of Job's storm.

Job 32:1-10

¹ So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. ² But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. ³ He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him. ⁴ Now Elihu had waited before speaking to Job because they were older than he. ⁵ But when he saw that the three men had nothing more to say, his anger was aroused.

⁶ So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said: "I am young in years, and you are old, that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. ⁷ I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.' ⁸ But it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding. ⁹ It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right.

¹⁰ "Therefore I say: Listen to me; I too will tell you what I know.

Job 33:2-4, 22-30

²I am about to open my mouth; my words are on the tip of my tongue.
³My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know. ⁴The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

²²They draw near to the pit, and their life to the messengers of death. ²³Yet if there is an angel at their side, a messenger, one out of a thousand, sent to tell them how to be upright, ²⁴and he is gracious to that person and says to God, 'Spare them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for them—²⁵let their flesh be renewed like a child's; let them be restored as in the days of their youth'—²⁶then that person can pray to God and find favor with him, they will see God's face and shout for joy; he will restore them to full well-being. ²⁷And they will go to others and say, 'I have sinned, I have perverted what is right, but I did not get what I deserved. ²⁸God has delivered me from going down to the pit, and I shall live to enjoy the light of life.'

²⁹"God does all these things to a person—twice, even three times—³⁰to turn them back from the pit, that the light of life may shine on them.

Job 35:9-10

⁹"People cry out under a load of oppression; they plead for relief from the arm of the powerful. ¹⁰But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,'

Job 37:14-24

¹⁴"Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders. ¹⁵Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? ¹⁶Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who has perfect knowledge? ¹⁷You who shelter in your clothes when the land lies hushed under the south wind, ¹⁸can you join him in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?

¹⁹"Tell us what we should say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of our darkness. ²⁰Should he be told that I want to speak? Would anyone ask to be swallowed up? ²¹Now no one can look at the sun, bright as it is in the skies after the wind has swept them clean. ²²Out of the north he comes in golden splendor; God comes in awesome majesty. ²³The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great

righteousness, he does not oppress.²⁴ Therefore, people revere him, for does he not have regard for all the wise in heart?"

A Young Friend Indeed (32:1-10; 33:2-4)

Job had exhausted his defense against the accusations that came from his companions. Chapter 32 is where we encounter Job's sin: he was righteous in his own eyes (32:1). Chapter 32 is also where Job's fourth friend, Elihu, spoke for the first time. Elihu, whose name means "He is my God," certainly lived up to his name. Elihu represented a perspective very different from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. While those three friends and even Job himself focused on Job the man; Elihu focused on the One who created Job. Believers can rest assured God will never be left without a witness, even if that witness is younger than you. Elihu was introduced in this narrative suddenly and swiftly, as if he had heard enough. Silence had fallen on Job and his three friends. This was Elihu's opportunity; his window of opportunity to speak on what he had heard from the elder statesmen and combatants in the room.

Constructive Criticism

There is a message we all must be willing to accept. It usually comes to us when we least expect it, but it always gives us a moment of pause. That message is called constructive criticism. When taken at its face value, we find help and strength from tough words during tough times. In Exodus 18, Moses' father-in-law shared much needed advice with Moses. He could have ignored Jethro, but instead received the constructive criticism and the nation's leadership structure flourished. The New Testament book of Philemon is a book about constructive criticism. Paul wrote to Philemon: Forgive and receive Onesimus as you would forgive and receive me. Today, we do not know the outcome of Paul's words to Philemon, but we can deduce the importance of having someone willing to speak tough words to us for our own betterment. Constructive criticism can only be exercised where there is a relationship involved. Elihu offered constructive criticism to his friend, Job. Are you the kind of friend who can take and give constructive criticism?

Out of respect for his elders, Elihu spoke last; and he spoke clearest because he spoke about God. Elihu used his theological perspective to strongly, but respectfully turn the conversation toward God and not man. In Old Testament theology, the Spirit of God rested on a person until the person had fulfilled God's mission and purpose in real time. Elihu praised the Spirit of God as the source and strength of his life, even his young life. The Apostle Paul encouraged his young protégé Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Elihu was certainly not going to be intimidated by the presence of older, more seasoned individuals. One can also see salvation for Job, his family, and friends in Elihu's speech. Elihu explained how wisdom and understanding is not bound by age, but rather by the breath of the Almighty. The word, *breath*, used by Elihu also pointed to the presence of God's Holy Spirit. The breath of God is symbolic of God's breathing into man the breath of life. Elihu was young, but God's Spirit equipped him for the task at hand.

Elihu told everyone in the room his heart was upright. Notice the subtle yet stark contrast between the righteousness of Elihu and Job. Job's righteousness came from his own conclusions based on all the good deeds he had done. While Elihu's righteousness came from his simple dependence on God. Elihu said, "...the spirit of God has made me" (33:4a). Storms do rage in our lives, but God can still the winds as we give Him the credit for taking care of us in the middle of our tough times.

A Young Friend in Need (33:22-30; 35:9-10)

Elihu was wise beyond his years. He had listened quietly as Job and his three friends complained against God. Elihu had had enough. After Elihu introduced himself, he began to speak directly to Job. Elihu's perspective came from his belief that he was created by God. Nothing nor no one is greater than the Creator. Elihu's message to Job was a reminder that God can and will speak to people in several ways. Elihu helped Job to understand God can speak through pain, dreams, and angels. Elihu supported his argument even further by speaking further on the topic of angels. As messengers of God,

angels can be present with the responsibility to serve as mediators between God and people in particular.

As we listen to Elihu's words to Job and his companions, even though Elihu was talking about angels, believers can sense the presence of Jesus Christ in these verses. In that sense, we can easily see the atoning work of Christ as He came and offered His sinless life as a ransom for all. See our lives being renewed by the salvation that comes through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ. When we see the Son (Hebrews 1:2), we pray prayers of praise and thanksgiving, thus finding favor with the Father. In Elihu's case, he then reminded Job and everyone else around them to shout for joy when they found favor with God who would restore all to fullness and peace. The same is true for us today.

The purpose of Elihu's message was to remind his listeners that God was concerned about humanity and had made a way for reconciliation when their life-actions lead them toward the pit. The use of the word *pit* is synonymous with death. We all are going to die one day, if the Lord delays His coming. Death, however, is not the end. A relationship with God removes the pain and power of the pit. Even though we all will die a real, physical death; life in Christ ensures everlasting life. Elihu called it, "...the light of life" (33:30). The life Job and his friends wanted was there for them all the while. The epic problem for them was they had allowed their present circumstances to represent their spiritual relationship with God. Elihu's message to his senior friend was: Your theology is wrong—God has not abandoned you.

Elihu acknowledged the presence of pain and suffering in life. He called it a "load of oppression," but he also reminded his listeners that when bad occurrences happen to good people, do not ask, "Where is God, my Maker?" (35:10). Instead, be thankful God has a Messenger, and His name is Jesus. He's our Mediator, the Man in the middle who gave His life as a ransom for our sin, while also covering our sins and giving us all reason upon reason to shout for joy. Even in the storms, when life seems to be falling apart.

No Age Limit on Praise (37:14-24)

Elihu, the youngest and wisest person, turned to Job specifically with a series of rhetorical questions. The questions were not intended to embarrass

Job. Rather, the questions were like the ones our parents used to ask us even though they knew the answers. My mother would ask, "What are you doing?" even though she could see me walking across the top of the piano. The questions would be asked with the intent of bringing us back to our senses. My dad used to ask, "Did you hear me?" He knew we could hear, but his emphasis was on our behavior; for certainly *since* we could hear him, he expected our actions to mirror his instructions. How many whippings could we have avoided if only we had adhered to the questions from those who loved us? Elihu was seeking a change in behavior from Job.

Like a loving parent, God gives us what we need, and not always what we deserve. The Cross of Christ answers the question of what we need. The world needs what God has to offer in the person of Jesus the Christ. This was the central message Elihu shared with Job: God is too much God, He is too wonderful, too mighty, too much of everything that ever shall be...to leave you without a way out.

There is no doubt Elihu loved Job. His presence with Job and all the sights, sounds, and intimacies of the pain, suffering, open sores, and shame pointed to Elihu's support of Job. But Elihu was on a mission. Elihu's questions invited Job to focus on the One who could heal the body, restore the soul, and replace the material things of life. Elihu invited Job to focus on God. He challenged Job to consider God's wonders? (37:14). The same question is asked today as the good news of the Trinity is shared with others. Those who study physical sciences may be able to explain clouds, lightning, wind patterns, and other elements of planet Earth. But Elihu asked questions that Job, nor science could answer: In asking Job, "How...", Elihu wanted Job to consider the wonders of God. "Why does God do all this for us, Job?"

Elihu questioned Job about the totality of God's existence. Job thought he could stand face-to-face with God and question Him? Get real Job. Can you hear Elihu? "Wait a minute, Mr. Job; who among us can question an infinite God, for we are too finite. Who can understand the mind of our God? Certainly not man's limited understanding. Man cannot even look into the sun without being blinded. The Almighty is beyond our reach." Elihu ended his speech to Job as he began it: He asked a simple yet profound question, "...does he [God] not have regard for all the wise in heart?" (37:24). Life will get difficult. All of life's materials will one day begin to fade. People will let

us down. Families will disagree. Loved ones will die. We too will decline in health and resources. Elihu reminds us all of two simple words that capture the mind and imagination of the wise: "...but God!"

Need or Want

Beside each category, choose either need (N) or want (W):

Family _____ Friends _____ Transportation _____ Reputation _____
Salvation _____ Finances _____ Shelter _____ Health _____

We are challenged to consider what's most important in life. Take a moment to evaluate your responses.

Implications and Actions

Elihu asked questions about God in nature starting with clouds, wind, the landscape, and other natural wonders. When we think about God, we think about nature. For God so loved the world, that He gave us the world (to live in), He also gave us His Son. Think about that for a moment. When God said, "Let there be..." He was giving us the world. Let your mind wonder back to the days of your youth. The long walks to a friend's house...the long, lazy walks enjoying the summer breeze with your first puppy-love. Think about the drive across the flatlands of the prairies. Remember the first time you saw real mountains, the northern lights, or the open ocean from the deck of a cruise ship. If you have ever visited the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls, you can join with Elihu in his appropriate responses to Job's complaints. When storms arise in your life, even when life seems to be falling apart, God is still God.

Questions

1. Have you ever had a friend who saved you from yourself; someone who told you the truth—no matter what? Who loved you enough to correct you when you might have been mistaken? How has that person helped you through the ups and downs of life?
 2. Have you ever been part of a conversation that seemed to be going nowhere and someone stepped in to add a bit of wisdom to the proceedings?
 3. How have you felt when you have witnessed a young person standing bold in their resolve to be God's personal witness?
 4. Tell how you responded the last time you were criticized by a friend for a word or an action; did you receive the criticism as constructive; or did you perceive your actions were under attack?
 5. What meaning could have been in Elihu's discussion on angels.

lesson 11

Hearing God in the Storm

MAIN IDEA

Sometimes God will bring storms into our lives so we will listen more intently.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

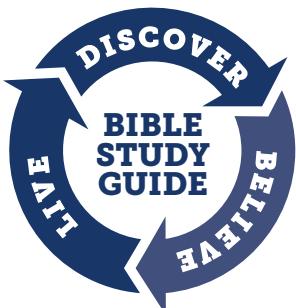
Does God speak to me through my storms?

STUDY AIM

To understand that God never intended for us to understand Him, but to simply trust Him and praise Him

QUICK READ

Driven by pain and grief, Job had cried out for answers from God. God responds with powerful reminders of His divine authority, power, and sovereignty.



Introduction

Many people encounter a “Job experience” at some point in their lives—a moment that defines their faith in God and clarifies what it means to trust His sovereignty. For me, that moment came when my teenaged son accidentally shot and killed one of his closest friends.

For weeks I struggled with guilt and grief. The question “Why?” kept me awake night after night. Had the bullet trajectory changed by mere millimeters, the other teenager would have survived. Why had God allowed it to hit in the precise spot to cause death?

For years I had thought I understood Paul’s mandate to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Suddenly I was confronted with the verse’s full intent, and I couldn’t do it. “Please,” I pleaded in the dark, “show me what it means to give thanks in this situation. What is there to be grateful for?”

The answer came quietly, whispered into my heart: “I AM.” I was ready to listen. “Okay, teach me,” I begged. “I am...what?”

“I AM,” the Spirit said again, and suddenly the meaning exploded with blinding clarity—God IS. That is all we need. God is Who and what He claims to be. We either believe He is God, or we don’t—there is no middle ground. To trust His sovereignty means acknowledging that He is God, and we are not; staking everything we are and have in His promises; believing that whatever He does or allows in our lives is the good thing, the right thing, and the best thing, regardless of how it seems to us.

This is the point to which God brought Job and suggests the purpose for his story in Scripture.

Job 38:1-7

¹Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

²“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?

³Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

⁴“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. ⁵Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶On what were its footings set, or

who laid its cornerstone—⁷ while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Job 40:1-5

¹ The LORD said to Job:

² “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!”

³ Then Job answered the LORD:

⁴ “I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.

⁵ I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more.”

God Speaks (38:1-3)

Most ancient cultures functioned under a retribution principle, the idea that good was always rewarded and evil was always punished (see Job 31:2-3; John 9:1-3). Within their belief that nothing in life happened apart from the wills and activities of divine beings, Job’s friends could not fathom a situation in which misfortune might befall someone who was innocent of wrongdoing. Even Job himself was dumbfounded by what appeared to be God’s betrayal. In the interchanges with his visitors, Job repeatedly protested his innocence and cried out to God for answers (30:20; 31:35; 34:5).

Job was in the right, from his viewpoint. He had always been diligent to atone for his family’s sins, whether deliberate or unintentional (1:5, 8). He strove for righteousness in every area of his life (ref. 31:1-34). So, he could not understand why God would turn on him and inflict such severe suffering for no apparent reason. Life just wasn’t supposed to work that way.

Job was not alone in his confusion. For centuries people have struggled with the question of *theodicy*, the reason a good, merciful, all-knowing and all-powerful God would permit evil and suffering in the world. Even today, online chat boards contain posts accusing God of cruelty or malicious intent for allowing such things as childhood diseases, terrorism, or catastrophic natural disasters. “If God really does exist, he should stand trial for all the suffering he has caused in the world,” demanded one post in a popular discussion forum.

For Job's sake, and for the sake of those who would read his story, God needed to correct the flawed assumption that He must answer to us. God is not bound by human perceptions of rightness, goodness, or fairness. He confronted Job with the reality of His universal sovereignty by demanding, "Just who do you think you are?" The challenge in no way compromised God's kindness or compassion, but was a wakeup call to help readjust Job's perspective.

Suffering Servants

Job is not the only suffering servant in the Old Testament. David was persecuted through no fault of his own. Elijah ran for his life. And the prophet Jeremiah cried, "I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the LORD's wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long" (Lamentations 3:1-3).

When faced with a crisis, those who chose faith in God experienced His power and presence in their lives. During his trials, Jeremiah said, "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks Him" (Lamentations 3:21-25).

God Alone Is Sovereign (38:4-7)

Biblical audiences were familiar with the storm imagery often associated with manifestations of God's presence (ref. Exodus 19:16; 1 Samuel 12:18; Jeremiah 23:19). Speaking to Job through a tempest, God asked a series of rhetorical questions that established His power and authority. The scenarios painted in each question emphasized the wide gap between the limited knowledge of frail humanity and the omniscient, omnipotent Creator of the universe.

Ancient mythologies teemed with Creation stories. The Egyptian account, for example, featured a god who emerged from a primeval ocean, impregnated himself, and gave birth to a son and daughter. His tears turned

into humans, and his children became the father and mother of all the other gods.

A Mesopotamian myth also pictured the emergence of two water deities, whose union produced all kinds of gods and monsters. When the female deity tried to take control of everything, one of her descendants killed her and split her in two. One half became the heavens, and the other became the earth.

The ancient Chinese believed that a god hatched from a divine egg. The top half of his shell transformed into the sky, and the bottom half became the earth. After 18,000 years, the deity grew tall enough to push the earth and sky into their appointed places. At that point, his body morphed into rivers, mountains, sun and moon, and the tiny scavengers covering him turned into people.

The earliest Creation story from India described how the gods sacrificed a man (who somehow already existed), whose feet and head became the earth and sky. The sun rose from his eyes and the moon from his mind. The fat that dripped from him during burning turned into birds and animals.

In stark contrast to mythological deities that depended on such acts as sexual reproduction or cosmic transmutation to get the world going, the Judaic Yahweh was an all-powerful, all-knowing, omni-present Being who spoke the entire universe into existence *ex nihilo* (Latin, *out of nothing*). A God of order (ref. 1 Corinthians 14:33), Yahweh carefully planned the earth and its systems before filling it with animal life and humans. At each stage in the process of Creation, the writer of Genesis reports that God “saw that it was good”—that is, exactly the way He intended it to be, according to His plan.

Not only did God create the physical world and the people who inhabited it (Genesis 1:27), but He also formed a plan to restore the relationship with them that would be ruptured by sin (ref. Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4). Every aspect of life and being fell within God’s direct authority as Creator and Ruler.

This was God’s reminder to Job. Yahweh is God, and Job was not. God knew every inch of the earth’s foundation and dimensions, which in Job’s day could not be measured by humankind. Creation was God’s choice, God’s plan, God’s act.

What people have trouble understanding is that God’s act of creation does not obligate him to us in any way. Just as a child can smash a block tow-

er he has just built, or rip up a picture he has drawn, God has complete sovereignty over anything He has designed and made—including us. He owes us nothing. And yet God chooses to love and establish relationship with us. He cares for us and provides our needs. He heals, protects, teaches, and nurtures us, because it is His choice to do so. When God allows trials in our lives, it is never without purpose. He uses everything that happens to help us better understand His nature and character. He never stops working in us or with us to reveal Himself and lead us into deeper spiritual clarity. But that in no way diminishes God's absolute dominion over every aspect of our lives.

How to Answer? (40:1-5)

When confronted with God's power and authority, Job could not answer. There was nothing to say. Absolute sovereignty compels complete submission. Job recognized his utter insignificance before God Most High. He realized that he was less than a speck within the scope of all eternity. Whatever happened to him, good or bad, just did not matter. Except it did. Job's life mattered to God.

If God had not cared, He would have simply squashed or ignored Job and moved on. Instead, God took time to reveal Himself in a way that would clarify Job's understanding and deepen Job's relationship with Him. God brought into focus the answer to humanity's most burning question about divine justice. He alone is God. He alone determines what is good or right, and whatever He wills is perfect.

Submitting to God's sovereignty removes an element of fear from life. Believing that God has a purpose and plan for everything He allows, and that whatever He does is motivated by love and designed for good, incapacitates anxiety or dread. A heart that is truly submitted to God's sovereignty will accept whatever comes with thanksgiving.

"Putting Suffering Into Perspective"

In his article "Putting Suffering Into Perspective," psychotherapist John Peteet, M.D. addressed the "need for suffering patients to reexamine their assumptions about life." He noted that "Patients with a religious world view often struggle with whether God cares about, or has sent, their pain. Atheistic patients also search for the meaning in their lives but reject the answers offered by traditional authorities...Atheists faced with suffering may instead take pride in their own integrity, intellectual honesty, or stoicism." (*The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research*, 2001 Summer, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3330651/>).

How might Christians share the reality of God's love with suffering nonbelievers?

We can see this principle at work in the lives of other Bible characters, such as Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, better known to us by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When faced with execution for defying the king's command for pagan worship, they answered, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). They trusted God to decide what was best in their situation and would accept any answer He gave.

So, what might Job have learned from his experience? First, that we obey God because He is God, and not as a means of earning blessing or avoiding punishment. Second, God's love, mercy, and justice are not compromised by anything He allows to happen, whether it seems good or bad to us. Third, God sees all of eternity—past, present, and future—as one complete picture, and He is working to accomplish His plan and purpose in every situation. He is above and outside of us and knows things that we can't (ref. Isaiah 55:8). God is not obligated to let us know what He's doing, but in love He chooses to reveal to us His character, His nature, and His plan (ref. Amos 3:7). Fourth, we don't need to know why God does anything, because He is God, and we are not. It is enough for us to know and trust Him and to leave it there.

Implications and Actions

The first time my grandmother saw my grandfather, he was kneeling beside his wife's coffin asking God to help him raise his three surviving children. His wife, son, and brother had died within days of each other during the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic, and his 5-year-old daughter would eventually follow them. Granddaddy did not become bitter or angry at God. He neither hurled accusations nor questioned God's goodness. To him then, and until his death at age 81, God was my grandfather's merciful Savior, unerring Guide, his solid Rock and caring Shepherd. He accepted both good and bad from the Lord and praised Him for it. I have never met a man who was so filled with joy and peace as my grandfather. In the world's eyes he was a simple farmer, but the witness of his life made a huge impact on God's Kingdom in his little country town.

This is the message of Job. God is Sovereign. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

Questions

1. At the beginning of chapter 38, Job was at the lowest point of his life, having lost everything, and he was suffering physically and emotionally. Why did God's answer seem more harsh than gentle?
 2. Why did God begin His answer to Job by describing His work of Creation?

3. Describe how Job's understanding of God changed through his experience of suffering.
 4. Has God ever revealed Himself to you during a time of trial? Describe that experience.
 5. Asking "Why?" is a common human reaction to adversity. Is the question "Why?" out of place within a Christian's spiritual walk.
 6. How can pain make people more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit? In what ways might suffering deepen a person's spiritual insight?

FOCAL TEXT

Job 40:6-9, 15-19; 41:1-7,
10-11; 42:1-6

BACKGROUND

2 Chronicles 7:14;
Isaiah 6:5

lesson 12

When Answers Are Not Enough

MAIN IDEA

It's all about Jehovah's power, not Jurassic Park.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

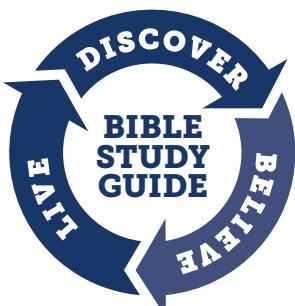
Does God have unlimited power in my situation?

STUDY AIM

To understand that the only reason God brought up Behemoth and Leviathan was as evidence of His unlimited power

QUICK READ

God wanted Job to understand that only He has the power and authority to create an entire world and fill it with amazing creatures beyond our imaginations.



Introduction

In elementary school, my son and his classmates were tasked with creating new, original superheroes with powers inspired by school subjects (like Multiplication Man). Their brightly colored pictures lined the classroom walls during a parent open house. I enjoyed seeing their imaginative ideas, but I couldn't help but notice that all the characters shared many similarities with those that already existed in cartoons and comic books.

Being designed in God's image, that is, able to understand and experience the attributes of His character and nature—people have a great capacity for imagination and creativity because God Himself does. But nothing a person can fabricate is truly original. Even the wildest monster or alien species in books or movies have features referenced from earthly biological systems. Most are able to see, eat, move, or communicate in some fashion. While human invention is based on what already exists, what can be seen and known, God's imagination has no bounds. He thought everything up from nothing! God originated colors, patterns, shapes, sizes, textures—everything that has ever filled the world is a product of God's creative design.

The amazing creatures described in chapters 40–42 of Job are not mentioned to impress readers or fuel a debate over the co-existence of people and dinosaurs. They rather serve as reminders of how awesome and limitless God's creative power is. If these same beasts, that could squash a human with one stroke, meekly submit to God's ruling authority, how much more so should His people.

Job 40:6-9, 15-19

⁶ Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm:

⁷ "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

⁸ "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? ⁹ Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his?

¹⁵ "Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. ¹⁶ What strength it has in its loins, what power in the muscles of its belly! ¹⁷ Its tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are

close-knit. ¹⁸ Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like rods of iron. ¹⁹ It ranks first among the works of God, yet its Maker can approach it with his sword.

Job 41:1-7, 10-11

¹ "Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? ² Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook? ³ Will it keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? ⁴ Will it make an agreement with you for you to take it as your slave for life? ⁵ Can you make a pet of it like a bird or put it on a leash for the young women in your house? ⁶ Will traders barter for it? Will they divide it up among the merchants? ⁷ Can you fill its hide with harpoons or its head with fishing spears?

¹⁰ No one is fierce enough to rouse it. Who then is able to stand against me? ¹¹ Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

Job 42:1-6

¹ Then Job replied to the LORD:

² "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴ "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' ⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

God's Challenge (Job 40:6-9)

I once heard a preacher say, "Anyone who doesn't have power as great as God's should never challenge God." That's just common sense. A six-year-old could never win a footrace against an Olympic athlete. Small-town little league players wouldn't stand a chance against a professional baseball team. It would be ridiculous for someone with only basic first aid training to attempt a heart transplant. And yet some people think it's okay to call out God for His judgments, to challenge His will, defy His commands, or accuse Him

of error. They don't stop to consider the absurdity of weak, helpless humans pitting themselves against the omnipotent Creator of the universe.

In his heart, Job was not trying to defy God when he questioned Him. He just wanted answers. But it was not Job's place to ask. He, along with all Creation, was subject to God's rule, and not the other way around. Job needed a strong reminder that God did not answer to him. God used some of His most impressive creatures as object lessons to prove his power.

"The Ministry of Suffering"

George W. Truett, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dallas 1897-1944, preached a sermon entitled "The Ministry of Suffering." "Trouble," he said, "if rightly used, enables us to honor God. Trouble, then, is a trust, and we are so to receive it...and we are to bear it, we are to meet it, we are to go through it, we are to face it like we ought as a trust from God, to be used for the glory of His great name... No matter what the trouble is, no matter what brought it, no matter who brought it, no matter how it came about, God is dishonored if a Christian does not bear his fiery trial like he ought to bear it. You are being tested for God, and you will dishonor Him egregiously, or you will honor Him gloriously, according to your behavior when trouble is on. Remember that."

(Full sermon text available at <https://www.bibleblender.com/2017/biblical-less-sons/biblical-history/historical-sermons/the-ministry-of-suffering-george-w-truett-1867-1944.>)

Behemoth (40:15-19)

In the late 1800s, American paleontologists Othniel Charles Marsh and Edward Drinker Cope unearthed almost intact skeletons of a Brontosaurus and Apatosaurus. This fueled a period of intense public interest in dinosaurs. Well-known writers of the period, including Jules Verne and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, began including prehistoric creatures in some of their novels (*Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Verne, 1871; *The Lost World* by Doyle, 1912). In 1910, Jules Lermina published a serial called *Panic in Paris* (*L'Effrayante Aventure*) that was released three years later in book form. The protagonists in his story discover an ice-age cavern beneath Paris that holds a

collection of frozen dinosaurs, including a Triceratops, an Iguanodon, and a 50-foot, 15-ton Brontosaurus. The monsters eventually cause havoc when they thaw and take to the Parisian streets.

Since the earliest paleontology discoveries, people have been fascinated by the sheer size and strength of the larger dinosaurs. By second grade, many children today can identify them from pictures. It is not surprising that at some point, people began wondering if dinosaurs might have coexisted with humans, perhaps even traveling with Noah on the Ark. Proponents of that theory often reference these verses in Job as supporting evidence.

The problem is the Behemoth's identity is not the focus of this passage. Whether or not the creature was a dinosaur just doesn't matter. For one thing, the question is unanswerable because no first-hand witnesses are still alive from that period. All anyone can do is speculate about it. But even more important, the main point of this passage is God's might. Whatever the monster is, it is not as powerful as the God who created it.

Leviathan (41:1-7, 10-11)

Even more astonishing than the Behemoth's description in Job 40:15-19 is the picture of the Leviathan painted in the next chapter. It excites the imagination with features like "double coat of armor" (41:13); "mouth ringed about with fearsome teeth" (41:14); "Its back has rows of shields tightly sealed together" (41:15); "Its snorting throws out flashes of light" (41:18); "Flames stream from its mouth; sparks of fire shoot out" (41:19); "Smoke pours from its nostrils" (41:20); "Its breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from its mouth" (41:21). The description continues for thirteen more verses. For readers raised on stories of Smaug (*The Hobbit*, JRR Tolkien), Saphira (*Eragon*, Christopher Paolini), or Toothless (*How to Train Your Dragon*, Cressida Cowell), these clues in Job seem to point toward dragons.

Among people who could read during the Middle Ages (AD 500-1500), one of the most popular types of books was called a bestiary—literally, a book of beasts. These hand-scripted volumes contained descriptions and occasional illustrations of animals, birds, reptiles, insects, and sea creatures, both known and imaginary, which often concluded with a short moral lesson. Not surprisingly, dragons featured prominently in such books.

Although dragons eventually came to symbolize the Devil in medieval Church lore, many people of the time believed dragons were real. Some bestiaries warned people to watch for dragons hiding in trees, because they might swoop down to grab livestock for a meal, and also because falling dragon urine was feared as a flesh-eating poison. Saint George was credited with taming, and then killing, a dragon that had been terrorizing a rural village. The dragons were pictured in different shapes and sizes. Some were serpentine, some could fly, and others were at home in water. All were considered dangerous or destructive.

An even earlier interest in dragons is evident in the Greek apocryphal work, “Bel and the Dragon,” that was added onto the biblical book of Daniel. It appears in the Catholic Bible, but not in Protestant or Jewish canons of Scripture. In the story, Daniel refuses King Cyrus’s order to worship the dragon and proves that it is not a god by poisoning it.

Despite the persisting fascination with dragons that continues today through movies and literature, the only accurate conclusion we can draw from the description in Job is that the beast’s identity just doesn’t matter. The only thing noteworthy about the creature is that God made it. Yes, it is a powerful animal, but God is more powerful. The beast is wildly untamable, but it meekly submits to its Maker.

The focus of this passage is not on the fantastical monster, but on the almighty God who designed, created, and ruled it along with every living creature on the face of the earth. As God says in 41:11, “Everything under heaven belongs to me.” The psalmist echoes this truth when he writes, “I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it” (Psalm 50:9-12).

Job Repents (42:1-6)

Confronted with God’s righteousness, Job recognized himself for the small, weak, and sinful being he was. His response was the same as the tax collector’s, who couldn’t even bring himself to look up as he beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13). It was the same as

Simon Peter's when he fell at Jesus' feet and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8). **Divine holiness exposes sin with blinding clarity.** People either prostrate themselves before it or try to distance themselves from it, but no one can stand unmoved before it. Enlightened by the truth of God's rebuke and touched that God had cared enough to give it, Job repented and submitted himself completely to God's sovereign rule in his life. Before this encounter, Job had known about God, but now he had experienced Him in a personal way. From that point on, Job's faith and worship would be stronger, deeper, and more meaningful.

Principles for Trusting God

Consider these principles for trusting God in suffering:

God is God, and I am not (Psalm 46:10).

God sees, knows, and understands things that I cannot (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God loves me with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16).

God is always working for my good (Romans 8:28).

God's judgments and plans are perfect (Romans 11:33; Revelation 16:7; Jeremiah 29:11).

God is worthy of my trust (Numbers 23:19).

God identifies with my pain and cares when I feel weak (Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 8:18; Matthew 5:4).

What other principles would you add to these?

As soon as God finished creating humans, He began communicating with them (Genesis 1:28: "God blessed them and said to them..."). Unlike the shadowy, mysterious deities in other ancient pantheons, God wanted people to know Him and to know what He desired from them. Even His discipline is an act of love (ref. Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:6), for He wants us to experience the blessing of right relationship with Him.

Implications and Actions

Just before one of my high school Bible classes started, two students began debating the world's age. One held to the theory of Young Earth Creationism, while the other argued for a creation process that spanned millions of years. Their exchange became so heated that one of them started crying and I had to separate them.

It is easy to become distracted by secondary issues in biblical stories. Many people enjoy the process of tracking down background information to enhance understanding. But there's a big difference between interest and obsession. Launching into debate to support opinions that can never be proven sidesteps the most important aspect of Bible study—spiritual truth. In examining biblical accounts like Job's, we must be diligent to focus on main principles (God's sovereignty) instead of lesson illustrations (fantastic beasts). Paul's charge to Timothy to "correctly" handle "the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) is as important to us now as it was to him then.

Questions

1. How did the descriptions of the beasts God created impact Job's understanding of God's sovereignty?
 2. In what ways might the descriptions of creatures in this passage distract readers from the main focus on God's power and authority?

3. What was God's purpose in bringing up these two creatures and discussing them in such detail?
 4. In what ways does God remind us of His power and sovereignty today? What are some things that inspire contemporary believers with awe?
 5. How is it possible to keep God's majesty and glory at the center of our attention during times of great pain or sorrow?

lesson 13

Saving the Best for Last

MAIN IDEA

Suffering can make us bitter or better—it's our choice.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

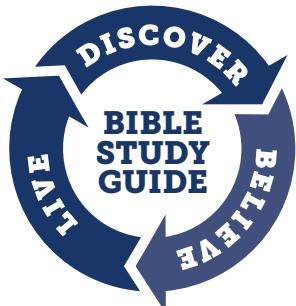
Is there anyone in my life who I am harboring resentment toward?

STUDY AIM

To learn that we can change our attitude easier than we can change our circumstances

QUICK READ

Rather than punish Job's friends for their misguided and misinformed sermonizing, God instructed Job to intercede for them. Job's obedience resulted in restored relationships and overflowing blessing.



Introduction

Dwight Carlson, M.D., a doctor with specialties in both internal medicine and psychiatry, has a heart for missionaries. Having served on the boards of two mission agencies, he has spent years in member care and counseling personnel on foreign fields.

Dr. Carlson is himself acquainted with grief and sorrow. His 36-year-old brother, Dr. Paul Carlson, was killed in 1964 while serving as a missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rather than blaming God or becoming bitter over this loss, Dwight Carlson developed a deep concern for Christians who struggle with pain. The titles of some of his books reflect this concern: *Overcoming Hurts and Anger* (2000); *When You Feel Hurt* (1988); *From Guilt to Grace* (1984); *The Will of the Shepherd* (1989).

In 1994, after interviewing multiple missionary families who were battling emotional distress, Dr. Carlson wrote the book *Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded?* In it, he explores the tendency of Christians, including church leaders, to deny the impact of emotional trauma. Many believe that depression, fear, or anxiety cannot coexist with strong faith. For this reason, believers struggling with mental or emotional issues often feel alone, having no one to turn to for help.

Randy Elrod picked up this theme in a 2011 blog post entitled “Why Christians Shoot Their Wounded.” “We shoot more readily,” he notes, “when the wounds in the other person are a glaring reflection of our own hidden struggles... A person’s wounds are not a religious calamity signifying the world is going to hell in a handbasket. It is a new opportunity to practice love. Unconditional love” (<https://www.randyelrod.com/why-christians-shoot-their-wounded/>).

Job’s friends “shot” him when he was down. Rather than comforting him in his pain, the three men passed judgment on his alleged sin. Sermonizing from what they considered a higher moral ground, they pointed out his error and called on him to confess and repent of sins that he had not committed. Because of their preconceived notions, the men brushed aside everything Job said without really listening to him. Their “help” merely added to his suffering.

Job might have become resentful and cut ties with his so-called friends. Instead, he forgave them and served as an instrument of reconciliation to help restore their right standing before God.

Job 42:5-17

⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

⁷ After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. ⁸ So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has." ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹² The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

Job Repents (42:5-6)

Although Job had not committed an overt sin, he realized that questioning God's motives, judgments or actions was synonymous with accusing Him of error. That's something a person just could not do to the Sovereign Creator of

the universe! Despising himself and repenting “in dust and ashes,” a symbolic act of mourning, was an appropriate response of contrition.

You Have Not Spoken Truth (42:7-9)

One of the most bewildering incidents in my teaching career happened about three years ago. I opened my school email one morning to find a note from our head of school berating me for having lost my temper and yelling at a boy in one of my 10th-grade English classes. I couldn’t imagine what prompted the message, for nothing like that had ever taken place in my whole 15 years of classroom instruction. I choose not to become angry or raise my voice in any school situation. All my students know that about me. I said as much in my emailed response, to which she replied, “His mom says you did it and she is very upset. You should never yell at a student, even if you’re upset.” Again, I wrote back to say that I had not and never would yell in my classroom. The reported incident literally did not happen. Her reply said, “Well don’t do it again.”

Unforgiveness

Consider the implications of forgiveness in this story:

A woman became estranged from her brother after a quarrel. The two of them avoided contact with one another for thirty-seven years. They never met each other’s families. When someone called to say her brother had died of a heart attack, she was suddenly filled with remorse. She could not even remember what their quarrel had been about. Deeply regretful, she tried to make contact with his family. But the pattern of unforgiveness was too deeply ingrained. His wife and children refused to speak to her, and the family remained divided.

False accusations hurt. They can also be infuriating. Job tried telling his visitors they were mistaken in their assumptions of his sin. Not only did they fail to hear or believe him, but they persisted in their insistence that he should confess and repent. Instead of offering comfort or encouragement,

the three men added to the pain of Job's experience. In their self-righteous arrogance, they were not willing to concede any defect in their own opinions.

Job had every right to resent Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar for their false accusations. But when God vindicated him, there was no gloating, bitterness, or estrangement. Humbled by his encounter with the living God, Job did not hesitate to intercede for the three men. God had treated Job with such patience and restraint, how could Job fail to pay forward similar mercy.

During a class discussion, one of my students once commented, "Holding a grudge is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." Withholding forgiveness is a sin that damages us more than the object of our wrath. Jesus said, "If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15). If Jesus gave His life to purchase forgiveness for our sins against God, how could we dare fail to follow His example by refusing to forgive others?

Many scholars believe Job's story dates back to the time of Abraham, during the Bible's patriarchal period, which predated the Law of Moses by generations. When God did give the Law to Israel, He would outline sacrifices necessary to atone for specific offenses. Compared to the one bull or goat God mandated for an individual's unintentional sin in Leviticus 4, the expiation He required from Job's friends was unusually large. This indicated the severity of their sin. Not only did the three men malign Job, but they also usurped God's authority by presuming to speak for Him.

At times throughout my life, I have been accosted by persons claiming, "God told me to tell you this." Few things are more irritating than someone claiming to be God's special mouthpiece, privy to the hidden secrets of His mind—especially if those messages are directly opposed to the prayerful consensus of the Body. The claim "God told me He wants you to do this" represents spiritual arrogance of the highest order. That is not to say God does not communicate with His people. Of course, He does! It is one of the main jobs of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But there is a big difference between being dictatorial—"God wants you to do this"—and humbly sharing what the Lord has laid on a person's heart—"I feel led to share my thoughts with you so we can pray about it together."

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar took it upon themselves to interpret God's character and will to Job. Without God's commission or consent, they fabricated their own message to speak on God's behalf. Such presumption can precipitate a dangerous slide into a type of idolatry wherein their own words and opinions would take the throne in their hearts. God wanted them to realize and remember their sin, and so He required a substantial price from them to pay for it.

Restored Blessing (Job 42:10-17)

The theme of rejoicing and restoration following suffering runs throughout Scripture. Through the prophet Jeremiah God promised, "I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow" (Jeremiah 31:13). Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Inherent in the idea of restoration is a re-blessing that compensates for loss. Eve, for example, was comforted after Abel's death when God granted her "another child in place of Abel" (Genesis 4:25). Jacob grieved the loss of his son Joseph until God restored the "new and improved" Joseph back to him (Genesis 46:29-30). The theme continues in the New Testament, where Jesus raises a girl back to life after her death (Mark 5:38-43). Christ also addresses the theme of multiplied blessings when He promises, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29).

Job's trust in God was well founded. The Lord restored everything the man had lost many times over. Job regained his children (in that period the same number of sons and daughters as before would have been considered a doubling of his children rather than their replacement), his possessions, flocks and herds, the respect of his family and friends, and his honor in the community. He lived a long, fruitful life filled with God's favor and blessings. The Bible writers use the same formula for Job's passing as for the Patriarchs—a full life, long years, large family, and abundant inheritance for the next generations (see Genesis 25; 35:27-29; 48:21-50:14; 22-26). It might

be inaccurate to say that things went back to “normal” following his restoration, though. Job himself was changed, because he had experienced the presence of the living God, up close and personal. His understanding of God’s nature, character, and will was fuller and deeper. God’s revelation of Himself was the greatest blessing of all.

Job's Blessing

It is of special note that Job gave his last three daughters an equal inheritance with his sons. The normal practice of that time was to allow daughters an inheritance only if there was no son (Numbers 27:8), and the daughter’s portion would usually pass to her husband. The additional fact that Job’s daughters were identified by name in this passage, while their brothers were not, is another indication that the girls held special standing, either in the family or in the larger community. It is possible that in Job’s culture (in Jeremiah 25:20-21 the region of Uz was associated with Philistia, Edom, Moab and Ammon), before the birth of Israel and the giving of the Law, the rules for women were different from those that would develop later in Hebrew society. In any case, the passage implies a harmonious family relationship, free from envy or strife, in which each member was valued. This would also be considered part of God’s blessing on Job’s life.

Implications and Actions

My husband’s uncle lost a farm that had been in his family for generations. He never got it back, even though his faith in God never wavered. The message of Job is not that God will surely pay back anything we lose. The blessings prepared for us in God’s presence are far greater than anything we can imagine for ourselves in this life. Job’s story focuses on faith, submission, forgiveness, reconciliation and restored relationship. Those are the lessons most applicable to our lives today. Absorbing and applying such principles will lead us closer and closer into conformity to Christ’s image, which is the ultimate goal for every believer.

Questions

1. Why was Job willing to forgive Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar for the hurt they caused him? How might Job's role as intercessor have impacted his ability to forgive them?
 2. What grievances seem most difficult for you to forgive? Why?
 3. How does the act of forgiving others affect our relationship with God?
 4. Why did Jesus say we could not receive His forgiveness without giving it to others?
 5. In your experience, how has God restored joy after a time of trial? How did that restoration affect your ability to trust God?

lesson 14

The God of Restoration

MAIN IDEA

Jesus wanted to restore Peter to usefulness.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

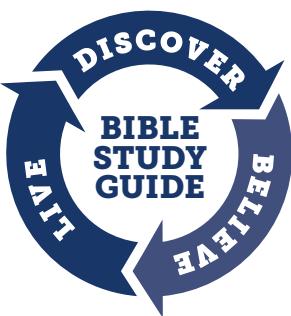
Am I willing to glorify God with my life?

TEACHING AIM

To learn that when I fail the Lord Jesus can restore me

QUICK READ

The third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, they were fishing, and Jesus invited them to share breakfast. After eating, Jesus had an all-important conversation with Peter.



Introduction

In fifteen years of junior and high school teaching, I have overheard many discussions centered around student crushes. As girls or boys discuss their feelings, this question keeps popping up: “But do you LIKE like them?” Apparently, there’s a big difference between merely liking someone and LIKE liking them.

The English language depends heavily on adjectives or comparisons to describe a person’s depth of feelings for others. We rely on such phrases as “I love her like a sister,” or “He’s like a brother to me,” to define relationships. New Testament Greek, on the other hand, sidesteps these descriptors and uses separate, specific words for different kinds of love. *Eros*, for example, denotes physical love and desire; *Storgé* is a strong, affectionate love between parents and children; *Philautia* encompasses a concept of self-love that can range from self-care to egotism.

In His conversation with Peter, Jesus used two specific Greek words: *Agapē* and *Philia*. Many Christians recognize *Agapē* as the love God has for those He created, a sacrificial, unconditional love that gives itself even without expectation of return. *Philia* is a deeply affectionate bond between family members and close friends. Understanding the differences between these words will help readers grasp the full impact of Christ’s message to Peter.

John 21:15-23

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead

you where you do not want to go.”¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”)²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

²² Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”²³ Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

How Do You Love Me? (21:15-17)

At the beginning of chapter 21, the disciples are still processing a staggering sequence of events, from Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12-13) to His sudden arrest (John 18:12) and horrific crucifixion (John 19:16-18). Jesus’ followers knew of His resurrection, but they had not yet grasped the full reality of it. Having been told to find Jesus in Galilee (Matthew 28:6-8), the men in this account were unsure of their next move. So, seven of them, including Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John (21:2), fell back into an old pattern—fishing (21:3). The work was familiar and comforting. They knew what to do and how to do it, and physical labor gave them a break from their chaotic thoughts.

Jesus knew where to find His followers. Coming full circle, He reenacted the earlier miracle that had confronted Simon Peter with his own sin and resulted in his call to discipleship (Luke 5:1-11). This time, instead of trying to distance himself from Christ (Luke 5:8), Peter rushed toward Jesus as fast as he could go (21:7).

As the scene opens in John 21:15, the seven disciples had just finished eating the breakfast Jesus prepared for them (21:12). Jesus apparently pulled Peter aside for a walk and private talk along the shore (see 21:20). He asked, “Simon, Agapas me (*ἀγαπᾷς με*)?—Do you love me as I love you, sacrificially and unconditionally, more than anyone or anything else in your life?”

Simon Peter was prone to impulsive speech and action. It hadn't been that long since he had confidently declared, "Even if all fall away [from you], I will not... Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Mark 14:29, 31). And yet mere hours later, Peter denied Jesus three times in succession (ref. Matthew 26:69-75). Sobered by the shame, grief, and remorse of that experience, Simon Peter gave an uncharacteristically reserved answer to Jesus' question: "Lord, *philo se* ($\varphi\imath\lambda\tilde{\omega}\ \sigma\epsilon$)—I love you with the deep affection of a family member or close friend." The spiritual arrogance he had displayed before Christ's arrest was tempered by his complete failure to be faithful when Jesus needed him most.

The psalmist called God's people "the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3) and invoked images of God leading them as a shepherd (Psalm 23:1, 78:52). In John 10:11 and 14, Jesus identified himself as the "good shepherd" who "lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus revealed that He was the source of living water (John 4:14) and the bread of life (John 6:35), both necessary for the nourishment and well-being of His flock.

Peter knew these truths about Jesus. Even if he himself was not perfect, even if he was unsure of his own heart, even if his faith was under construction, so to speak, he would still be able to share the message of Christ's sacrifice and love. Jesus had taught by example how to give care and nurture to the flock, and now He was charging Peter with that responsibility.

Following that challenge, Jesus asked again, "Simon, *Agapas me?*"

Peter wasn't there yet. He realized that he could not commit to the same level of selfless, unwavering love that Christ had shown him. The best he could say at this point was, "Lord, *philo se.*" Again, Jesus followed with a command to care for His flock.

One last time, Jesus confronted Peter with the question, "Do you love me?" But this time Jesus used Peter's own wording and asked, "Simon, *phileis me* ($\varphi\imath\lambda\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma\ \mu\epsilon$)? Do you love me like a brother?"

The altered terminology stung Peter. He must have felt a sharp sense of his own weakness when Jesus seemed to lower the expectations for this disciple. We can imagine Peter thinking as he replied, "Lord, you already know how I feel about you. You know the limitations of my love for you. So why do you keep rubbing in my shortcomings by continuing to ask me about it?"

Peter's answer showed that he was still preoccupied with himself. He was focusing on his own status, his own feelings of failure or unworthiness. But Jesus was not trying to make a point about Peter's loyalty or the kind of love he felt. The whole purpose of this conversation was to remind Peter that obedience is the most important thing Christ expects from His followers.

Before His arrest, Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commands... Any-one who loves me will obey my teaching..." (John 14:15, 23). Peter was one of Christ's sheep who needed love and nurture. Jesus was not singling him out for rebuke, even though he had stumbled.

Jesus wanted Peter to understand that his focus should be on obedience and service instead of beating himself up for perceived failures. By repeating the mandate "Feed my sheep," Jesus was redirecting Peter's attention toward love's truest intent, embodied in Christ's image.

Love Expressed Through Obedience (21:18-19)

Christ had told His disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). To deny themselves meant saying "no" to any desire or impulse that hindered obedience to God's call or command. To take up their cross meant saying "yes" to anything God required of them each day. To follow Jesus was to deliberately choose conformity to His image in every moment. With Jesus right there among them, teaching and training and guiding the disciples day by day, such radical obedience must have seemed possible. But their confidence dissolved when Christ died on a Roman cross.

Jesus did not try to sugarcoat His call to Peter. He provided disturbing details of what Peter's obedience would cost him. It was a haunting description of what Christ had experienced on His way to the cross, followed by the simple command, "Follow me." If you love Me in any way, Peter, obey Me. If you love Me, deny yourself instead of denying Me. If you love Me, pick up your cross without fear or regret. Knowing full well what it will cost you, follow Me.

What About the Other Guy? (21:20-23)

The conversation with Jesus was not an easy one for Simon Peter. He had witnessed Christ's brutal torture and death. Now Peter grappled with Jesus' call to follow Him there. Glancing around as he pondered Christ's words, Peter noticed that another disciple (probably John) was following at some distance behind them. Seeing him must have sparked the question of whether God would require the same cost from other followers, for Peter turned to Jesus and asked, "Lord, what about him?"

Jesus' answer was the equivalent of saying, "What happens to him is not your business." While God's call to salvation is the same for all people, His commission to service is specific to every individual. Before speaking the world into being, God had already prepared for each person the "good works" (Ephesians 2:10) that would strengthen the Body and build His kingdom (ref. 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8).

Reflection of Christ

Consider how your love for God affects interactions with:

- Family members
- Friends
- Colleagues at work or school
- Other church members
- Business Personnel (store clerks, medical office staff, restaurant servers, etc.)
- Postal workers or delivery people
- People on social media
- Strangers on the street

Do your words, attitudes, and actions reflect Christ's presence in your life?

In comparing himself to other disciples, Peter was in danger of becoming distracted. If his gaze became fixed on others, it would veer away from Jesus and His call. This wouldn't be the first time it happened to him. When Peter stepped out of the boat to walk with Jesus on the water, he was fine as long as

he kept his eyes on Christ. But the moment his attention shifted to the storm raging around them, he lost his focus and began to sink (Matthew 14:28-30). Peter needed reminding that God's only standard of measurement for any of us is Christ.

Jesus established a new starting point for Peter. Letting go of past failures and keeping his eyes fixed on Christ, Peter began a journey toward restored discipleship. Years later, perhaps he recalled his lakeside conversation with Jesus as he wrote: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be" (1 Peter 5:2).

Rumors (21:22)

God's Glory Not Humanity's!

Just as John mentioned in 21:23, rumors tend to spread. By the 13th Century AD, many Christians accepted legendary stories about both Peter and John. People believed, for example, that every day of his life, Peter spent hours weeping because of his denial of Jesus. Some witnesses claimed to see visions of angels comforting him as he died on a cross, allegedly hanging upside down because he felt unworthy of sharing Christ's death. A tradition developed that John's mother was a younger sister of Jesus' mother Mary. The most dramatic story of John was that he survived being dunked in a vat of boiling oil by the Roman emperor Domitian. And to this day, some still argue that John ascended into Heaven without physically dying. These are just a few of the claims that circulated during the Church's early years.

While such legends can be entertaining, it's important to avoid glorifying the men rather than the God they served. Our focus should always be on Jesus.

It's an unfortunate human tendency to sensationalize what seems mundane. John provided a footnote to let readers know that it had happened here. Of all the spiritually significant content in the exchange between Jesus and Peter, some people zeroed in on what was in essence Christ's lesson illustration and blew it up into the equivalent of an urban legend. Speculation about

John's possible immortality has preoccupied believers for centuries. We modern church members shouldn't feel too smug, though, because there are some who continue to chase such rabbit trails. Spending more time and energy debating topics that cannot be proven or won than in Bible study, worship, or prayer is no different from creating unfounded stories from random remarks. Perhaps Paul's comment to the Corinthian believers is a good reminder for us all: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Implications and Actions

Some people tend to keep beating themselves up for past mistakes. Others feel inferior to those they perceive as "stronger" Christians. Christ's death and resurrection leveled the field for everyone. No matter our strengths or weaknesses, we alike are sinners saved by God's grace. Jesus has a purpose for each believer and is continually at work to accomplish His plan in our lives.

Paul had the right idea when he said, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal..." (Philippians 3:13-14). If we want to grow in faith, we must let go of anything that pulls at us from the past, whether success or failure. Spiritual maturity faces forward and keeps Christ as the central focus in every situation.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever continued feeling guilt for a past mistake, even after confessing and repenting of it? Why does it seem so difficult to get rid of some types of guilt? How does such guilt hinder full restoration in relationship with Christ?

2. What role should obedience to Jesus play in the thoughts, lives, and decisions of contemporary Christians?
 3. Which of Christ's commands seem difficult to understand or carry out?
 4. How does self-doubt affect our conformity to Christ's image?
 5. How would you describe your love for God? What role does it play in your daily life?

Prayer for this Study

Overcomer

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, ESV).

Father,

Lord, I come into Your presence with praise and adoration. Lord, You are from everlasting to everlasting. You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. You, oh God, are the creator of the heavens and the earth and all they contain. I humbly bow at Your feet and worship You.

When I walk through difficult days, dark seasons of life, You, oh God, are with me, never leaving me or forsaking me. You are my refuge and strength and my help in times of trouble. Father, You are a compassionate God, who loves me and cares for me in a very real and personal way. You are my Abba Father.

Lord, help me to take my focus off my fears, hurts, and my circumstances and to fix my eyes on Jesus my Savior. Lord nothing happens to me that You are not aware of, that You do not allow, even things I do not understand, things that do not make sense, things that hurt deep within my heart and soul.

Lord, I kneel in prayer and press into You today, and I cling to You my God and my Savior. You, oh God, are my everlasting rock and I trust You forever. I give You my tears of sorrow, my hurts, my anxiety, and trust that You know what is best for me, You have a plan for me. Through Jesus I can overcome the most difficult circumstances and find joy in Your presence.

Lord, I read in the book of Job, how he faced a real enemy. Satan was trying to cause him to stumble, to give in to temptation, to curse Your holy name. Even his wife encouraged him to sin, and his friends became his accusers. Lord, I know that I face a real enemy each day, who wants to deceive me by his lies and deceptions. Even though I cannot see the enemy, I know he is real and looking for opportunities to cause me to doubt You, to stumble in my faith and to yield to temptation. First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Lord, Job suffered in silence and was in deep pain and despair and although the circumstances in Job's life caused him deep discouragement, he remained faithful to You with a posture of humility and a heart of worship. Job completely rested in Your sovereignty and trusted You, Lord. Lord, my prayer is that I can be unmovable and steadfast in my faith, trusting in Your sovereignty and wisdom.

Lord, just as Job's faith was tested, You test me and You refine me, You teach me and make me more like Jesus. Lord, search my heart and reveal any practice or attitude that I need to demolish to grow in maturity in my faith.

Lord, I am grateful that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. You have forgiven me of my iniquities and have redeemed me through the blood of Jesus my Savior. You, oh Lord, have prepared a home for me to live with You eternally. A place where there will be no more tears, no more sorrow, no more death, no more pain, and no more night; a place where I will reign with You forever and ever. Come, Lord Jesus!

In the strong name of Jesus,

Amen

DLB



Our Next New Study

(Available to use beginning June 2022)

Prayer That Moves Heaven Power With Purpose A Study of Prayer

How important is prayer to you? The highest and holiest activity you will ever be involved in is when you communicate with the Creator of the universe. But does prayer come naturally? No. You and I must learn the skills of bold, persistent, and effective prayer.

Praying in faith is the key that will open a multitude of the blessings God has for you. God knows what you need before you ask, but when you ask, it is your way of acknowledging your total dependence on Him.

Prayer is not a way God has given us of making Him work for us. Most of us think of prayer that way. We feel we have needs. We have something we want done, something we find to be beyond our ability to handle with our own strength, so we rely on the promises of God. We come before Him and say, “You said you would do whatever I ask, now, and this is what I want you to do.” In that approach, we are really saying God is a kind of heavenly bellboy; that when we push the prayer button He is to show up and take orders for what we want Him to do. But that is to totally misunderstand the nature and purpose of prayer. No, prayer is God’s way of involving us in what He intends to do.

You should always pray with an open Bible and an open heart. As you read what God is saying, you start doing what He tells you to do.

The way to know with absolute certainty you are praying according to God’s Will is to pray according to God’s Word. And that becomes a ***Prayer That Moves Heaven.***

Lesson 1	Battle Ready	Ephesians 6:17-20
Lesson 2	Praying for Others	2 Thessalonians 3:1-5
Lesson 3	Devoted to Prayer	Acts 2:42-47
Lesson 4	When We Don't Know What to Pray	Romans 8:26-27
Lesson 5	Faith That Does Not Quit	Luke 11:5-13
Lesson 6	Never Give Up	Luke 18:1-8
Lesson 7	Prayer That Moves Heaven	Ephesians 3:14-21
Lesson 8	Jesus Prays for Us	John 17:20-26
Lesson 9	The Miracle of Forgiveness	Mark 11:22-25
Lesson 10	Prayer and Fasting	Nehemiah 1:1-11
Lesson 11	Lord, Teach Us to Pray	Luke 11:1-4
Lesson 12	Prayer to Heal Our Land	Daniel 9:1-23
Lesson 13	Praying with Confidence	1 John 5:14-15

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