

JOB

FOR BEGINNERS

FAITHFUL LIVING IN TIMES OF  CRISIS

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the late Dr. Stafford North who served as Executive Vice President and later on as Distinguished Professor of Bible for Oklahoma Christian University. He was at various times, my teacher, boss, mentor, collaborator and friend. Stafford easily fraternized with leaders in the church and higher educational circles as well as the foot soldiers of the gospel who manned the small congregations that dotted each state across this country. He was the busiest person I knew but always made the time to take your call. Our brotherhood will miss his wisdom, faithfulness and sense of humor.

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1.

Critical Introduction

This book is designed to help those readers who are familiar with Job's story but less so with how it can be applied to the believer's life experience. Below is a short breakdown of how the title "Job for Beginners: Faithful Living in Times of Crisis" summarizes both the goal and approach I will use.

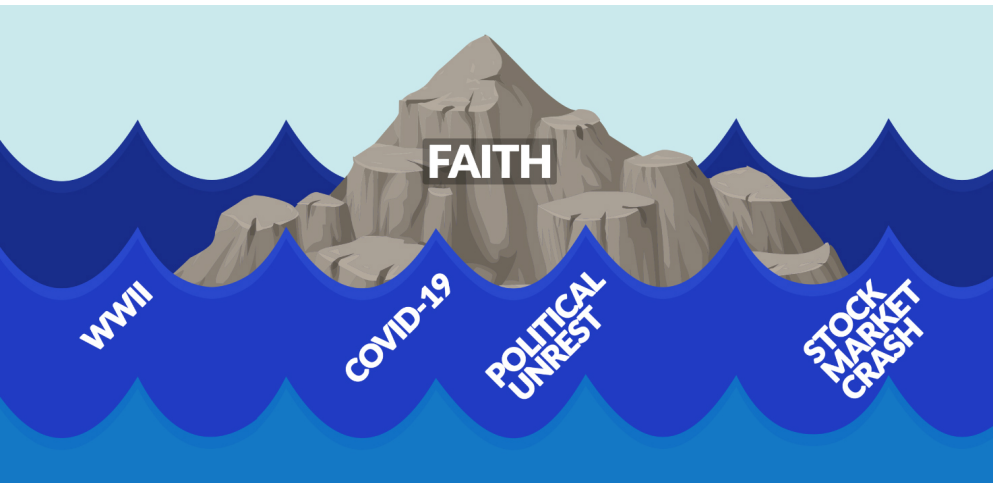
- A. The book of Job will be the main resource that I will use to demonstrate a model life and attitude that we, as Christians, should strive for during times of crisis.

- B. "Times of crisis" well describes the state of not only our lives but the lives of everyone else around us at this particular moment in time. We all go through challenging episodes in our personal lives (like going to college for the first time, or getting married, having children, loss of a loved one, moving, etc.), but it is a rare occurrence when the entire world is challenged by the very same crisis as we are experiencing now. If nothing else, the COVID-19 pandemic has had the ability to test

everyone regardless of age, social status or worldview with the very same challenge and reveal the viability of both our belief system and political ideology.

- C. "Faithful living" describes not only the goal or the model life that Christians strive for in both good and bad times, it is the shelter that protects us during every crisis. Not only is faithful living our response to crisis, it becomes a light and a witness to an unbelieving world thrust further into darkness by the confusion and fear created by this and every crisis throughout history.

Job, therefore, is the biblical character whose experience most resembles the nature of our experience today. He endured a one-man pandemic which battered and caused him great loss. His experience and reaction were messy at times and not necessarily heroic. However, his story provides us with the picture of a faithful, sincere, yet imperfect man, and how he reacted to the moment when he was in the eye of the storm. The book of Job is valuable, especially during these challenging times, because it shows us not only what we as believers should do but also what we shouldn't do in moments of crisis.



Like all believers, Job's life was a mixture of aspirational righteousness and human weakness, as well as life experiences left unanswered and unresolved. We can, therefore, relate to him not only as a Bible character from long ago, but also as a human being doing his best to live out his faith under trying circumstances.

THE BOOK OF JOB

Since the title says, "Job for Beginners", we'll begin with some preliminary information about the book, its author, the time it was written and its general theme and outline.

1. Literary Importance of Job

Aside from its unique subject matter, one feature of this book is the beauty of its writing. For example, some in referring to the book of Job have said:



Magnificent and sublime as no other
book of Scripture.

- **Martin Luther**



The greatest poem of
ancient or modern times.

- **Alfred "Lord" Tennyson (British Poet Laureate)**

We often focus so much on the story of Job that we fail to appreciate the quality of the style and the expression of the author. Some scholars have referred to the author of Job as the Shakespeare of the Old Testament.

2. Date and Authorship

There has been no consensus among scholars as to the actual author or time Job was written since there are no clues within the book itself as to its date or authorship.

As a Bible book it is grouped according to its style and category (poetry/wisdom literature) which consists of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. These books are so-called because they deal with human struggle and real-life experience.

There are several ideas about its date and its authorship:

- A. Earliest Jewish tradition ascribed its writing to Moses (1400 BC).
- B. Later scholars (Martin Luther) believed it was produced by Solomon (1000 BC).
- C. Modern scholars believe it was written by an unknown author during the time of the exile of the Jewish people in Babylon (600 BC).

Suffice to say that the book of Job was accepted and included in the canon of the Old Testament by 150 BC.

3. Book of Job – Historical or Poetic?

One question that often arises is, "Is Job a purely historical book about what happened to a man and his family, or is it a work of fiction that teaches important theological principles?"

The earliest Jewish teachings claimed that Job was history. Martin Luther wrote that Job was a work of poetic imagination set in a historical framework. For example, it was similar to historical dramas based on true events. Still, others claim that it

was an uninspired work of heathen fiction (Spinoza, Dutch philosopher).

Most conservative scholars hold that Job is an inspired literary work based on true historical events.

4. Purpose of Job

A more important focus for study, aside from the time and the authorship aspects, is the purpose of this book. Actually, the book of Job has a number of ideas and issues that it deals with:

A. One of the earliest views suggests that it was a study of the patience demonstrated by a good man while he was being tested by various trials. James echoes this idea in his New Testament epistle:

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- James 1:2-4

James summarizes the principle that we see played out in a man's life in the book of Job.

B. Another important purpose is that the experience of Job reveals the falseness of the prevalent dogma at that time which taught that personal suffering was always the result of personal sin (G. B. Caird, Old Testament scholar). Job himself does not refute this fallacy used by his friends to explain what has happened to him and why (he defends himself, but he doesn't completely refute their arguments).

However, the readers who see what goes on behind the scenes and observe the action from God's viewpoint are able to conclude that this notion (personal suffering is always the result of personal sin - e.g. Karma) is not accurate.

C. The most obvious conclusion is that the Book of Job deals specifically with the very real problem of the suffering of innocents, and how and why one can maintain faith in the face of this experience.

This idea has been the view of the majority of Bible scholars who have commented on the book of Job. Here are a few summary statements from some of these writers:

“The important truth revealed [in Job] is that there is a suffering of the righteous which is not a decree of wrath, but a dispensation of God's love. This is the heart of the book of Job.”

- **Franz Delitzsch, The Book of Job**

“In the end Job's problem is left unsolved, except that in the infinite wisdom of God, undeserved suffering must have an explanation beyond our comprehension. This is, after all, the simple doctrine of faith, which does not insist upon explaining everything.”

- **Edgar Goodspeed, The Story of the Old Testament**

“It is when Job comes face to face with God that he comes to himself. He does not receive definite answers from the Lord. In the book, when God speaks, there is no new instruction, only His presence. God is bent simply on being God.”

- **Interpreter's Bible**

And so, the focus of the book is the problem of innocent suffering. Job's story doesn't actually give easy answers to the question, "Why do innocent people suffer?" or "Why do unfair and unjust things happen in this world?" Rather, it presents one particular case and its extraordinary circumstances (Satan personally attacks an individual and God allows it to happen), and we are witnesses to the developments and eventual outcome (God appears to Job and he is restored). The circumstances of Job's experience are difficult or perhaps impossible to apply directly to ourselves, however, we do have an intimate view of how Job feels about the unjust things that take place in his life and how he reacts to them.

- Shock at losing material possessions
- Sorrow and grief at losing his family
- Pain and suffering because of his illness
- Humiliation at the loss of prestige and respect
- Frustration and anger at the seeming injustice and unfairness of his situation.
 - He may have also been among those who believed that personal suffering was the judgment of God upon an individual because of personal sin. This may have been why he was upset and thought he was being punished unjustly. He knew that he was a good and just man and yet here he was being punished anyways. The facts didn't agree with his theology.

We are witnesses to his unjust suffering as well as how he feels and deals with these things as a human being. Our life lessons come from comparing his life experience to ours because to one degree or another we also experience shock, sorrow, pain, humiliation, frustration, anger and despair at times in our own

lives. Of course, we rarely experience all of these emotions at the same time and over the same issue. However, whether individually or collectively, Job's experience mirrors our experience as people of faith dealing with adversity.

It is as if Job represents a one-stop example of how a believer deals with suffering he neither understands nor deserves. The Book of Job doesn't provide nice, neat bullet point solutions to the problems and injustices of life; instead, Job presents how one man lived a faithful, not perfect, life during a time of terrible crisis.

Our own life lessons, therefore, will come from examining Job's journey from a blessed life to unjust suffering and loss, to revelation and then finally to restoration for a blessed life once again.

2. Outline and Characters

We are using the book of Job as a guide to learn how to live faithful lives while experiencing personal or national crisis. Job did not live during a time of war or famine, the type of social and national crisis that imposes hardship on the individual regardless of his personal circumstances.

Job's crisis was personal, imposed on him through supernatural means but experienced fully in a physical and emotional way (loss of wealth, family, health and status in society). We said that the core of Job's book describes his reaction to unjust suffering. Basically, he was a good man who was subjected to what he believed to be undeserved suffering.

Job's dilemma lay in the fact that he believed the theology of that era which taught that suffering was the direct result of personal sin. In other words, God punished sinners in 'real time.' We still have that idea prevalent in various belief systems today. People often say, "What did I do to merit this?" Of course, the religions of

Hinduism and Buddhism contain a similar concept of fate and auto retribution.

Unfortunately, the teaching to which Job ascribed did not match his personal experience, thus causing his dilemma or crisis.

- He knew that he was a good man and therefore could not understand why he was made to suffer.
- He also knew that God was just so he not only suffered but had no way to explain why a just God would cause him to suffer unjustly.

Add to this the fact that his friends each in turn assumed that he was guilty of sin and had brought these calamities upon himself. This, then, caused Job to experience the loss of his final possession, the respect and sympathy of his friends during a time of extreme suffering.

With this summary in mind, we will examine the various characters in Job's story and consider a possible outline of the book we can use in our study. Outlines are helpful because they help us maintain perspective while reading through character development and action details.

CHARACTERS

The book of Job could easily be staged as a play since most of the action revolves around the dialogues between several main characters:

- God with the devil and then at the end with Job himself.
- Job with his wife followed by a series of exchanges with his three friends plus a fourth individual.
- Job's response to God at the end.

And so, the main characters are the following:

JOB

A wealthy patriarch with a large family who lived in the land of Uz (modern-day Saudi Arabia). He is a figure of history since he is mentioned along with Noah and Daniel in the book of Ezekiel.

¹² Then the word of the Lord came to me saying,
¹³ "Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast, ¹⁴ even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves," declares the Lord God.
- Ezekiel 14:12-14

He was not an Israelite (no references to key theological elements in the book, for example: Law, covenant, temple or Yahweh). He was blameless and upright, a man who feared God (believer) and one who shunned evil.

He had grown children (seven sons and three daughters) and his sons themselves were wealthy men who hosted lavish feasts, especially on their birthdays.

We will learn more about Job's life, character and experience as we go through his book.

JOB'S WIFE

Not much is said about her in the Bible as such. Some Jewish folklore gives her name as *Sitis* which is a root word for Satan. These same sources claim that she died and eventually Job

married Dinah, Jacob's daughter, but none of this is supported by Scripture.

The Bible records that at a certain point she encourages her husband to kill himself in order to put an end to his suffering.

SATAN

An angel referred to with other angels as "sons of God" here in this book. The term Satan means "adversary" and only appears in three other books of the Old Testament (I Chronicles 21:1, Psalms 109:6, Zechariah 3:1-2).

He is able to exist and move in both the physical and the spiritual realms. He is also responsible for Job's suffering, as we will learn when we review his exchange with God regarding Job's righteousness and faith.

The key to the story is that we know this as do God and the devil, but this information is never revealed to Job, even when God appears to him at the end of the book.

JOB'S FRIENDS

It was a custom of the times to visit, sit with, encourage, and mourn with those who were ill or suffering hardships. Due to the serious nature of Job's woes and condition, three of his friends come to sit and comfort him.

They travel from northwest Arabia and upon arriving simply remain silent out of respect for Job's great loss and suffering. When they do begin to speak, however, we see what kind of person each is.

One good note about them is that they come to say what they had to say to Job in person and did not talk about him behind his

back. Most of the time, this type of gossip tries to determine why the person is being punished.

The three visitors and the local man were:

- A. **Eliphaz** (God is fine gold) He was a descendant of Esau. He was old, devout and more gracious than the other visitors. Some have referred to him as a mystic of that era. Today you would classify him as a liberal.

- B. **Bildad** (Uncertain source) He was a descendant of Abraham and Keturah, Abraham's wife after Sarah died. He's been called a scholar or traditionalist according to his speech. He was less kind and sympathetic than Eliphaz in his comments to Job. He stood for rigid authoritarianism. Today you would classify him as a conservative.

- C. **Zophar** (Male goat) He was dogmatic, impetuous, and intolerant. He was wise in his own eyes, as well as unmoving and judgmental. Today you would call him legalistic.

- D. **Elihu** (He is my God) He was a local man and the youngest of the four who waited until all spoke before speaking. This was done as a sign of respect for his elders. In his speeches Elihu doesn't actually add anything new to the arguments of the others. He rebukes the three for various failings but repeats their arguments and finishes by correcting two of Job's erroneous points:
 - 1. That God was somehow unjust
 - 2. That God refused to speak to Job

Of course, we are going to examine these speeches more closely as we review the text.

GOD

God is present at the beginning of the book along with Satan and then at the end with Job. He does not appear to Job in order to comfort or to explain the situation but rather to reveal Himself more clearly to him; the idea being that to be in God's presence is a transcendent experience that goes beyond explaining, understanding or comforting.

In the end Job gets to have a clearer, crisper vision of the true and living God and this in itself is enough, actually more than enough. No longer any need for answers or the smoothing over of feelings since once in the presence of almighty God one exists on another plane.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

There are always many possible outlines that can be used in the study of any of the books of the Bible. The difference between the variations are usually based on the specific focus or the approach that the teacher wants to use in studying the material. For example, in a basic study model where you are introducing the book to those not familiar with it, a standard overview outline is best.

Here is a sample of this type taken from the Blue Letter Bible based on material developed by Warren Wiersbe, an American writer, speaker, and theologian.

OVERVIEW OUTLINE: BOOK OF JOB - WARREN WIERSBE

1. Job's Distress – Ch. 1-3

1. Prosperity – 1:1-5
2. Adversity – 1:6-2:13
3. Perplexity – Ch. 3

2. Job's Defense – Ch. 4-37

1. First round – Ch. 4-14
 1. Eliphaz – Ch. 4-5 - Job's Reply – Ch. 6-7
 2. Bildad – Ch. 8 - Job's Reply – Ch. 9-10
 3. Zophar – Ch. 11 - Job's Reply – Ch. 12-14
2. Second round – Ch. 15-21
 1. Eliphaz – Ch. 15 - Job's Reply – Ch. 16-17
 2. Bildad – Ch. 18 - Job's Reply – Ch. 19
 3. Zophar – Ch. 20 - Job's Reply – Ch. 21
3. Third round – Ch. 22-31
 1. Eliphaz – Ch. 22 - Job's Reply – Ch. 23-24
 2. Bildad – Ch. 25 - Job's Reply – Ch. 26-31
4. Young Elihu speaks – Ch. 32-37
 1. Contradicting Job's friends – Ch. 32
 2. Contradicting Job himself – Ch. 33
 3. Proclaiming God's justice, goodness and majesty – Ch. 34-37

3. Job's Deliverance – Ch. 38-42

1. God humbles Job – 38:1-42:6
 1. Tough questions too great for Job to answer – 38:1-41:34
 2. Job acknowledges his inability to understand – 42:1-6
2. God honors Job – 42:7-17
 1. God rebukes his critics – 42:7-10
 2. God restores his wealth – 42:11-17

In this outline we can see, in one glance, a detailed description of the events of this book in chronological order and thus quickly become familiar with the "action and sequence" of the story.

If you wanted a compressed version of this outline, however, you could say that the three main divisions of this book are as follows.

COMPRESSED OUTLINE

1. Job's distress – Ch. 1-3
2. Job's defense – Ch. 4-37
3. Job's deliverance – Ch. 38-42

Having these types of outlines helps teachers and students not get lost in the poetry and details when studying the book. They help provide a constant context as the storyline is examined more closely.

A third sample is a thematic outline based on the title of this book, "Faithful Living in Times of Crisis."

THEMATIC OUTLINE

- 1. The Physical Crisis**
 1. The Devil's attack – Ch. 1-3
- 2. The Theological Crisis**
 1. Job's friends attack – Ch. 4-37
- 3. The Spiritual Crisis**
 1. God challenges Job – 38:1-41:34
 2. Job's faith saves him – 42:1-17

This outline assumes that the student is familiar with the story and the characters so that the focus of teaching can be on the attempt to answer the question, "How does one maintain faith in a situation or period of time where there doesn't seem to be any satisfying answers or cosmic fairness?" Surely a question asked throughout history by all kinds of people.

3.

The Physical Crisis

JOB 1:1-3:26

We've looked at some introductory features of this book.

1. **Time** - It could have been written as late as the time of the Jewish exile in Babylon (6th to 5th century BC), however, it describes a series of events that took place around the time of the Patriarchs (1900-1800 BC).
2. **Story** - The story is about a good man who suffers great calamity and loss through no fault of his own.
3. **Characters** - The main characters are God and the Devil, along with Job who is the main character, his wife who plays a minor role, and then there are three of his friends as well as a fourth person who comment on his condition.
4. **Plot** - The plot is mainly compromised of a series of dialogues and monologues that move the story along.
 1. Prologue - 1
 2. God and the Devil - 2 sets
 3. Job and his wife - 1 set
 4. Job and his friends - 3 sets
 5. The young man Elihu - 1 monologue
 6. God and Job - 2 sets of dialogue
 7. Epilogue - 1

These seven sections introduce the character, Job; the setting of his life; the various crises and how they are handled, interpreted and finally resolved. We also considered a variety of outlines that could be used to guide us in our study:

A. Formal Detailed Outline

- Takes into account every event in chronological order and includes each verse.

B. Compressed Outline

- Main ideas
 1. Job's Distress - Ch. 1-3
 2. Job's Defense - Ch. 4-37
 3. Job's Deliverance - Ch. 38-42

C. Thematic Outline

- Based upon and develops the theme of the book. "Faithful Living in Times of Crisis"
 1. The Physical Crisis
 1. The Devil's attack - Ch. 1-3
 2. The Theological Crisis
 1. Job's friends attack - Ch. 4-37
 3. The Spiritual Crisis
 1. God challenges Job - Ch. 38:1-41:34
 2. Job's faith saves him - 42:1-17

The three outlines cover the same material, however, each one emphasizes different things about the material.

- A. **Formal outline** - Focuses on knowing the story, its progression and characters. This outline helps the student explain the story and the characters to someone else. The goal is familiarity with the book of Job.
- B. **Compressed outline** - The objective here is to interpret the story in a brief form while giving it meaning and

context. The goal is to summarize the story in a relevant and easily remembered way.

- C. **Thematic outline** – Here, one tries to understand what the story teaches concerning a particular religious or theological principle. The goal is to see what the story means. This outline style will be our approach to the study of Job.

FAITHFUL LIVING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Following this thematic outline will mean that we'll have to stay focused on Job's attempt at a faithful life despite the various crises that he faces. This is difficult because there is a natural curiosity to get a better look at the drama of the terrible things done and said to him throughout the book. It's like a wreck on the highway, we want to see the damage to the cars involved in the accident, we want to find out if anyone's hurt, and if so, what kind of injuries they've sustained. However, we are less interested in how the drivers feel or think about the accident itself.

In Job's story, there are many tragic events and heated words about why these horrific things have happened to a seemingly good man. Like the highway wreck, we mustn't be distracted by the damage created by the debate but instead keep our attention on how Job maintains his faith while undergoing these various trials.

One thing to keep in mind, however, is that we're observing how Job maintains a measure of faith, not perfect faith. You see, if there is one thing we learn from Job's experience it is that even the best of us doing our utmost only achieves a measure, or incomplete faith and not a perfect faith.

When we study Job, we are examining this particular man's experience of faith and not necessarily the "ideal" of how one

should express faith, even if Job's belief and tenacity were remarkable as one who lived in the period of the Old Testament with its limited amount of revelation.

THE THEMATIC OUTLINE – FAITHFULNESS IN CRISIS

1. The Physical Crisis – Ch. 1-2:10

A. Introduction (1:1-5)

The crisis in Job's life is preceded by a brief introduction of Job himself. The name Job means, appropriately enough, he who weeps.

¹ There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. ² Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. ³ His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men 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 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

- Job 1:1-5

In this short sketch we learn that Job was:

- A. **Blameless and upright** - Complete as to his mind and heart; straight and correct as to his moral conduct.
- B. **Feared God** - Had a continual reverence for God which served as his motivation for justice, truth, and efforts at personal goodness.
- C. **Turning away from evil** - He was a man who avoided evil. He had no fascination, attraction to or curiosity for evil things. He was proactive in avoiding every occasion or appearance of evil, ungodly people and things.
- D. **He had a large family** - (seven sons, three daughters) His wife is not mentioned here which may be a clue to her eventual reaction to his suffering.
- E. **He was a businessman** - We learn that he is a man of a great wealth invested in the transportation/shipping of goods (3,000 camels); the production of food and clothing (7,000 sheep); farming (500 yoke of oxen); production of milk and personal transportation (500 donkeys).
- F. **Many servants** - He had a large household of servants who worked his land, animals and business ventures, as well as managed and cared for his home and estate.
- G. Aside from his personal wealth, he was held in high honor by his countrymen and considered greatest among them.
- H. In addition to all of his wealth, we learn that unlike many rich families where there is jealousy and competition among the siblings, Job's family maintained a close-knit and loving attitude among themselves.
- I. Finally, in contrast to his personal wealth and power, we see Job very careful in offering sacrifices to God on behalf of his children, just in case in their youthful inexperience or ignorance they may have neglected to do so or be reverent in their celebrations.

This introduction, among other things, gives us the picture of a man who was the least likely to be the target of the wrath of God, since at that time it was believed that Job's blessings were a visible sign that he was a righteous man.

The theological equation simply said that:

**"GOOD MEN ARE BLESSED
AND THE WAY OF SINNERS IS HARD."**

In other words, good men will prosper, and evil men will be cursed in this life here on earth.

B. Satan Questions Job's Piety (1:6-12)

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 do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." ⁸ The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." ⁹ Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge about 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 put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." ¹² Then the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.
- Job 1:6-12

This short dialogue between God and Satan provides the reason for Job's coming trials:

- God allows Satan to test the integrity of Job's faith.
- Satan claims that Job's good character is based on his many blessings and if some of these are suddenly removed, he will turn against God.

The key here is that not only are God and Satan aware of the true cause behind the trials rained down on Job, so are we, the readers. Job, as well as his family and friends are not in the loop. Keep this in mind.

C. Job's Suffering and Loss (1:13-2:10)

The author gives us a brief summary of the devastation that Satan brings into Job's life:

1. Loss of property and children - 1:13-19

- Loss due to people (Sabeans - a desert tribe) steal his oxen.
- Loss by nature (lightning) destroys servants and sheep.
- Loss due to people (Chaldeans) steal his camels and his servants.
- Loss by nature (wind/tornado) kills his family.

2. Job passes this initial test - 1:20-22

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

²¹ He said,

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord."

²² Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame
God.

This is Job's finest hour in that he suffers unimaginable loss all at once but:

- He does not curse or blame God; he actually praises Him.
- He does not feel sorry for himself and use his misfortune for self-pity or anger at other less righteous men who do not suffer despite their sinful lives (i.e. why me and not them?).
- He doesn't lose faith. On the contrary, he turns to God for help and comfort by going into mourning.

3. Satan's second attack - 2:1-8

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 The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

³ The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause." ⁴ Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."

⁶ So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

⁷ Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.
- Job 2:1-8

This second test involves a personal attack on Job's body, up to this time he still had his health.

Note that the author reminds the readers that Job has done nothing to deserve these calamities. Verse three says that his suffering was without cause. It is important to remember this point when his friends begin to speak about the reason for his suffering.

His illness was a skin disease that covered his body, not necessarily leprosy.

4. His wife's attack - 2:9-10

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 speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.
- Job 2:9-10

Job lost his children to an accident of weather, however they remained who they were (faithful, loving, close) even in death. After the loss of his health there remained only one last comfort in his life, and that was the love, encouragement and faithfulness of his wife.

However, in one last cruel blow, he loses these things as well. The effect of the recent losses of wealth and family are demonstrated

in her broken spirit as she goads her husband to do what she herself may have already considered or succumbed to:

- Curse/deny God.
- Stop defending Him and trying to act justly and faithfully.
- Escape the suffering by taking your own life. You still have the power to do this.

Once again, however, we see Job rise to the occasion with patience, wisdom and unshakable faith.

And, once again, the author confirms that Job remains blameless, even with the loss of his wife's love and support.

2. Job's First Response to the Crisis – 2:11-3:26

At this point, the physical and emotional attacks cease and the author sets the scene for the next phase of Job's trials, the theological crisis.

A. The arrival of Job's friends (2:11-13)

¹¹ Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. ¹² When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky.

¹³ Then they sat down on the ground with him for

seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.
- Job 2:11-13

We've already introduced these characters in a previous chapter.

- **Eliphaz** - old, wise and more gracious
- **Bildad** - educated, conservative
- **Zophar** - dogmatic and intolerant

There is another character, Elihu, a younger man who is a local and waits until the end to speak. The three travelers arrive to sit and mourn with their friend, Job, and their period of silence, seven days, is an initial show of respect for Job who despite his losses and illness was in their eyes an honorable man.

B. Job's Soliloquy (3:1-26)

Until this time, Job has only briefly commented on the events that had befallen him and responded to his wife's despairing cry to curse God and die.

With the arrival of his friends who await some comment from him before they themselves speak, Job gives a full monologue that contains his passionate desire for the only event he believes is left for him in this life and that is for him to die.

This cry for death is outlined in three questions that he poses:

A. Why was I born? (3:1-10)

- If this is what I've come to (loss of everything for no reason, why be born in the first place?).

B. Why did I not die at birth? (3:11-19)

- Was I given life just to suffer for no reason? Why not just take me at birth?

C. Why can't I just die now? (3:20-26)

- The present suffering makes no sense, if there is to be no justice, why not just end his life now?

Job starts well but the weight of the physical suffering now joined with the weight of the theological conflict that is beginning to brew inside of him begin to take their toll on his patience and his faith.

The theological conflict, if you remember, was that Job and his contemporaries believed that God's justice was meted out in real-time. In other words:

- degrees of goodness + righteousness
= degrees of blessings
- degrees of sinfulness + unrighteousness
= degrees of punishment

CONFLICT:

Why would God make an innocent man suffer, even suffer greatly?

In the next section (Theological Crisis), Job's friends will begin to explore and even exacerbate this crisis in Job's life.

4.

The Theological Crisis

Part 1

JOB 4:1-14:22

We've been introduced to Job, a wealthy and righteous man who suffers a series of losses that create an enormous physical and emotional crisis in his life. Despite losing his wealth, children, wife, and lastly his health, he continues to have faith in God and does not sin despite the desperate situation that he is in.

Now, I explained that one feature of Job's belief system was that God's justice worked in real-time, for example:

- Good people were blessed right away by God and so prosperity and health were signs of righteousness.
- Sinners, likewise, were judged and punished right away, and so adversity and poverty were signs of God's displeasure with them and their actions.
- In other words, the good were blessed and sinners were punished right here on earth.

And so, even though Job reacted faithfully through the physical crisis that he suffered, he began to break down as he faced the theological crisis that came in the form of three friends and a

fourth man who challenged the seeming conflict present in his situation. You will note that their comments on Job's predicament said, "If you are as innocent and righteous as you claim, why is God punishing you so severely?"

Job's dilemma, therefore, was that he believed both statements to be true:

1. He was innocent and righteous.
2. God always punished guilty sinners.

The dilemma, therefore, was, "Why then was God punishing an innocent man?"

This theological crisis is played out in a series of three cycles of speeches between Job and his friends. There are also two speeches by a younger man called Elihu who waits until Job and his friends have finished speaking before making his comments, and to which Job makes no response.

These dialogues and speeches explain the prevailing theological thinking at that time as well as Job's attempts at resolving the apparent contradiction that he faced and for which he had no answer.

CYCLE #1 – SPEECHES (4:1-14:22)

Some scholars suggest that the theme of this first cycle of speeches is: "The nature of God." Job's three friends each have a point of view concerning this topic and weave it into their arguments with Job.

- **Eliphaz** - emphasizes God's holiness and goodness
- **Bildad** - emphasizes God's righteousness
- **Zophar** - focuses on God's wisdom

1. Eliphaz – 4:1-5:27

Eliphaz is old, devout and more gracious than Job's other two friends. He bases his arguments for the 'Doctrine of Retribution' (the good are blessed and the bad are punished in real-time) on the notion that this is how things have always worked, according to his personal experience.

Eliphaz' approach with Job is to begin in a kindly manner, but he soon discards this attitude and proceeds to rebuke him. He then pleads with his suffering friend not to despise the chastening of the Lord and finishes by promising him future blessings if he simply repents.

ELIPHAZ' SPEECH – SUMMARY

Job's elderly friend begins by expressing surprise that one who had comforted others going through similar experiences should break down so quickly. In other words, he exhorts Job by reminding him of his own past conduct when the situation was reversed and he was the one comforting those who suffered, "You ought to be practicing what you've been preaching to others," is his conclusion.

- 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered,
2 "If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient?
But who can refrain from speaking?
3 "Behold you have admonished many,
And you have strengthened weak hands.
4 "Your words have helped the tottering to stand,
And you have strengthened feeble knees.
5 "But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;
It touches you, and you are dismayed.
- Job 4:1-5

He also reminds Job concerning the 'Doctrine of Retribution' (the theological principle supposedly at play that they both believed was true). One, declaring Eliphaz, that he knew from experience.

⁷ "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent?
Or where were the upright destroyed?
⁸ "According to what I have seen, those who plow
iniquity
And those who sow trouble harvest it.
⁹ "By the breath of God they perish,
And by the blast of His anger they come to an end.
- Job 4:7-9

Eliphaz has been called a mystic and he demonstrates why in verses 4:12-5:7 where he describes one of his visions.

¹² "Now a word was brought to me stealthily,
And my ear received a whisper of it.
¹³ "Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the
night,
When deep sleep falls on men,
¹⁴ Dread came upon me, and trembling,
And made all my bones shake.
¹⁵ "Then a spirit passed by my face;
The hair of my flesh bristled up.
¹⁶ "It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance;
A form was before my eyes;
There was silence, then I heard a voice:
- Job 4:12-16

This vision contains three exhortations or encouragements for Job:

1. Realize and accept that no one is perfect, not even you, therefore, accept your sinfulness (4:17-5:7).

2. Job should commit his cause to God. Innocent or guilty, he should go to God for a resolution to his problems (5:8-16).
3. Job is reminded of the 'Doctrine of Mussar,' which stated that God disciplined His children (5:17-27). This concept is stated by the writer in Hebrews 12:6, "*For the Lord disciplines, the one he loves...*". The point Eliphaz is making here is that Job should be happy, not sad or angry since any man chastened by God is a blessed man. In reminding Job of this Eliphaz is trying to frame what has happened to Job in a positive light.

Now Eliphaz's speech is actually true in putting Job's suffering in a positive light (God is chastening him to make him a better man), however, his conclusion is not accurate in the context of what we, the readers, know. Eliphaz is not aware that Satan has destroyed this innocent man's life to prove that without his blessings Job would soon abandon God.

2. Job's Reply to Eliphaz – 6:1-7:21

Job's reply is not a philosophical or theological rebuttal to Eliphaz's arguments and exhortations, his reply is emotional. It is the cry of one who is suffering great loss and tragedy. In a word, his first reply is deeply human. He says three things about his predicament:

A. His intolerable wretchedness

¹ Then Job answered,
² "Oh that my grief were actually weighed
And laid in the balances together with my calamity!
³ "For then it would be heavier than the sand of the
seas;
Therefore my words have been rash.

⁴ "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me,
Their poison my spirit drinks;
The terrors of God are arrayed against me.
- Job 6:1-4

In other words, he has ample reason to be miserable and angry.

B. He expresses his great disappointment in his friends

"For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend;
So that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty.
- Job 6:14

His point about them is that by withholding their kindness and warmth as friends, their appearance has only increased his suffering and not comforted him as friends ought to do for one another when in need.

C. Job reveals his bitterness against God and his prayer for the end of his suffering through death (7:1-21)

Job doesn't deny God, but he is angry with Him, and his prayer is not for deliverance or healing but death which will simply put him out of his misery.

3. Bildad's Speech - 8:1-22

We've noted that Bildad is more rigid and authoritarian than Eliphaz, and his speech is less sympathetic or kind. Bildad suggests that the sins of Job or possibly those of his children have brought on his sufferings. In the end, however, Bildad assures that God will remember Job.

Bildad's speech has three parts:

A. He rebukes Job for his angry accusations against God's justice

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,
2 "How long will you say these things,
And the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?
3 "Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty pervert what is right?
4 "If your sons sinned against Him,
Then He delivered them into the power of their
transgression.
5 "If you would seek God
And implore the compassion of the Almighty,
6 If you are pure and upright,
Surely now He would rouse Himself for you
And restore your righteous estate.
7 "Though your beginning was insignificant,
Yet your end will increase greatly.
- Job 8:1-7

Bildad's point is that God doesn't pervert justice, He punishes man for his sins. In other words, God doesn't punish someone unjustly. Bildad's point is, "if, as you claim, you are so right, why isn't God helping you?" Note that he's appealing to the 'Doctrine of Retribution' to support his argument.

B. Bildad then appeals to the ancients (8:8-19)

He makes the case that there is nothing new in what he argues (Doctrine of Retribution), it has always been this way. He simply continues in the teaching of the ancients. His is the traditional position.

C. He completes with a word of encouragement (8:20-22)

²⁰ "Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity,
Nor will He support the evildoers.

²¹ "He will yet fill your mouth with laughter
And your lips with shouting.

²² "Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
And the tent of the wicked will be no longer."

- Job 8:20-22

Bildad concludes by assuring that Job will be restored and his enemies punished. From Bildad's perspective God will help if Job accepts the lessons from the past. Bildad is true to his understanding of the 'Doctrine of Retribution,' but since he, like Job, does not know the context and reason for Job's suffering, his arguments and conclusions may be sincere but are incorrect.

4. Job's Reply to Bildad's Speech - 9:1-10:22

We need to understand that these cycle of speeches are not necessarily debates as we understand debates. In a modern debate, one person makes a point and the other responds specifically to that point with a counter argument denying or clarifying to his advantage the details made by the first speaker.

Job answers Bildad's claim that he is a sinner and is suffering just punishment, but one day will be restored by God. This theme is a standard outline used by many prophets in the Old Testament (condemnation, punishment and then restoration).

Job, however, does not deal with Bildad's comments but reveals what he thinks about his present suffering:

A. He expresses his feelings of helplessness in the presence of God's omnipotence (9:1-21)

Job does try to respond to Bildad but knows that it is futile. He is in the difficult position where he knows too much about God to deny Him, but not enough about Him to understand the truth of what is actually happening. This first thought leads Job to try to make some sense of it all by claiming that there may be another principle at work here.

B. Both good and bad suffer alike and somehow God is responsible for both

This idea was also a common one at the time and may have been Job's appeal to the wisdom of the ancients to explain his own situation. However, he follows this point with his own explanation of what may be going on.

C. God is being unfair to him

He goes one step further by declaring that if there was an umpire (used only once in the Old Testament - decider/adjudicator) between him and God, this would allow him to plead his case without fear.

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 umpire between us,
Who may lay his hand upon us both.

³⁴ "Let Him remove His rod from me,
And let not dread of Him terrify me.

³⁵ "Then I would speak and not fear Him;
But I am not like that in myself.

- Job 9:32-35

This is a primitive and not fully developed type for Christ as the mediator between God, the judge and punisher of sinful man, and man who is both guilty and helpless before God thus needing a mediator.

D. Job cannot understand God's present attitude towards him (10:1-17)

Remember that Job is dealing with a theological crisis where what he believes is in direct conflict with what is happening to him.

'According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty,
Yet there is no deliverance from Your hand.
- Job 10:7

In the end:

E. He renews his plea for death and asks only for a brief respite before he goes (10:18-22)

Job is in a loop. He sees no reason nor rhyme to his suffering, so after an attempt to explain and defend himself, he returns to the only option he thinks remains: death or even a better option, never having been born in the first place.

'Why then have You brought me out of the womb?
Would that I had died and no eye had seen me!
- Job 10:18

Job falls silent once again which opens up an opportunity for the third friend, Zophar, to speak.

5. Zophar's Speech - 11:1-20

Zophar is neither a mystic nor a traditionalist. He is dogmatic, impetuous, intolerant and does not appeal to direct experience with God or the wisdom of the past but sees himself as being the source for truth (H.W. Robinson).

Zophar provides no comfort or encouragement but accuses Job of lying, rebukes him for his sins and asserts the glory of God.

A. The Rebuke (11:1-6)

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,
2 "Shall a multitude of words go unanswered,
And a talkative man be acquitted?
3 "Shall your boasts silence men?
And shall you scoff and none rebuke?
4 "For you have said, 'My teaching is pure,
And I am innocent in your eyes.'
5 "But would that God might speak,
And open His lips against you,
6 And show you the secrets of wisdom!
For sound wisdom has two sides.
Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity.
- Job 11:1-6

Stop your babbling before God and be thankful that you're getting off easy, you're still alive, aren't you?

B. God's Wisdom

7 "Can you discover the depths of God?
Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?
8 "They are high as the heavens, what can you do?
Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?

⁹ "Its measure is longer than the earth
And broader than the sea.

¹⁰ "If He passes by or shuts up,
Or calls an assembly, who can restrain Him?

¹¹ "For He knows false men,
And He sees iniquity without investigating.

¹² "An idiot will become intelligent
When the foal of a wild donkey is born a man.

- Job 11:7-12

Man's wisdom is blindness compared to God's wisdom. This is true but not applicable in Job's case because Zophar, like Job, is in the dark when it comes to Job's situation. Job is not guilty of violating or denying God's wisdom, he simply does not know what God knows which, in itself, is not a sin.

C. Exhortation to Repent (11:13-20)

Zophar goes on to make other baseless charges (Job has sinned, or has spoken foolishness to God, doubted and rejected God's wisdom) so the solution is for Job to repent.

Of course, if the charges were true, then sincere repentance would bring forgiveness and restoration, but since Zophar's accusations are false, there is no need for Job to repent for these.

6. Job's Reply to Zophar - 12:1-14:22

Job's reply begins with a direct repudiation of much of what he and the others have said, but as in all of his speeches, the awful reality of what has happened to him and his inability to change any of it returns Job to a solemn and a sorrowful conclusion.

A. Job asserts that his insight is not inferior to that of his friends (12:1-13:2)

¹ Then Job responded,
² "Truly then you are the people,
And with you wisdom will die!
³ "But I have intelligence as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
And who does not know such things as these?
- Job 12:1-3

In his answer to Zophar, Job includes all three friends, and despite his condition, reminds them that he knows what they are talking about, but nothing they are saying has any effect on his misfortunes or his feelings concerning these things.

B. Their defense of God is unnecessary (13:3-12)

In other words, God can care for Himself, He doesn't need you to defend Him. I believe Job is pointing to their defense of God as a subtle form of self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

C. Job mounts a new challenge against God (13:13-28)

So far, Job's main complaint has been that God is not being fair with him (punishing an innocent man), but in this passage he charges that God is bullying him.

²⁴ "Why do You hide Your face
And consider me Your enemy?
²⁵ "Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble?
Or will You pursue the dry chaff?
- Job 13:24-25

In other words, what is happening to him is overkill. This possibility leads him back to making another comment about not only his life, but life in general.

D. The frailty and brevity of human life in general (14:1-12)

¹ "Man, who is born of woman,
Is short-lived and full of turmoil.
² "Like a flower he comes forth and withers.
He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.
- Job 14:1-2

Job recognizes that no matter how glorious his past life was and how miserable his present condition, the whole of life hangs by a thread and is quickly over anyways.

¹¹ "As water evaporates from the sea,
And a river becomes parched and dried up,
¹² So man lies down and does not rise.
Until the heavens are no longer,
He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.
- Job 14:11-12

E. His conclusion: there is really no hope (14:13-22)

At this point in time in the Old Testament the idea of life after death was not well developed. At best, it was believed people lived on somehow through their children. This is why having children (aside from economic reasons) was so important, and not having children was considered shameful and in a way, a curse from God.

¹⁸ "But the falling mountain crumbles away,
And the rock moves from its place;

¹⁹ Water wears away stones,
Its torrents wash away the dust of the earth;
So You destroy man's hope.
²⁰ "You forever overpower him and he departs;
You change his appearance and send him away.
²¹ "His sons achieve honor, but he does not know it;
Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive
it.
²² "But his body pains him,
And he mourns only for himself."
- Job 14:18-22

Job sees no end to his physical and emotional suffering except his death which will end his life and extinguish his being. This thought also makes the unfairness of what he is experiencing so hard to bear. The point he is contemplating can be summarized in the following way, "I excel at doing what is right and being good, and I am not only punished but will also die without hope."

Although incorrect theologically, having this thought certainly justifies his question and cry, "Why was I even born?"

5.

The Theological Crisis

Part 2

Job 22:1-31:40

We are in the part of the book where Job's three friends speak to Job concerning his situation. In their attempt to make sense of the catastrophic things that have happened to him they rely primarily on the common theological thought or axiom of the day which proposed that:

- God blessed the righteous and punished sinners in real-time.
- At a time when there was not a lot of revelation about life after death, this meant that the blessings and punishments were administered here on earth during what was believed to be your only conscious life.

For the friends, therefore, the conclusion was an easy one: bad things had happened to Job, therefore he must have done something wrong to deserve these things.

Now in their speeches they will frame their arguments in different ways claiming that Job has rejected this 'Doctrine of Retribution' (God blesses and punishes now) (Eliphaz), or that Job is ignoring the wisdom of the ancients (Bildad), or that he is a complainer and should simply repent and get this thing over with (Zophar).

Understand that there is no theological dilemma for these men:

- They are sure that they know what has happened (Job is being punished for his sins) and what the solution is (confess and repent).
- They are also convinced that their theology is sound (God, who makes no mistakes, always blesses the good and punishes the sinners).

As I've mentioned before, the theological crisis/dilemma is Job's experience, not theirs. He, like they, firmly believes in the doctrine of retribution. He, unlike his friends, however, also knows that he is not a sinner but rather a righteous man. He also believes that God knows this as well.

The theology that guided his life no longer lines up with the reality that he is experiencing. In his replies to his friends so far, he does not defend against their arguments, nor does he try to resolve the contradiction taking place between his beliefs and the reality that he is experiencing.



It is this contradiction that is at the heart of his crisis, not merely the physical and emotional suffering he has to endure. The fact that there is this disconnect between his belief about God and what has happened to him means that he has no access to

spiritual comfort since he cannot answer the question, "Does God punish the innocent?"

- If the answer to this question is yes, then Job is at a spiritual dead end with the information he presently has about God.
- If the answer is no, then why is God allowing this to happen?

This brings us to the second cycle of speeches made by Job and his friends.

CYCLE #2 SPEECHES – 15:1-21:34

It has been suggested that the theme of this cycle of speeches is the "fate of the wicked" (R. Smith - International Commentary: The Old Testament. Vol. 3/p.177).

1. Eliphaz – 15:1-35

Eliphaz was kind in his previous approach, but this time he dispenses with any niceties and begins this speech by questioning Job's wisdom.

¹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded,

² "Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge,
And fill himself with the east wind?

- Job 15:1-2

He begins by accusing Job of presumptuousness. In other words, he challenges Job's assumption that he is right and justified contrary to the wisdom of the ancients. Job is undermining accepted norms of religion and going against tradition by claiming his innocence in the presence of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Eliphaz's argument is, "How can you claim innocence when God's punishment upon you demonstrates otherwise?"

- 3 Should he argue with useless talk,
Or with words which do not benefit?
- 4 Indeed, you do away with reverence,
And hinder meditation before God.
- 5 For your wrongdoing teaches your mouth,
And you choose the language of the cunning.
- 6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;
And your own lips testify against you.
- 7 "Were you the first person to be born,
Or were you brought forth before the hills?
- 8 Do you hear the secret discussion of God,
And limit wisdom to yourself?
- 9 What do you know that we do not know?
What do you understand that we do not?
- 10 Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us,
Older than your father.
- 11 Are the consolations of God too little for you,
Or the word spoken gently to you?
- 12 Why does your heart take you away?
And why do your eyes wink,
- 13 That you can turn your spirit against God
And produce such words from your mouth?
- 14 What is man, that he would be pure,
Or he who is born of a woman, that he would be
righteous?
- 15 Behold, He has no trust in His holy ones,
And the heavens are not pure in His sight;
- 16 How much less one who is detestable and corrupt:
A person who drinks malice like water!
- Job 15:3-16

Eliphaz charges Job with adding the sin of presumptuousness (challenging God's wisdom) to his initial sin. He reminds Job of

the dangers of not having a clear conscience before God and the speedy destruction of the wicked - the message being, "You can't win against God, so repent."

²⁴ Distress and anguish terrify him,
They overpower him like a king ready for the attack,
²⁵ Because he has reached out with his hand against
God,
And is arrogant toward the Almighty.
- Job 15:24-25

2. Job – 16:1-17:16

Job speaks more directly to his friends in this cycle but doesn't necessarily answer their arguments or accusations in a defensive mode; instead, he reasserts his innocence. His reply and speech after Eliphaz' comments have five main points:

A. He reproaches the heartlessness of all three of his friends.

¹ Then Job responded,
² "I have heard many things like these;
Miserable comforters are you all!
³ Is there no end to windy words?
Or what provokes you that you answer?
⁴ I too could speak like you,
If only I were in your place.
I could compose words against you
And shake my head at you.
⁵ Or I could strengthen you with my mouth,
And the condolence of my lips could lessen your pain.
- Job 16:1-5

He rebukes them for the fact that they bring nothing new to the table, not even comforting words. He too could criticize if he were them, but he could also bring comfort, which they have not done yet.

B. He claims that he has now been abandoned by both God and man, even though he is innocent.

14 He breaks through me with breach after breach;
He runs at me like a warrior.
15 I have sewed sackcloth over my skin,
And thrust my horn in the dust.
16 My face is flushed from weeping,
And deep darkness is on my eyelids,
17 Although there is no violence in my hands,
And my prayer is pure.
- Job 16:14-17

He is a man suffering in innocence.

C. Since they (his friends) witness against him, he declares that the only true witnesses he can count on (to declare his innocence) are in heaven (God and the angels).

18 "Earth, do not cover my blood,
And may there be no resting place for my cry.
19 Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
And my advocate is on high.
20 My friends are my scoffers;
My eye weeps to God,
21 That one might plead for a man with God
As a son of man with his neighbor!
22 For when a few years are past,

I shall go the way of no return.
- Job 16:18-22

He is correct in this, since God and the angels know the real story. The irony here, however, is that he has guessed correctly but does not know why.

D. His fourth statement is Job's assessment of the present situation concerning the relationship with his friends.

In short, he has simply become a byword to them, and he criticizes them for this development.

⁶ "But He has made me a proverb among the people,
And I am one at whom people spit.
⁷ My eye has also become inexpressive because of grief,
And all my body parts are like a shadow.
⁸ The upright will be appalled at this,
And the innocent will stir himself up against the
godless.
⁹ Nevertheless the righteous will hold to his way,
And the one who has clean hands will grow stronger
and stronger.
- Job 17:6-9

The expression 'byword' is a term for a person who personifies a type. In Job's case the personification of an arrogant sinner who refuses to repent and is punished for it by God. Today we would say, "I've become that guy."

But come again all of you now,
For I do not find a wise man among you.
- Job 17:10

Note that despite this, Job continues to challenge his friends.

E. Job's conclusion, therefore, is that all is lost and death will become his only deliverance.

¹⁵ Where then is my hope?
And who looks at my hope?
¹⁶ Will it go down with me to Sheol?
Shall we together go down into the dust?"
- Job 17:15-16

In this, we see a crack in Job's faith, not his faith in God's existence but rather a lessening of his faith in what God can do for him. He figures that all is lost, and the only thing left for him is to die in order to end his suffering (keep this thought in mind when we come to the end of the book).

3. Bildad – 18:1-21

Bildad seems to become more irritable as he pursues his condemnation of Job with his second speech. His second speech tells Job that his present situation is simply a foretaste of his ultimate fate.

⁵ "Indeed, the light of the wicked goes out,
And the spark from his fire does not shine.
⁶ The light in his tent is darkened,
And his lamp goes out above him.
- Job 18:5-6

Bildad's point is that in the end, no one will remember Job. This is what God does to the wicked.

¹⁷ The memory of him perishes from the earth,
And he has no name abroad.
¹⁸ He is driven from light into darkness,
And chased from the inhabited world.

¹⁹ He has no offspring or descendants among his people,

Nor any survivor where he resided.

²⁰ Those in the west are appalled at his fate,
And those in the east are seized with horror.

²¹ Certainly these are the dwellings of the wicked,
And this is the place of him who does not know God."

- Job 18:17-21

4. Job – 19:1-29

In his isolation (rejected by his wife and friends) Job cries out for sympathy and light. Many believe this is one of the highlights of the entire book.

A. Job begins his second speech by protesting his friends' lack of understanding.

³ These ten times you have insulted me;
You are not ashamed to wrong me.

⁴ Even if I have truly done wrong,
My error stays with me.

- Job 19:3-4

He renews his argument that whatever they "think" he has done wrong, the truth is that God has punished an innocent man. He wishes they would understand this.

⁵ If indeed you exalt yourselves against me
And prove my disgrace to me,

⁶ Know then that God has wronged me
And has surrounded me with His net.

- Job 19:5-6

B. Job sees himself as being despised by both God and man. A true low point, can it get worse?

¹⁰ He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone;
And He has uprooted my hope like a tree.

¹³ "He has removed my brothers far from me,
And my acquaintances have completely turned away
from me.

- Job 19:10, 13

C. Job now appeals to the future for some kind of vindication since he has lost hope for the present time.

²³ "Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were recorded in a book!

²⁴ That with an iron stylus and lead
They were engraved in the rock forever!

- Job 19:23-24

He claims that if his defense and appeal are preserved (in stone or a copper scroll) someone in a future generation will read, understand, and eventually vindicate him.

D. He makes his final appeal to God Himself since he is convinced that neither his friends in the present nor appeals to posterity will succeed in the end.

Yet as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last, He will take His stand on the earth.

- Job 19:25

In other words, he believes that God alone is responsible for his circumstances and God alone will be able to redeem him. Here we see a definite shift in Job's faith and thinking. At the lowest point (rejected by God and men) Job continues to hope in God. Not simply a belief that He is, but a trust that He will ultimately save Job, somehow.

E. Job finishes with a warning for his three friends.

²⁸ If you say, 'How shall we persecute him?'
And 'What pretext for a case against him can we find?'
²⁹ Then be afraid of the sword for yourselves,
For wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
So that you may know there is judgment."
- Job 19:28-29

Today we would say, "Be careful, what goes around comes around."

5. Zophar – 20:1-29

This friend merely repeats his argument (affliction is the result of sin) but he doubts his own theory and argument for a moment.

² "Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me
respond,
Even because of my inward agitation.
³ I listened to the reprimand which insults me,
And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.
- Job 20:2-3

Zophar's disquieting thoughts on account of Job's comments show that he is momentarily shaken in his position. However, in the next verses, we see that he reverts back to his initial argument.

27 The heavens will reveal his guilt,
And the earth will rise up against him.
28 The increase of his house will disappear;
His possessions will flow away on the day of His anger.
29 This is a wicked person's portion from God,
The inheritance decreed to him by God."
- Job 20:27-29

Zophar continues to argue that no matter how rich, no matter how favored or how high a position one has, if he has sinned somehow, he will be brought low. He speculates that while Job's arguments and claims may have affected him, he declares that he does not know any more than Job all of the circumstances surrounding his situation. He also rejects Job's declaration that he is an innocent man who still trusts God to vindicate him.

6. Job - 21:1-34

Job's reply to Zophar actually comments on the subject of Zophar's speech which has to do with the prosperity of wicked men.

A. Job begins with the age-old question concerning justice and the wicked.

7 Why do the wicked still live,
Grow old, and also become very powerful?
8 Their descendants endure with them in their sight,
And their offspring before their eyes,
9 Their houses are safe from fear,
And the rod of God is not on them.
- Job 21:7-9

In essence, it seems that the wicked often live and prosper without any negative consequences.

B. He then questions the wisdom of the ages, the Law of Retribution (God blesses and punishes in real time) by pointing to common examples that contradict this ancient wisdom.

He also notes that hereditary guilt is not true or moral (the sons bear the guilt or punishment for the sins of the father - a point also made by the prophet Ezekiel, Ezekiel 18:20 - 600 BC, (same era as the writing of Job).

19 You say, 'God saves up a person's wrongdoing for his sons.'

Let God repay him so that he may know it.

20 Let his own eyes see his destruction,

And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

21 For what does he care about his household after him,
When the number of his months is at an end?

22 Can anyone teach God knowledge,

In that He judges those on high?

23 One dies in his full strength,
Being wholly undisturbed and at ease;

24 His sides are filled with fat,
And the marrow of his bones is wet,

25 While another dies with a bitter soul,
Never even tasting anything good.

26 Together they lie down in the dust,
And maggots cover them.

- Job 21:19-26

His point is that from simple observation, we see quite plainly that:

1. Many wicked men grow rich, and they stay that way and then they die peacefully at a ripe old age and nothing bad happens to the sons they leave behind.

2. We also see many righteous men live hard lives, full of troubles who die in the middle of their poverty.

Much like Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes, Job states that these inconsistencies are common, and death seems to be the great equalizer in all of this. He refers to a judgment for the wicked that will come one day, even if for now they are buried in fine graves which are watched over and carefully tended to.

³⁰ For the wicked person is spared a day of disaster;
They are led away from a day of fury.

³¹ Who confronts him with his actions,
And who repays him for what he has done?

³² When he is carried to the grave,
People will keep watch over his tomb.

³³ The clods of the valley will gently cover him;
Moreover, all mankind will follow after him,
While countless others go before him.

³⁴ So how dare you give me empty comfort?
For your answers remain nothing but falsehood!"

- Job:30-34

Job has not only put his case for final judgment into God's hands at a future date, along with that of the wicked who will likewise be judged but has also repudiated the basis of his friends' arguments and assumptions against him as falsehoods. In other words, Job is laying the groundwork for an argument or a new wisdom that says, "Sometimes the innocent suffer and the wicked go free, but one day God will judge both according to their actions and His wisdom, not man's wisdom."

6.

The Theological Crisis

Part 3

JOB 22:1-37:24

Thus far Job and his three friends have more or less debated to a draw with no progress made by either side:

- A. The friends have held fast to the conventional wisdom of the day, that sinners are punished in real time for their sins and this wisdom explains the reason for all the calamities that have been suffered by Job.
- B. Job, for his part, agrees with them in principle but is vexed by all the bad things that have happened to him since he is not aware of any sin in his life that would cause these sufferings to take place. He not only knows that this is true but also argues that God knows this to be true as well.

This theological crisis has caused him to reevaluate the accepted wisdom of that day and begin to formulate an explanation that makes sense of the seemingly conflicting facts that are facing

him, primarily that a just and loving God would punish an innocent man.

This new formulation is put forth in his final speech as a response to Zophar in chapter 21. Job's conclusion springs from a wisdom that says, in part, that 'sometimes the innocent suffer and the wicked go free, however, one day God will judge both according to their actions and His, not man's wisdom, will prevail'.

This flash of insight is quickly set aside by Job's friends who immediately renew their attack using the same line of argument that has served them from the beginning.

CYCLE #3 OF SPEECHES – 22:1-37:24

The friends continue with a condemnation of Job, and in particular, the sins they believe he is guilty of.

1. Eliphaz – 22:1-30

- ¹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded,
 - ² "Can a strong man be of use to God,
Or a wise one be useful to himself?
 - ³ Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous,
Or gain if you make your ways blameless?
 - ⁴ Is it because of your reverence that He punishes you,
That He enters into judgment against you?
 - ⁵ Is your wickedness not abundant,
And is there no end to your guilty deeds?
- Job 22:1-5

Eliphaz claims that God does not need man, even if he is righteous. However, an evil man does get His attention. This is quite a cynical view of God who is unimpressed by a man's

righteousness but concerned only with a man's wickedness. Eliphaz reveals his lack of knowledge concerning the true and living God and His character, that he describes as One being devoid of love and focused only on justice and retribution.

Eliphaz moves on from this basic view to list Job's many sins (of which he has no proof) (vs.6-20):

- injustice
- rejection of the poor, the hungry, the widowed
- indifferent to the presence and the judgment of God = disbelief
- arrogance in rejecting God without fear

He completes his speech by exhorting Job to repent while there is still time (vs. 21-30).

"Be reconciled with Him, and be at peace;
Thereby good will come to you.
- Job 22:21

Eliphaz's appeal is that if Job repents, God will be at peace with him and will repeal all the bad things that have happened to him. His thinking is simple: acknowledge and repent of your sins and God will bless you. This process is true in general, but not so in Job's case and he will say as much in his reply.

2. Job's Reply to Eliphaz – 23:1-24:25

Job renews his search for God's presence and what he would do should he come before God to plead his case (Job 23:1-9). Despite his search, however, Job confesses that He cannot be found. Even so, Job reasserts his innocence. Even if he cannot find God to

plead his case in person, Job maintains his innocence nevertheless (Job 23:10-17).

Job even contends that God not only ignores his righteousness but is also oblivious to the evil taking place in the world and provides an example to prove his point (Job 24:18-25).

From the city people groan,
And the souls of the wounded cry for help;
Yet God does not pay attention to the offensiveness.
- Job 24:12

Much like Solomon, Job says that good and bad people do what they're going to do and then in a moment they are gone and eventually forgotten. All is vanity, and if it is not, who is to say differently?

Job's reply is quite cynical, still maintaining his innocence but expressing the thought that even if this is so, perhaps God doesn't care one way or another. This is the conclusion of a man who still believes but whose belief is warped by his pain and suffering.

3. Bildad's Speech – 25:1-6

Only two of the original three friends speak in this third cycle of speeches (Eliphaz and Bildad). Zophar, the most dogmatic and intolerant of the three is quiet after the second cycle of speeches and his place will be taken by Elihu, the youngest of the men present in the story.

Bildad's short speech (six verses) will focus mainly on man's inferiority to God.

- He has no new arguments to present in order to explain Job's situation so he falls back on the obvious

observation that man is inferior to God, furthermore, how can he even think that he can know the mind of God.

- His argument is that of the agnostic, we can't possibly know (since we are so inferior to God, why even try?).
- He concludes that what Job is attempting to do (to know God's mind) is not possible.

¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite responded,

² "Dominion and awe belong to Him

Who makes peace in His heights.

³ Is there any number to His troops?

And upon whom does His light not rise?

⁴ How then can mankind be righteous with God?

Or how can anyone who is born of woman be pure?

⁵ If even the moon has no brightness

And the stars are not pure in His sight,

⁶ How much less man, that maggot,

And a son of man, that worm!"

- Job 25:1-6

His final response is that God is so far beyond man in both power and purity, how can man think to challenge Him or even claim to be pure (righteous or acceptable) before Him? Of course, we (but not Job) know this is true without Christ.

4. Job's Reply to Bildad – 26:1-14

Job's reply is divided into two sections.

A. He mocks Bildad's weak response of falling into agnosticism (you can't know).

¹ Then Job responded,
² "What a help you are to the weak!
You have saved the arm without strength!
³ What advice you have given to one without wisdom!
What helpful insight you have abundantly provided!
⁴ To whom have you uttered words?
And whose spirit was expressed through you?
- Job 26:1-4

He summarizes Bildad's position as being useless, as providing no answer or help for those seeking answers and having no inspired source.

B. Job provides a more exalted vision of the living God.

From the spiritual world that we cannot see.

⁵ "The departed spirits are made to tremble
Under the waters and their inhabitants.
⁶ Sheol is naked before Him,
And Abaddon has no covering.
- Job 26:5-6

To the created world we do see and dwell-in.

⁷ He stretches out the north over empty space
And hangs the earth on nothing.
⁸ He wraps up the waters in His clouds,
And the cloud does not burst under them.
⁹ He obscures the face of the full moon
And spreads His cloud over it.

¹⁰ He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters
At the boundary of light and darkness.
- Job 26:7-10

Like Bildad, Job acknowledges God's greatness, but he does so with a sense of reverence and respect. God is greater than man, but not simply stronger in measurable ways but greater in ways that only God could be.

He stretches out the north over empty space
And hangs the earth on nothing.
- Job 26:7

The strongest man in the world would not be capable of doing this, only God has this ability.

5. Job's Final Words to His Friends – 27:1-28:28

Zophar does not speak after Job replies to Bildad and so Job takes the opportunity to speak to the three friends who have come to spend time with him after he has suffered the great loss of family, wealth and health. He no longer responds to each in turn but actually speaks to all three as a group.

A. He begins by affirming his innocence.

Despite all of their arguments, he holds fast to the one thing he knows to be true (as well as God), that he is innocent. He summarizes his position by saying:

1. No matter what God does to me, I will not sin, just as I have not done so in the past.

1 Job again took up his discourse and said,
2 "As God lives, who has taken away my right,
And the Almighty, who has embittered my soul,
3 For as long as life is in me,
And the breath of God is in my nostrils,
4 My lips certainly will not speak unjustly,
Nor will my tongue mutter deceit.
- Job 27:1-4

2. I will never admit that you and your arguments are right.

Far be it from me that I should declare you right;
Until I die, I will not give up my integrity.
- Job 27:5

3. My conscience is clear.

I have kept hold of my righteousness and will not let it
go.
My heart does not rebuke any of my days.
- Job 27:6

B. He describes the mental condition and material ruin of the wicked (Job 27:7-23).

Some scholars believe this is Zophar's response to Job's declaration of innocence. However, it is mainly seen as Job's way of assuring his friends that he is well aware of how God deals with the wicked.

They have continually been saying to him, "You know that God punishes the wicked and you have been punished, therefore, you must be guilty." This argument assumes that he doesn't believe God's ways with sinners, but Job does believe that God punishes the wicked. In other words, just because he holds to his

innocence does not mean that he is not aware of how God deals with the guilty.

C. He praises God's wisdom.

Job continues his speech with a praise to godly wisdom with his point being that man cannot answer the ultimate questions for this kind of wisdom is the prerogative of God (Job 28:1-29). This may be his own conclusion to the dilemma that he is facing: "does God punish the innocent?"

His answer, however, seems to be, "Some questions only God has the wisdom to answer." His friends, who thought that they were wise, could not answer his question. Job declares that only God has true wisdom, which is the understanding of how all things work together.

¹² "But where can wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
¹³ Mankind does not know its value,
Nor is it found in the land of the living.
¹⁴ The ocean depth says, 'It is not in me';
And the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
¹⁵ Pure gold cannot be given in exchange for it,
Nor can silver be weighed as its price.
- Job 28:12-15

Wisdom about the creation is not found within the creation.

²³ "God understands its way,
And He knows its place.
²⁴ For He looks to the ends of the earth;
He sees everything under the heavens.
²⁵ When He imparted weight to the wind,
And assessed the waters by measure,
²⁶ When He made a limit for the rain,

And a course for the thunderbolt,
²⁷ Then He saw it and declared it;
He established it and also searched it out.
²⁸ And to mankind He said,
'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to turn away from evil is understanding.'
- Job 28:23-28

Only God possesses this wisdom.

What is understood here but left unsaid is that God knows the mystery of Job's life and will reveal it because man cannot. In a sense, this is Job's final argument to his friends, God will reveal the truth concerning Job's suffering and innocence one day.

D. Job's Summary – 29:1-31:40

Job has maintained his innocence and demonstrated that he is quite aware of the sufferings brought upon the guilty by God. He has praised God's unique wisdom and suggested that perhaps only God's wisdom will be able to make sense of his dilemma (an innocent man being punished by God) since neither he nor his friends have found a satisfactory answer. In this final section, Job will complete his speech with the following remarks:

1. He will review his happy past filled with great power, wealth and righteousness (Job 29:1-25). This highlights the position from which he has fallen.
2. He then describes his present wretched condition: having lost family, wealth, influence, respect and health (Job 30:1-31). This is done to indicate his utter loss of all things precious in his life.
3. He mounts one final challenge to God to accuse him of sin (Job 31:1-40). Job doesn't ask for his health or wealth back but rather he seeks to clear his name of a false charge. In this he demonstrates that being considered

righteous is more important to him than physical comfort, position or wealth. This request demonstrates the kind of man he truly is.

6. The Speeches of Elihu – 32:1-37

At the end of Job's final speech, a new character is introduced. He was the youngest in the group and at a time where there was great respect shown to the elderly, Elihu refrained from speaking until Job and his three friends had ceased to speak and not before. Though he is the last to speak, Elihu has a lot to say with his comments going on for six chapters.

His speeches, however, attack two basic errors that he feels Job has made in his arguments:

1. That God is unjust in some way.
2. That God can't or won't speak to Job.

These two ideas are contained in five separate points Elihu delivers in one single speech.

A. Elihu expresses his frustration with Job and his friends for not coming to a satisfactory conclusion concerning their disagreement (Job 32:1-22).

He is angry that the friends failed to convict Job and claims that even though he is young, he believes God will enable him to succeed where they failed; he wants to take his turn.

¹⁸ For I am full of words;

The spirit within me compels me.

¹⁹ Behold, my belly is like unvented wine;

Like new wineskins, it is about to burst.

²⁰ Let me speak so that I may get relief;

Let me open my lips and answer.

²¹ Let me be partial to no one,
Nor flatter any man.

²² For I do not know how to flatter,
Otherwise my Maker would quickly take me away.
- Job 32:18-22

B. He explains that sometimes God uses suffering to turn men from their error (Job 33:1-33).

This is a true insight and wise spiritually, but Elihu has no way of knowing this and it does not apply to Job. Not all true spiritual laws or approaches apply to everybody, every time. So this principle was true in general (God uses pain to get your attention), however, it was not true for Job and not the primary reason for his suffering.

C. He defends God's justice (Job 34:1-37).

One of Job's points to his friends was that as an innocent person, God's treatment of him was not justified. If God punishes the guilty and rewards the righteous, then why is a righteous man being made to suffer?

Job was innocent of moral failure, but he was guilty of theological ignorance. Elihu merely repeats the argument of Job's friends: God cannot be unjust, so Job must have done something wrong and is paying the price.

Elihu, however, doubles down on his argument by accusing Job of knowing his sin but denying it.

³⁶ Oh that Job were tested to the limit,
Because he answers like sinners.

³⁷ For he adds rebellion to his sin;
He claps his hands among us,

And multiplies his words against God."
- Job 34:36-37

In the end, Elihu was also guilty of ignorance and made his guilt worse by absolute confidence in his theological knowledge.

D. Elihu condemns Job's self-righteousness (Job 35:1-16).

Elihu contends that by holding onto his position (I am innocent yet punished), Job is claiming a greater righteousness than that of God. If Job is innocent and God is punishing him unjustly, then the fault lies with God and not Job, making Job's righteousness even greater than God's righteousness.

¹ Then Elihu continued and said,
² "Do you think this is in accordance with justice?
Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's'?
³ For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You?
What benefit will I have, more than if I had sinned?'
- Job 35:1-3

The point Elihu makes is that Job's complaint (whether he sins or not, he is punished and this is unfair) is an empty accusation. Elihu answers that this "straw man" argument claiming that doesn't matter what Job does, good or bad, does not even affect God who is too far above man to care. God does what He wants, regardless of what man says or does. Job's arguments, demands and self-righteous claims, therefore, are meaningless before God.

E. How God deals with man (Job 36:1-37:24).

In the end, Elihu holds out hope because he enumerates the various ways that God's providential care is always available to man.

5 Behold, God is mighty but does not reject anyone;
He is mighty in strength of understanding.
6 He does not keep the wicked alive,
But gives justice to the afflicted.
7 He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous,
But with kings on the throne
He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.
8 And if they are bound in shackles,
And are caught in the snares of misery,
9 Then He declares to them their work
And their wrongdoings, that they have been arrogant.
10 He opens their ears to instruction,
And commands that they return from injustice.
11 If they listen and serve Him,
They will end their days in prosperity,
And their years in happiness.
12 But if they do not listen, they will perish by the
sword,
And die without knowledge.
- Job 36:5-12

Elihu repeats what the others have said about God. That He is generous, just and forgiving to those who search and heed His commands, but He readily punishes those who refuse to hear and obey.

14 "Listen to this, Job;
Stand and consider the wonders of God.
15 Do you know how God establishes them,
And makes the lightning of His clouds to shine?
16 Do you know about the hovering of the clouds,
The wonders of One who is perfect in knowledge,
- Job 37:14-16

In his final words, Elihu creates a bridge for what God will say to Job about Himself and His power in the next chapter. With the

close of Elihu's speech, we come to an end of the cycle of speeches from Job's friends. The next character to take the spotlight will be the Lord Himself who will question Job's knowledge and wisdom, and in so doing will bring him into a spiritual crisis.

7.

The Spiritual Crisis

This would be a good time to review our outline in order to better understand the change that will take place in Job's experience. Our overall theme is faithful living in times of crisis and what we've witnessed so far is Job's continued faithfulness (not perfection) as he undergoes two types of crisis,

1. Faithfulness through physical crisis. Through the devil's interventions (permitted and limited by God) Job loses his wealth, family, health, wife and position within society. He claims that this treatment is unfair, he is innocent, and God is making a righteous man suffer; however, despite all of this he does not deny God or abandon his faith.
2. Next, we observe Job remaining faithful through a theological crisis that at first emanates from within but is soon made worse by outside forces in the form of negative attacks from his three friends.

Simply put, Job's inward crisis consists of the terrible fact that his theology no longer matches his reality. Briefly stated, one of Job's key theological principles, that he lived by, was the common belief that God blessed the righteous and punished sinners and

did so in real-time here on earth. This was referred to as 'The Doctrine of Retribution.' Job's theological dilemma (his crisis) was that he was aware that he was a righteous man (he knew that he was not guilty of sin and he recognized that he was tremendously blessed by God as proof thereby confirming the wisdom of what was commonly held), but God was now punishing him as if he were a sinner. The question that arose as a consequence of this situation and one that he could not answer was simply, "Did God cause the innocent to suffer?"

Added to this inner crisis were the reasoned arguments of his three friends, who at other times he would have heartily agreed with, that what had happened to him was simply the working out of what the doctrine of retribution demanded: repentance had to come before re-establishment. He was guilty of some kind of sin and the tragedies he had suffered were the proof that this was so.

All three of his friends, plus a fourth man who was present and speaks at the end, make various forms of this same argument to convince Job of his guilt. In his responses, Job holds fast to two things that he both knows and believes.

1. He is a righteous man and there is no hidden sin in his life.
2. God is present and His ways are above man's ways.

Throughout this second crisis, he continues to believe and trust God, but he also expands his mind to consider that perhaps God has other ways (other than the law of retribution) to deal with man. Perhaps the way He has dealt with Job is one of these different ways. Perhaps some innocent suffer now for a time to fulfill God's purpose. Perhaps he is a righteous man, but nevertheless may not understand all of God's ways.

This line of thinking prepares him to experience the greatest of his many crises and that is facing God in person.

JOB'S SPIRITUAL CRISIS: FACING GOD – 38:1-42:6

We've seen it many times in stories and movies where the main character bravely talks about what he'd do if the boss, chief, leader, enemy or bully were actually in the room, and he turns around and what he thought would never take place actually happens: he is face to face with his nemesis.

We've watched Job demand an audience, hearing or trial before God so he can make his case (I'm innocent, I don't deserve to suffer). In effect, challenging God to appear and defend Himself or His decisions in some way.

In chapter 38, God does appear to Job as a theophany (in this case a whirlwind/windstorm, as opposed to a burning bush for Moses or other forms for various prophets). Perhaps the whirlwind best reflected Job's life which was left in tatters, much like what you see left behind after a tornado.

In this section, it is God's turn to speak and He makes two main speeches each followed by Job's response of submission and repentance. The spiritual crisis that Job finds himself in is surviving God's presence as a sinner.

GOD'S FIRST SPEECH AND ITS EFFECTS – 38:1-40:5

1. Job's ignorance of inanimate creation (38:1-38)

God begins by pointing out the fact that as a man, Job has no power to produce or sustain any part of the creation. He points out Job's ignorance in general, not as an insult, but simply as a fact that needs to be recognized. In his desire to debate with God, Job immediately realizes that he is inadequate. God begins his first speech by challenging Job.

¹ Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind and said,

² "Who is this who darkens the divine plan
By words without knowledge?

³ Now tighten the belt on your waist like a man,
And I shall ask you, and you inform Me!
- Job 38:1-3

God informs Job that He is the creative force behind:

- A. The earth - vs. 4-7
- B. The sea - vs. 8-11
- C. Time - vs. 12-15
- D. The deep - vs. 16-18
- E. Light and darkness - vs. 19-20
- F. Snow, hail, fog - vs. 22-24
- G. Thunderstorms, dew, ice - vs. 25-30
- H. Constellations - vs. 31-33
- I. Clouds and mists - vs. 34-38

2. Job's ignorance of animate creation

God continues His first speech by pointing out Job's ignorance of the animate creation. First the inanimate, now the animate creation is listed; not a complete list but a representative list of creatures God has created. God is the creator and the protector of:

- A. The lion - vs. 39-40,
- B. The raven - vs. 41
- C. Mountain goats and hinds - vs. 39:1-4
- D. Wild donkey - vs. 5-8
- E. Wild ox - vs. 9-12
- F. Ostrich - vs. 13-18
- G. Horse - vs. 19-25
- H. Hawk and eagle - vs. 26-30

3. Job's response to God - 40:1-5

1 Then the Lord said to Job,
2 "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
Let him who rebukes God give an answer."
3 Then Job answered the Lord and said,
4 "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I say in response
to You?
I put my hand on my mouth.
5 I have spoken once, and I will not reply;
Or twice, and I will add nothing more."
- Job 40:1-5

God pauses in his description of the creation He has brought into existence from what is not seen (Hebrews 11:3) in order to question Job directly. "You who question how you've been treated, you who question God's method, intention and justice, can you answer God now that He questions you?" In other words, "If you are wise enough to contend (debate) with God about what has happened to you, surely you are wise enough to answer these basic questions that divine beings know."

Job realizes how insignificant he really is in the grand scheme of things and covers his mouth signifying that he has already said too much, however, he has not yet repented, and this leads to God's second speech.

GOD'S SECOND SPEECH AND ITS EFFECT – 40:6-42:6

God begins His second speech by challenging Job to take over the operating of the universe. "If you are ready to challenge My judgments and methods, as in your own life, then you should be able to do My job with the creation as a whole."

⁶ Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind and said,

⁷ "Now tighten the belt on your waist like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me.

⁸ Will you really nullify My judgment? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?

⁹ Or do you have an arm like God, And can you thunder with a voice like His?

¹⁰ "Adorn yourself with pride and dignity, And clothe yourself with honor and majesty.

¹¹ Let out your outbursts of anger, And look at everyone who is arrogant, and humble him.

¹² Look at everyone who is arrogant, and humble him, And trample down the wicked where they stand.

¹³ Hide them together in the dust; Imprison them in the hidden place.

¹⁴ Then I will also confess to you, That your own right hand can save you.

- Job 40:6-14

God then uses two examples from the animal kingdom to demonstrate Job's weakness and inability to manage, let alone rule the creation (Job 40:15-41:24).

- A. Job can't control the behemoth (hippopotamus) or the leviathan (crocodile), two large, powerful, and dangerous animals.
- B. If he can't dominate these creatures, what makes him think he can operate the creation consisting of both human beings as well as the animals living in it?

JOB'S CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE - 42:1-6

1 Then Job answered the Lord and said,
2 "I know that You can do all things,
And that no plan is impossible for You.
3 'Who is this who conceals advice without
knowledge?'
Therefore I have declared that which I did not
understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I do not know.
4 'Please listen, and I will speak;
I will ask You, and You instruct me.'
5 I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You;
6 Therefore I retract,
And I repent, sitting on dust and ashes."
- Job 42:1-6

Job's error was that he judged God's actions and intentions without having God's vantage point. Certainly, a mistake with God, but also a mistake when doing this to other people as well. His repentance is in three stages:

- A. He declares what is right: that God's knowledge and wisdom are complete (vs. 1-2).
- B. He acknowledges his own sin in speaking and judging things that he lacked knowledge of (God's ways and intentions).
- C. He takes back what he said, folds in the attitude that went with it and repents (will respond differently in the future).

Note that Job does this before there is any change in his situation. He repents because he is wrong, not simply in order to have his health back or his wealth restored.

EPILOGUE – 42:7-17

After God's direct speeches to Job and Job's response, two more events take place to bring this episode in Job's life to a close.

1. Job's friends are condemned

⁷ It came about after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is trustworthy, as My servant Job has. ⁸ Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so as not to do with you as your foolishness deserves, because you have not spoken of Me what is trustworthy, as My servant Job has."

⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job.

- Job 42:7-9

God corrects their false notion concerning the 'Law of Retribution' upon which they based their judgments and their condemnations of Job. Job had been partially correct in the end supposing that God may have reasons why the innocent suffer which were not known to man. The friends claimed they knew the mind and manner of God and sat in His judgment seat, and for this they were condemned.

Note that Job's forgiveness from God included his participation in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation of his friends with God as well. The teachings of Jesus (forgive our enemies, pray for

them) are seen working right here with Job and his friends (Matthew 5:44).

2. Job is restored

¹⁰ The Lord also restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord increased double all that Job had. ¹¹ Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they sympathized with him and comforted him for all the adversities that the Lord had brought on him. And each one gave him a piece of money, and each a ring of gold. ¹² The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand female donkeys. ¹³ He also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵ In all the land no women were found as beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritances among their brothers. ¹⁶ After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, an old man and full of days.
- Job 42:10-17

The epilogue surely satisfies most people's desire for a happy ending, but not everyone feels this way. Some do not like the blessings that Job receives in the end because these take away from his status as a long-suffering "hero of faith" personage.

We need to consider, however, that this was not done as a reward (since Job was, perhaps, not guilty of losing faith, but rather presuming on God and challenging His ways). In this case, no reward was actually due to him for this failure. This ending,

therefore, demonstrated God's continued attention to his servants before, during and after the crises in their lives are over.

Remember, Job is still called upon to have faith because even though he has survived the crisis of being in the presence of God, the Lord still hasn't revealed to Job the reason for all of his suffering (i.e. the devil's challenge that Job would lose his faith if he lost family and material wealth, etc.).

Despite the renewal of family, wealth, health and honor, Job must still trust God since his life is now to be based on faith and not wisdom or understanding.

8.

Life Lessons from Job

We've completed a brief thematic study of the book of Job. I say "thematic" and not "textual" because we have not had a line-by-line type review which would have taken much longer, but followed an outline based on the theme, "Faithful living in times of crisis." In this way, we have become familiar with Job's story and focused on this man's reaction to his difficult experience, or should I say, the operation of his faith through various trials.

Briefly stated, Job was a righteous man in God's eyes, and he was allowed to undergo a variety of trials initiated by Satan, but permitted and limited by God, in order to demonstrate Job's righteousness and faithfulness. Added to his financial, family and health losses were the accusations from his friends that he was responsible for bringing all of these catastrophes upon himself because of secret or unrepentant sin.

We observed Job as he faced three major crises.

1. Physical Crisis - where he lost his wealth, family and health. Job accepted that what had happened to him was permitted by God's will and submitted to it with his faith intact.

He said,
"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord."
- Job 1:21

2. Theological Crisis - his friends encouraged him to repent of his sin, which according to the thinking of the day, was the cause of his misery. Job also believed in this 'law of retribution' where one was blessed or cursed by God based on one's relative righteousness. This may have been Job's secret sin. He trusted that his righteousness was the reason for his former wealth and blessings. This, of course, caused his second and more serious crisis where his theology no longer lined up with his life experience. He managed to successfully debate his friends to a draw, but this glaring inconsistency pushed him to contemplate the possibility that God may have other reasons for using personal suffering in the life of an otherwise faithful and righteous man.

3. Spiritual Crisis - this newly developed realization led him to a final crisis which emerged as a personal encounter with God. In this challenging scenario, God questioned Job's knowledge and power compared to His own knowledge and power as a Divine Being. We saw from this encounter that Job's true sin was that in his attempts to justify himself he attempted to lower God to his own level. For example, when he questioned God's justice and demanded a trial where he would debate his case with Him, thinking that in some way this would be the same as debating his friends and refuting their arguments. After being face to face with God, however, he recognized the great gulf that separated them and repented. God then forgave and restored Job as well as his three friends.

7 LESSONS FROM JOB

I'd like to finish this part of our study of Job by drawing several lessons from his experience of suffering and enlightenment.

#1 - God is great!

Job's sin (and the lesson that he learned) was that the greatness of his God far surpassed what Job originally thought. People rarely, if ever, overestimate God or what He can do. Our problem, like Job, is thinking that God is simply a better version of ourselves. Small faith has a small God, but biblical faith believes in the God who created all, sustains all and will transform all when Jesus returns.

#2 - Our strength is in God, not self

Job's faith found a way to persevere because it was fixed on God and not upon himself. Paul the apostle had to learn this very same lesson through suffering as well (II Corinthians 12:9).

Job's faith allowed him to express his emotions to God who was strong enough to receive them. Strength in God builds a faith that can trust Him, even in the darkest moments.

⁷ The Lord is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart triumphs,
And with my song I shall thank Him.

⁸ The Lord is their strength,
And He is a refuge of salvation to His anointed.
- Psalm 28:7-8

#3 - Your faith works only when you work your faith

We note at the beginning, before he faced all of the crises, Job practiced those things that built a strong faith. Things like righteous living, faithful worship and benevolence. He was doing all of these things while he was healthy, while he was rich, while everything was going well. He was practicing acts of faith and working that faith so that when the storms came, his faith held fast.

Soldiers train while there is no war so that they are ready when the war does come. In the same way, we train and strengthen our faith while there is peace so that when the storm comes, and it will, our faith will be fully functional and strong because we have been dutifully working at it.

Remember that trials (of any kind) can cause us to lose, or worse, consciously abandon our faith.

- The sudden death of a spouse or child
- A loss of income or a job
- Forced changes in where or how we live
- A broken family
- Legal problems
- Constant immoral behavior by ourselves or others near to us

These and other trials constantly battering us will cause fatigue, discouragement, anger, resentment and despair. We let ourselves go spiritually when things like this begin to take place. We develop an attitude that says, "Well, if God doesn't care, why should I care?" This is where a well-developed faith can naturally take over and lead us through the storm to safety.

#4 - Be still!

"Be still and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10). We rarely learn anything while thrashing about spiritually. Note that Job's wife was exasperated with him. "Do something," she more or less said to him, even if it meant cursing God and ending one's life.

However, the spiritual man or woman's first response to crisis is stillness, not action.

#5 - Realize that no one really knows how it feels

Each person's suffering is unique, even if some of the details are similar to someone else's experience. One of Job's frustrations was that his friends assumed they knew exactly what he was going through, or why he was suffering and how to make things right.

When you are the one undergoing the trial, save your energy in trying to explain how it feels or what the experience is like, since aside from the comfort of venting, someone else understanding doesn't usually solve the problem. Like Job, we should pour out our hearts to God who does know and who can help relieve our suffering.

#6 - Sometimes you don't know, and you will never know why

Even though in the end God faced and spoke to Job, corrected him, forgave and restored him, He never revealed to Job the reason for his suffering! You don't always have to know the "why" in order to heal properly and to move on successfully. Job never found out why he suffered and yet he lived a happy and full life after this terrible episode in his life.

Heaven will not be for remembering or finding closure for earthly trials. Heaven will be for experiencing the awesome

presence of God without the restrictions of sin and doubt. Knowing the why will not be needed when we will be glorified and exalted to the right hand of God with Jesus Christ.

#7 - God often uses crisis to bless us spiritually

It is usually after a crisis of some kind in our lives that we gain a greater understanding of God and His nature, power and ways. After a blessing, I am reminded of the things that I already know about God (His kindness and generosity) for which I repeatedly give thanks. However, it is during a crisis or during a trial that I usually discover something that I didn't know about God.

For example, I have learned and have been amazed at how God sees to all the small details of answered prayer. My wife and I prayed for help with a recent move, but in answering that prayer I noted the assistance and the blessings that we received in every aspect of that move (selling our house, buying another house, financing, moving, setting things up). I realized that God is the God of detail.

Regardless of the trial or challenge, God rewards faithfulness with both material and spiritual rewards. Job suffered greatly, but his constant (not perfect) faith was ultimately rewarded, not with the why of his situation, but rather with a greater understanding and appreciation of the "who" God really is and what He is like.

Now in addition to the seven lessons that we learned from Job, I'd like to provide you with an "emergency kit" to help you should you ever find yourself facing either a physical, theological or spiritual crisis.



SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY KIT

In the case of:

1. Physical Crisis

- Be still
- Stop crying out
- Stop explaining

2. Theological Crisis

- Say and do what you know is true, not what you think
- Humble yourself
- Start listening

3. Spiritual Crisis

- Believe God's word only
- Remember Cardinal Léger

Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger was a high official in the Roman Catholic Church. He lived like a privileged prince. He knew the teachings, the laws and the rituals of the Catholic Church. At the height of his career, he had a spiritual crisis and a calling to service. He searched the Word for what was true, what was from Christ and absolutely blessed by God regardless of denomination or doctrinal position. He willingly chose to leave his position as a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church and traveled to Africa (Cameroon) to work and live with the lepers who inhabited a separated colony in that place. He was a top-level leader of the

Catholic Church who did what he was sure of theologically. He learned that what was absolutely true was to love and serve the sick and the poor in the name of Jesus. When in doubt, do what you are absolutely sure that God's word teaches.

SUMMARY

Just a final word about the trials and the sufferings of this world. All of these will be forgotten when Jesus comes.

17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former things will not be remembered or
come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;
For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing
And her people for gladness.

- Isaiah 65:17-18

As Isaiah says, heaven will not be for remembering, but for rejoicing in the eternal now. Our task is to stand fast in faith, not to figure everything out or measure God's justice to determine if what's happening is fair. No use looking for the return or worrying about its coming. All of this is wasted energy.

Paul tells us that we will all be changed into eternal, glorious beings, and it will be done in the twinkling of an eye (I Corinthians 15:52). From the state of death in sleep, or from a steady normal life lived faithfully, or from the middle of some crisis where all you can do is to stand fast in faith while everything is whirling about you.

From one of these states, changed too quickly to observe it or comment or feel it, transformed into a new creature with a body fit for an eternal, joyful experience in the presence of God, never to sin, remember or regret ever again.

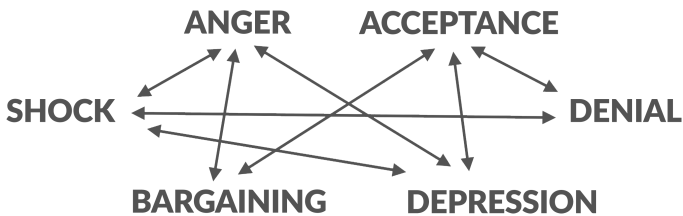
This is the true and living hope that all Christians have no matter what condition they find themselves in presently. This would have been the answer to Job's question and the end of his crisis had he known what we now know in Christ Jesus. The good news for Job is that he will be rejoicing with all the faithful for the very same reason when Jesus comes to bring us together as the celestial church, and all the trials and all the sorrows will no longer have memory. Praise God and glory to Christ through the Spirit! Amen.

9.

A Christian's Response to Death and Dying

In 1969, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote a groundbreaking book on the subject of death and dying. She noted a pattern of behavior that dying patients exhibited as they themselves approached death from terminal illness, or suffered the death of a loved one. Her five "stages" have become famous and often repeated in teaching people on how to cope with serious illness and death. In case you are not familiar with these, her five stages were:

1. Shock / Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance



She taught that people didn't necessarily go from one stage directly to the other, but rather went from one to another in a cyclical fashion. For example, the shock would be followed by anger and then depression and then a measure of acceptance after which one might revert back to bargaining with God for more time (in case of terminal illness). People went from one emotion to another for various amounts of time until, hopefully, they would remain in the acceptance mode for longer and longer periods of time. This became the primary model that explained a person's reaction to death and dying.

Kübler-Ross was not a Christian, and in later years saw herself as a sort of "medium" able to contact the spirit world. Much of her subsequent writings were not taken very seriously for this reason. I mention this about her because it confirms in my mind the fact that she did not use the Bible as a model for her death and dying theories. Had she used the Bible in developing her ideas she would have discovered a much more complete and satisfying response to death and dying by examining a believer's response to these traumatic events in life.

As a human being, a believer's response to his/her own terminal illness or the death of a loved one is the same as any other person's response. However, because of faith in God and trust in Christ, that response goes beyond the mere five steps that Kübler-Ross described.

JOB'S RESPONSE TO DEATH AND DYING

If we had to examine one person in the Bible who experienced both the threat of terminal illness and the death of loved ones simultaneously: it would be Job. We are familiar with Job's story:

- He was wealthy and well respected in his community for his goodness, wisdom and piety.
- He had a large family of sons and daughters.
- God permitted Satan to test him in order to see if he would be faithful in trial as he had been in abundance.
- Satan caused Job to lose:
 - His wealth
 - His children (all were killed at once)
 - His reputation
 - His health
 - The love and support of his wife and his family

Now, after all these things had happened to Job, we read that he did not respond like ordinary people do. He did not act like the people Kübler-Ross described in her book. He responded differently than most folks would in a similar situation. Most people after experiencing what Job experienced would go into denial and shock not wanting to accept the reality of the terrible things that had just taken place; or would try to put the events out of their minds as soon as the funeral was over telling themselves that, "Life must go on."

I'm always amazed at how quickly people begin to talk sports or light up a cigarette or gossip after a funeral service. No more than a minute passes after the final prayer at a graveside service and people are in a hurry to get back to "normal." It seems that we want to get the grieving over with as soon as possible. Many

times, those grieving want to blame God or question God concerning their tragedy. "Why now, why this, why me, why them?" they ask.

Believers, however, are not most people. Their way of dealing with death and dying is different because of the cross that is behind them, the Spirit that is within them and the future that is before them. An example of this is Job's response to the loss of his wealth, children and position, all in the same day. In the book of Job, chapter 1, we see the five steps that this believer went through in his experience of death and dying.

Step #1 - Mourning

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head
- Job 1:20a

Job immediately begins to lament the loss of his children as well as the other good things he had enjoyed for so long. Note that he accepts as true the events that have befallen him. That he tears his robe, shaves his head and falls to the ground are natural human and culturally appropriate responses to these tragedies. What Job did was the normal and healthy way to deal with tragedy: lamenting and mourning.

In some cultures, family members wear black for a year after the death of a close relative. This is a good way to separate oneself for a time of spiritual, emotional and social renewal. In effect, it says, "Don't mind me, I'm in mourning."

The worse detriment to recovery from a tragedy is to force a time limit for ourselves to "get over" our loss. If you don't weep and mourn when it happens, you'll weep and mourn later.

Many depressions and anxieties are the result of improper time and effort given over to mourning the loss of a loved one,

marriage, health or family situation. Mourning was all Job could do at this point, and he did it as a way of saving his sanity.

Step #2 - Worship

and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,
"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord."
- Job 1:20b-21

As a believer, once Job could struggle to right himself from the shock, his first thought was to go to God in worship and prayer. It is unfortunate that so many see prayer as a last hope or a grasping at straws when things go wrong. Instead of worship, tragedy leads many to:

- Drink and drugs
- Excessive eating or abuse of self in various ways
- All kinds of escapist methods to deal with the great pain associated with death and dying

Of course, the verse here in Job does not contain all that he said, doesn't repeat for us every prayer uttered; rather we are given the conclusion of his worship and talking to God. We read about the insight that he first gains as a result of that prayer.

Initial prayer and worship do not always produce such deep insights into the nature of our situation and such clarity about its meaning. However, when the thought of existing one more minute on this earth is too painful to bear - the only place we can and should go is to God in humble worship and prayer. If trouble, pain and death don't drive us to our knees, what will?

Grieving is like being strapped into a roller coaster where we feel powerless to affect anything happening to us or to our feelings. For this reason, we need to come closer to the one who does have the power to control all things - including death. This may not change the circumstances, but it does bring us peace and, at times, a certain understanding.

Job did this, and although his situation did not change, through his tears he was rewarded with a crystal-clear understanding of the true nature of his life and its ultimate meaning and substance.

Step #3 - Silence

Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.
- Job 1:22

Although later on Job did break his silence, his first and correct impulse was to hold his peace, contemplate his situation and wait upon the Lord. The Bible explains this by saying that Job didn't complain to or blame God. He didn't charge God foolishly. He didn't question God as to the timing, the fairness or the degree of his suffering.

He didn't dwell on the "why" of it all with the suggestion that there may have been a better or easier way. He did not substitute a plan of his own for what had happened that might have lessened the blow. He said nothing concerning the events and how they took place. The Bible says that in doing this, he sinned not.

Kübler-Ross described the stages of grieving as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. We've come to see these as the normal human progression and response to death and

dying. We should also note that for a weak and sinful person these may be normal responses, however,

- To lash out at God in anger
- To question His actions
- To try and change His decision or feel sorry for ourselves

All of these are fleshly, worldly responses born out of our sinful and weak natures. The only spiritual reaction is the final stage: the one of acceptance.

Compare these, however, with Job's initial response to death and dying:

1. **He mourned and lamented his loss.** We see that within his very first reaction is included most of Kübler-Ross' normal human responses of denial, anger and depression.
2. **He drew near to God in prayer and worship.** He didn't bargain with God, he bowed down before God in humility and trust.
3. **He remained silent.** During this time, he contemplated his situation and searched for meaning.

Eventually, he developed a life-threatening illness, lost the support of his wife and was condemned by his friends as a sinner who had brought all this misery upon himself. These additional burdens led Job to the last two steps in the believer's journey through the experience of grief and dying.

Step #4 - Enlightenment

For nearly 40 chapters in an on-going dialogue with his friends, we watch Job as he comes to grips with not simply the reality and

meaning of his suffering, but the truth that stands behind not only his suffering but the suffering of all men. Job learns that his experience is worth it if it reveals more perfectly the God, he believes in. In other words, if your suffering serves to give you a glimpse of God Almighty, then it is a small matter, and any complaining is foolish and sinful in comparison to what has been discovered along with what has been given to you.

Enlightenment, especially that enlightenment that enables us to see God more clearly is of more value than what we have lost - whatever that is, however we suffer.

Job learned that life, as well as death, are in God's hands and the painful experience of these is justified if it leads us face to face with God, even if it's only for a moment. That one moment is worth all the suffering. The non-believer's best hope is to arrive at that point where he accepts reality and learns to cope with it. That reality being that people suffer and die and there is nothing they can do about it except carry on as best they can - this is as good as it gets!

Suffering and death for believers, however, bring them face to face with the ultimate reality that there is a living God who gives life and controls death by His power. The ultimate end, therefore, is that death and dying can serve to strengthen faith and hope, and consequently loosen the grip of fear and sorrow that these experiences have on our hearts. Only an enlightened person like Paul the Apostle could write these words when facing death,

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain
- Philippians 1:21

Paul had seen beyond suffering and death, and had a glimpse of God's reality, and this vision was worth all the suffering he had to endure.

Step #5 - Restoration

In the last chapter, we learn that God heals Job and restores his family, wealth and position. This didn't change the fact that Job had suffered and lost children and prestige; his suffering was real. You see, God doesn't give us our **old** lives back; He gives us a new life. Here on earth, it is a life we can live and live with. Sometimes it is very different. Sometimes it is harder. But for believers, it is always a life where God is more prominent than before. In the end, He is the reward for persevering.

You may not have a parent, child, spouse, loved one or health anymore, but you now have more of Him to make up for it. And in the next world, the great promise for those who have experienced the enlightenment of suffering is that you will have all of Him all of the time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think back over the loss of a loved one and describe the most difficult stage of the normal grieving process for you (Shock / Denial / Anger / Bargaining / Depression / Acceptance).
 - Why do you think this was so?
2. Why do you think people usually try to avoid grieving?
3. What is your typical reaction to bad news, and why do you automatically react like this?
4. How can a person cultivate a Job-like personality?
5. If your best friend committed suicide tomorrow, what would you say to their spouse?

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