I was almost asleep when I was attacked. It was dark under the stars, with only a piece of the moon, and it was gliding slowly down to the horizon. The man's shadow fell over me, and my stiff arm shot out, grasping for him. My fingers found his ankle, and I yanked. A moment later there was dust in my eyes, and we were tumbling. He was very strong, but I held on. My fingers and arms burned in the wild thrashing as he tried to get away.

Our bodies were hot and sweaty and ground the rocks beneath us into fine sand, and on and on, out of breath in the black night, the man fought to get away.
I held his leg as he pummeled me. Finally he gasped out, “Let me go!” And between breaths I shook my head.

I have been a wrestler as long as I can remember. My mother told me I came out wrestling, which is why she gave me my name. Of course, having a twin brother gave me a natural sparring partner, but it always seemed like I was getting into some trouble, and it was all I could do to get free again. But this man was different than the others. He was stronger, swifter, and could not be tamed, so I just held on. “Let me go,” he said again, and then I thought I knew who he was. My arms were burning with fire and my fingers were brittle, but I blurted out, “I will not let you go until you bless me.” That seemed to only make him angrier at first. I held on for dear life. I was sure he would have me any second. Whether it was minutes or hours later, I don’t recall, but he suddenly raised himself up, and I saw his mighty hand swing down and his fist rushing into my hip. The pain ricocheted through my body, and my limbs went limp, but as the world began to rush away and the stars grew fuzzy, I heard him say, “You shall be called Israel because you have wrestled with God and man and prevailed.” And that’s when I knew for sure that I had just seen God face to face.

This is, of course, a retelling of the story of Jacob wrestling the angel of the Lord—a striking instance of determined and resolute faith. As we consider Job, we will witness another hero of faith who wrestles with God and man and prevails.

**Author and Context**

We do not know who wrote the book of Job, but there have been many guesses. The descriptions of Job and his estate are reminiscent of the patriarchs (many animals and servants, like Abraham), and Job lives to be 140 years old, which was more common during that period as well. This would put Job somewhere in the first half of the second millennium before Christ, probably between 1800–1500 B.C. The dialogues that fill the middle chapters of the book are all highly poetic and match many of the themes and literary features found in the wisdom literature (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.). Some of the themes of suffering and justice also remind us of the prophets who ministered at the end of the kingdom period and at the point of Israel’s exile. It is possible that Job is the “Jobab” referred to as one of the kings of Edom, as the Septuagint suggests (Gen. 36:33–34).  

And it is certain that Job was a great king or chieftain (1:3). But whoever Job was and however God sovereignly orchestrated the composition of Job, it comes to us in the context of the wisdom literature, and given the hand that Solomon had in so much of the wisdom literature, it may be that he played an important part in authoring this story as well.

**Significance**

One biblical literary scholar says that Job is “arguably the greatest achievement of all biblical poetry.” Thus, from a purely literary standpoint, Job is very significant. But there are many different angles of study that make Job an intriguing part of Scripture. Job is perhaps most famous for his suffering, and in particular, from the vantage of the reader, the revelation that God is intimately involved in suggesting and allowing the suffering of Job. This makes the book of Job significant for theological and philosophical questions of **theodicy**, which seeks to justify the goodness of God in the face of evil. But the themes of justice, suffering, and mercy are wound through nearly every page of Scripture. As we look at Job more closely, the parallels between Job and many other biblical characters come into focus. We see figures like Adam and Jacob and ultimately the Lord Jesus emerging from the narrative of Job. Ezekiel is the only Old Testament book that refers to Job, and he lists him with Noah and Daniel as perhaps the most righteous men to that point in history (Ezek. 14:14, 20). James gives us an inspired commentary on Job, pointing in particular to Job’s perseverance and the end of the story as proof of the Lord’s compassion and mercy (James 5:11). James seems to imply that Job is an example of a prophet who spoke in the name of the Lord and endured suffering with patience (cf. James 5:10).

**Main Characters**

It is worth the effort to learn the main characters of Job at the outset, particularly his three friends. Job is, of course, the main character of the story, along with God Himself. Job is described as being greater than all of the “sons of the east” (1:3), which suggests that he was a Gentile, and given his wealth and greatness, he was clearly a great king (1:3, cf. 19:9, 29:25). Job’s wife and children are also minor but important characters. The Accuser, literally “The Satan,” is apparently an evil angelic being, probably Satan himself, who appears in the assembly of the sons of God in the opening chapter and is granted permission to test the faith of Job through inflicting him with hardship and suffering. Throughout this essay, God will be referred to as Yahweh because that is God’s name in Hebrew, and one that is used in the story. Normally, English translations indicate this proper name of God by typing **LORD** in all capital letters. Similarly, Satan will be referred to as “the Accuser,” since that designation was important to the author and will also prove to be significant as we consider the main themes of the book. The three friends approach Job at the end of chapter two: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar...
the Naamathite. Elihu is a latecomer to the debate. He is a young man and apparently has been listening to the discussion. Minor but significant characters also include Job’s three daughters, mentioned by name at the end of the story: Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch—the most beautiful women in all the land.

Summary and Setting

The book of Job opens describing Job, his family, and the setting of the story. A great reversal takes place in the first two chapters, which sets the stage for the substance of the narrative. The great and blameless Job loses all of his livestock, his servants, and his ten children by the hand of the Accuser, who has been granted permission by Yahweh to strike him. Finally, Yahweh allows the Accuser to afflict Job’s body short of taking his life, and in these circumstances, mourning in dust and ashes, Job is joined by three friends with whom he converses and argues for most of the rest of the story. Elihu finally speaks up at the end. Yahweh ultimately answers out of the whirlwind with a couple of his own speeches. Job is justified by Yahweh in the final chapter, being declared right in what he has spoken. Job intercedes for his friends, and Yahweh restores the fortunes of Job. His relatives bring gifts of silver and gold, his livestock is restored twofold, and he is granted the same number of children again, with the beauty of his daughters particularly highlighted.

Worldview

The book of Job is a wrestling match. The famous story opens with Job, the blameless and upright king of the east, who is brought low through a series of horrific events that the reader understands to have been brought through the Accuser by the permission of Yahweh. While Job initially blesses the Lord and accepts the evil events from his hand, the majority of the book is Job’s decision not to accept the evil events as the last word from the Lord.

Our consideration of Job should start with the structure of the book. While the opening (prologue) and the closing (epilogue) are straightforward narratives, the bulk of the book of Job is a poetic dialogue, a series of speeches, argumentation, and debate, culminating in the answer of Yahweh from the whirlwind (38:1).
Frequently, readers find the dialogues tedious and would rather skip to the end. The response of God to Job is itself a wonderful and glorious tour of the glories of creation, closing with the exotic and terrifying leviathan, who is one of God’s pets. But if we skip to the end, not only are we disregarding a sizeable portion of God-breathed Scripture, but we will also fail to really understand the conclusion. Furthermore, the writer is also taking us on a journey with Job, and our experience of reading the story of Job is meant to have a certain effect on us.

There are a number of problems that we face in the book of Job. And, as with any good story, the point of the work is to solve those problems and bring resolution by the end. First, we face some of the fundamental questions of life: How and why does God allow evil? How can God remain good and blameless if He allows evil to happen to good people? These are questions that generally go under the term theodicy, meaning the defense of the goodness of God in the face of sin and death and evil.

Second, we face the problem of realizing that we have a book that gives significant airplay to people who are wrong. If we add up the verses and figure out how much Job’s three friends say, we realize that most of the book is arguing something God ultimately says is “not right” (42:7). Why has God allowed a book into the Bible that is mostly full of bad reasoning and seriously flawed theology? Furthermore, as we read about the three friends of Job, we see things that could just as easily be true and right. Much of what they say sounds like solid biblical wisdom: “He saves the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hand” (5:15) and “Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For he bruises, but he binds up; he wounds, but his hands make whole” (5:17–28).

Who could argue with these words of Eliphaz? In fact, Scripture says much the same thing in other places (e.g. Ps. 72:4,13; Prov. 3:11; Heb. 12:5). So we have not only a sizeable chunk of Scripture that is wrong, but also a sizeable chunk of Scripture that in other contexts would be right.

A third problem consists in the structure of the story itself. How do the prologue and epilogue relate to the main part of the book? And while there are other questions to be asked, one important one is, what about Job? Is Job right or wrong?

**Job as Adam and Jacob**

The book of Job opens with a number of themes that remind us of the beginning of Genesis. Job is described as “blameless,” and it could just as easily be translated “perfect.” Thus, Job is a “perfect man,” surrounded with a world of wonderful blessings as Adam was. Of course the characters are also reminiscent: Yahweh, Satan (the Accuser), a perfect man, and even an Eve (Job’s wife, who
famously counsels Job to “curse God and die” in 2:9). Job explicitly contrasts himself with Adam in one place by insisting that he has not covered his sin like Adam (31:33). Last, Job sits in the ashes after being struck with boils (2:8), and when his three friends arrive, they join him in mourning and sprinkle dust on their own heads (2:12). It was from the dust that man was formed (Gen. 2:7), and the curse pronounced for Adam’s sin is that he will return to dust in death (Gen. 3:19).

The narrator opens the story emphasizing that Job was “blameless and upright” (1:1), as Yahweh reiterates this to the Accuser twice (1:8; 2:3). Jacob is also identified as “perfect” (Gen. 25:27), and like Job, Jacob finds himself persecuted by those closest to him (his brother, his father-in-law); the story of his life is one of struggle and wrestling. Eventually he finds himself wrestling with God Himself (Gen. 32:24–30). God tells Jacob that his struggles have all fundamentally been with Him (Gen. 32:28). Jacob has learned wisdom through these struggles; his wrestling has made him like a king, which is why God gives him the new name Israel, which means “prince of God.” Jacob is a new Adam who walks and talks with God and eventually he will emerge as a prophet. This is a helpful way of looking at the entire story of Job, especially when we recognize that the bulk of Job is like a courtroom scene. Job and company may have actually been sitting outside in an ash heap, but they are arguing, reasoning, and deliberating as though they are in court. Of course, the book opens with two scenes where the “sons of God” stand before Yahweh, and the Accuser comes in among them. This famous scene reveals Yahweh suggesting that the Accuser consider Job as a worthy challenge. And after Job’s family, possessions, and finally Job’s body are struck by the Accuser, it is Job’s wife who calls Job to action.

On the surface her suggestion seems outright blasphemous: “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” The problem is that it is not clear what role she or this suggestion play in the overall story if she is merely a bitter old woman telling her husband to commit suicide or at least curse God until he strikes him dead. Job’s initial response is to say that she is being foolish and merely a bitter old woman telling her husband to commit suicide or at least curse God until he strikes him dead. Job’s initial response is to say that she is being foolish and insists that they ought to receive both good and evil from the hand of God (2:10). Yet what follows in the rest of the book is precisely not that. Job most certainly does not take what God has given as just and fair. What follows, after a seven-day interlude (2:13), is a plea that comes strikingly close to what his wife actually suggested. While he does not directly curse God, he begins cursing the day of his birth and the night he was conceived, wishing that time could go backward so that he might go back into darkness (see especially 3:8). Ultimately Job says he longs to be dead, that request increasingly bound up with charges that God has not been just.

**The Argument**

In order to follow the trajectory of the story, we need to consider the development of Job’s argument. Job’s initial plea is to die. He curses the day of his birth and wonders why he must go on in misery when he longs for...
LEVIATHAN

O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—this great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there (Psalm 104:24–26).

The word Leviathan appears in five places in the Bible, with the Book of Job, chapter 41, being dedicated to describing Leviathan in detail.

In the Jewish tradition the Leviathan was created on the fifth day, both male and female, but then God killed the female leviathan to keep the species from reproducing and so destroy the world. William Blake wrote of the Leviathan: “[H]is forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tyger's forehead: soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam tinging the black deep with beams of blood . . .” But in Job, the Leviathan appears next to very ordinary creatures—like goats. So if the Leviathan was a real beast, what might it be? Some propose that it was a crocodile or a Sarcosuchus, others that it was a whale. It has also been suggested that it was a Kronosaurus—which, based on its long teeth and great length, would certainly inspire a person to associate it with Job's aquatic monster.

In the drawing below from 1515, painter and printmaker Hans Baldung (c. 1480–1545), a student of Albrecht Dürer’s, created the image of a terrible creature that, if not the beast from chapter 41, certainly appears to be able to carry off the title of “Leviathan.”

death (3:20–21). When confronted by Eliphaz, who suggests that Job's confidence in his own integrity has been his downfall (4:6), Job responds by insisting that he is innocent, and once again pleads for death. This time he specifically pleads with God to “crush” him, to “loose his hand and cut” him off (6:8–9). And Eliphaz’s words only make him want to die more (7:13–14).

But after Bildad tries to instruct Job regarding God’s dealings with the wicked, Job begins to explain that not only does he want to die because he is suffering, but his central complaint is that he cannot contend with God (9:3). This is first of all because God is not easily accessible (9:11), and furthermore, Job asks, “How can I answer Him and choose my words to reason with Him?” It is not only unlikely that he will get a hearing with God, but what would that even look like? Even if he could get a hearing and he was completely right, Job recognizes that he would still have to beg for mercy (9:15). And even if he did call upon God and He answered him, Job says that he would not even believe it was happening (9:16). How can he get a day in court with God (9:19)?
His complaint is not merely with his circumstances but with the impossibility of taking God to court. God is not a man that Job can take to court, and he sees no one who could act as a mediator between them (9:32–33). Who would act as judge between God and Job? But as Job responds to the continued criticisms of his friends, the repeated interest of Job is to speak with God and receive an answer (12:4; 13:3), and his words grow increasingly similar to the words of his wife: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him” (13:15).

But why all the desire for death amidst the desire to try his case? If he really wants to argue his case, why does he keep saying he wants to die? The answer begins to emerge in chapter 14 when he refers to the hope of a tree. Job says that a tree that is cut down may die in the ground, but with a little water it will spring up out of the ground again (14:7–9). Similarly, a man who dies and is buried in the ground, even a barren and dry ground, where he sleeps until the heavens are no more, will eventually be changed, and when God calls, Job knows that He will answer (14:10–15). Job's plea is to die, but to die in order that he might finally have the opportunity to stand before God—that his righteous blood may cry out for justice (16:18). What he wants is to plead with God like a man pleads with his friend (16:21).

The full force of Job's argument finally bursts forth in one of the most famous passages of Job, when he proclaims, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth. And after my skin is destroyed, my glory will be my flesh. If by my side I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another . . . there is a judgment” (19:25–29). Job knows that there will be a final judgment, and if he cannot get his case tried in the present life, he is utterly convinced that at the resurrection he will see God face to face and finally be granted the opportunity to ask his questions and receive an answer. Again, he reiterates to his friends that what he wants is to be able to stand before God's judgment seat, to present his case before God (23:4ff).

Ultimately what Job wants is understanding; he wants to find out why all this evil and calamity has befallen him. He knows that the search for wisdom is a worthy cause, and one which God has called man to (28:1–11). It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but it is the glory of kings to search out a matter (Prov. 25:2). Job is in the process of searching for wisdom, but he has come to the conclusion that it is not “found in the land of the living” (28:13) and “is hidden from the eyes of all the living . . . ” (28:21). Only God has wisdom, only he has searched it out (28:27). This is why Job wants to die—so he can come face to face with God, ask his questions and receive answers, and finally understand and know wisdom. He wants to go before the Almighty and receive an answer; he wants to approach Him like a prince (31:35–37).

This leads us to remember the story of Jacob. His struggles and wrestling ultimately culminate in wrestling with God Himself face to face. That, of course, is fundamentally what Job is pleading for. But what Job may not have realized during the course of the dialogues, readers can begin to recognize for themselves. While God remains silent until the end of the story, God is preparing Job for the very thing he is asking for. Job wants an audience with God so as to argue his case before Him, but it is the very act of arguing with his three friends that is preparing him to do that.

There are several indicators that this is the case. We see this in the fact that Job finally does speak with God when He speaks to him “out of the whirlwind” (38:1; 40:6). Job is finally granted access to Yahweh, and it is a conversation that takes place in the wind of Yahweh's presence. And allusions to that imagery have appeared throughout the rest of the book. Frequently, the words of the rhetorical combatants are referred to as “wind” (6:26; 8:2; 15:2; 16:3), which is the word ruach—the same word for “breath” or “spirit.” That word is often used throughout the book, frequently to refer to the life-breath of man and the shortness of life, which is quickly blown away with the “wind” (21:18, 27:21). Of course, one of the disasters that befell Job was the great ruach—wind that struck the house his children were feasting in, killing them (1:19).

Similarly, other terms are also employed, such as the “east wind” referring to the words of Job's accusers (15:2), and the wicked are described as being stolen away in the “storm” (21:20). One way of looking at the story of Job is to picture him being drawn into the whirlwind. The narrative, the argument, and the dialogue itself is Job's transition into the whirlwind presence of Yahweh.

## Taming the Accuser

Another way to look at the progression of Job is to follow the accusations. The prologue introduces the Accuser in the presence of Yahweh being granted permission to try Job's integrity, but after the Accuser leaves the stage, the accusations do not end. Job says that his counselors have turned against him (19:19), likely referring in the first instance to his three friends. They are those whom he loved who have turned against him. Job refers to the “schemes” of his friends, who seek to wrong him (21:27). In fact, Job says that they have reproached him “ten times” (19:3).

In this sense the story can be seen as a continuation of the trial that began with the Accuser in the prologue;
only after the Accuser has left the stage, three mini-accusers take his place. Far from being “friends,” Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are “little satans.” This is suggested by the first speech of Eliphaz, who says that he had some sort of dream, and words were whispered to him and a spirit passed before his face and began to speak, asking if a “mortal can be more righteous than God?” (4:12–21) This “satan” is like the serpent of Genesis 3 who asks questions to tempt his listeners. Thus, the Accuser commissions the three men to take over for him. Job is an Adam being tempted by three crafty serpents.

It is also important to note that there is political force behind the accusations brought by the three friends. Job is a king or chieftain, meaning his disaster is not just a personal misfortune. All the people are involved, and during any economic disaster it is not long before a scapegoat must be found. This is what happened with Oedipus—when Thebes was wracked with the plague, the blame fell upon the king. Oedipus, like many good pagans, was willing to take one for the team. He did not defend himself, but if he had defended himself, the reaction he would have gotten would have been very similar to the reaction Job got. Job simply was not playing his appointed role—he needed to accept his guilt and get out of the way, as every good scapegoat knows how to do. The book of Job is striking—in all of ancient literature, there is nothing like this straight-up reply to the voices of the accusers.

Jeffrey Meyers points out that elsewhere in biblical literature, forces of evil are closely associated with the sea serpent—a dragon—that is precisely what Leviathan is (cf. Ps. 74:12–14; Isa. 51:9, Ezek. 29:3, 32:2). Of course the devil is seen in the form of a serpent in Genesis 3, and by the end of the Bible, John puts it all together: “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the land, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:9). This helps make sense of Yahweh’s answer to Job.

It is, of course, a display of His power and sovereignty, but more than that, it is a display of all the forces of nature and even evil as Yahweh’s pet. Yahweh can tame Leviathan; Yahweh plays with the “king over all the children of pride” (41:34). Ultimately, the theodicy of Job is trust in the wisdom of the God who plays with evil and tames it. But this also suggests that Job’s own struggle—wrestling with his accusers—has been the beginning of learning the same wisdom that God already possesses. Yahweh has given Job the opportunity to wrestle with the Accuser, and the conclusion is that Yahweh is pleased with Job’s progress.

Notice how Yahweh calls Job “my servant” three times in 42:8. This is virtually a title that God had suggested to the Accuser in the beginning and that has now been confirmed (1:8; 2:3). Part of Eliphaz’s initial accusation was that if God does not put trust in his own “servants” and even charges His angels with error, how can Job insist that he is right (4:18)? Part of Yahweh’s answer, then, is that He does put His trust in Job, His “servant.” This comparison with the angels is further evidence that Job has been ushered into the divine assembly. Job is now welcome when the sons of God come to present themselves before Yahweh. Job is God’s son, in whom He is well pleased.

**Job the Prophet**

Job began as a blameless and righteous priest, but the story of Job is his king-like struggle, wrestling through difficulties, judging rightly, and emerging into the third stage of biblical maturity and glory as a prophet. In this way, the story of Job can be read as his transition from the first, through the second to the third stage of glory-maturity. In simple terms this is seen in comparing the prologue and epilogue. At the beginning, Job offers sacrifices for his children who may have sinned (priest: 1:5), and in the end, Job offers sacrifices for his three foolish accusers who have spoken wrongly concerning God, who authorizes Job to pray for them and promises that He will hear him (prophet: 42:8). Job has graduated from the glory of a priest, through the glory of a king, to the glory of a prophet. What Job has wanted all along—the ability to speak to God face to face, as a man to his friend—has been granted! Job has been granted access to the deliberations of Yahweh, and when Job intercedes, he will be heard. Thus, the book closes not with an Accuser in the council of Yahweh, but an Advocate. Job has become a prophet, a member of Yahweh’s deliberating council.

This helps explain why the whole story is told and structured the way it is. Why is Job primarily a series of dialogues, arguments, accusations, and deliberations? Because Job must learn to speak in the assembly of the sons of God. He must patiently endure the testing of God, the accusations of his companions, and emerge clinging to his integrity in faith. When Job recognizes that he is but “dust and ashes” (30:19; 42:6), we are once again reminded of Abraham, who interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, recognizing that he was but “dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27): Job must learn to argue his case, cling to righteousness, and “gird himself like a man.” When Job speaks to Yahweh like a prophet, he is granted a prophet’s mantle.

Of course, we cannot ignore the fact that in all this, Job is a picture of Jesus. If Job is faithful in the midst of suffering, Jesus is a far greater example. Just as blameless and righteous Job entrusted himself to God, Christ even more so endured suffering and death as the spotless Lamb of God for the joy set before Him. As Job saw death and resurrection as the only way to put everything right, so
imagine the possibility of God bringing some sort of calamity into our lives, it ought to make us want to wrestle with evil, to strive with God for justice and truth. It ought to drive us to prayer. In other words, not only is this story about Job being granted a prophet's mantle, but as we read it, we are also being asked if we are prepared to take up a prophet's mantle. We, too, have been granted access to the heavenly councils, and we, too, are invited to speak. And God promises to hear us.

—Toby J. Sumpter

For Further Reading


5. Who is the Accuser? Why is that significant?
The Accuser is Satan, the great deceiving serpent and dragon of old. It’s significant because it shows us that Job faces something similar to what Adam faced in the garden, and it points forward to Christ, who also withstood the temptations and accusations of the devil in His ministry.

6. How is Job like Jesus?
Jesus was truly perfect and sinless, and He learned obedience through His sufferings. Jesus is our great prophet, priest, and king. Jesus was also tempted by the Accuser and did not succumb to temptation. Furthermore, Jesus was deserted by His friends and had many accusers who put Him to death. Like Job, Jesus was raised up from the dust of the earth and vindicated in His resurrection. God declared Jesus right and His accusers wrong in His resurrection. Jesus is now our great high priest and prophet, who intercedes for us.

Reading Assignment:
Job 1–14

Session II: Discussion
Job 1–14

A Question to Consider
What is justice?
Justice is usually synonymous with righteousness—that is, being right and fair. It is equity before the law. Impartial judges are required to read the law honestly and decide disputes. However, in the Bible, the judges in the book of Judges are much more than that. Judges like Samson, Gideon, and Deborah actually delivered Israel. God has done something similar for us in Jesus, through whom we receive mercy as our justice. That is fundamentally what justification is: being declared right for the sake of Jesus even when we don’t deserve it. Justification also includes the gift of the Spirit, who frees us from the power of reigning sin.

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis
1. What proof is given for Job’s righteousness in the prologue of Job? (1:5)
He offers sacrifice for his children who may have sinned.
2. What is Eliphaz’s first speech about (Job 4–5)? Eliphaz says that Job clings too much to his own integrity. He has seen a vision that has put him in mind of the fact that a man cannot be more pure or righteous than his Maker. He says that hard things happen sometimes, and Job should throw himself at the mercy of God, who does many wonderful things. Eliphaz says that Job should rejoice in his suffering because it is very likely that God is chastening Job for sin.

3. What is Bildad’s first speech about (Job 8)? Bildad seems to build on Eliphaz’s first speech. He is very sure that if Job’s children have died, it is because they sinned. And since Job is having such a rough go of it, it is clear that Job has sinned also. God will not cast away the blameless, Bildad reasons, and therefore the implication is Job is not blameless (contra Yahweh).

4. What is Zophar’s first speech about (Job 11)? Zophar says that Job’s words make a mockery of God. Job should be more humble and recognize that he cannot understand the ways of God. Zophar likewise tells Job to repent of his sin, and then God will have mercy.

5. What is Job’s answer to Zophar’s first speech (Job 12–14)? Job answers sarcastically that surely his friends are full of wisdom. But he affirms the great wisdom of God, who does all things, and Job insists that he is at least equal in wisdom to his peers. His request is merely the opportunity to reason with God (13:3). His prayer to God is that He would hear his prayers and forgive his sins. Job implies that his only hope is like a tree that has been cut down. He hopes to somehow come back out of the grave, to be called by God, and to answer (14:7–15).

Cultural Analysis
1. What does our culture consider to be just and unjust? Our culture generally insists upon things being fair. Equality and equal opportunity are important words in our society.

2. What does our culture think about suffering? Generally there is no place for seeing suffering as a blessing or discipline for life. It is almost always seen as unjust, unfair, and something to be avoided at all costs.

Biblical Analysis
1. Recall for a moment (or quickly re-read) some of the famous judges in the book of Judges (e.g., Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Samson). How do these judges “judge” Israel? Their “judging” is primarily pictured in terms of delivering Israel, setting them free from their enemies.

2. Read Leviticus 1. Job is described several times as “blameless,” and the Hebrew word is tam. Through-
out Leviticus, God requires that sacrifices be “without blemish,” (tameem—a related word). What implications might that description have for Job given what follows?

It suggests that Job is to be seen as “without blemish” and therefore qualified to be a sacrifice. If Job is a great king of the East, perhaps his sufferings and death-like experiences should be seen as sacrificial. In other words, perhaps the “death” of Job and his recovery and restoration (like a resurrection) is for the blessing and welfare of his people. This would be another way in which Job pictures Jesus, who was the “spotless Lamb” and our King who died and rose again for our salvation.

**Summa**

Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

How might justice and sacrifice be tied together in the story of Job? How might we apply this in our lives?

If justice is not merely being “fair” but also related to delivering the oppressed and fighting for the weak and defenseless, then sacrifice and suffering can be the noble way stronger individuals seek to bring justice to the weak. Jesus is the chief example of this when He went to the cross to win justice for us. His sacrifice and suffering were the means to that end. The cross secured our salvation and forgiveness and freedom. By His wounds we are healed. If our Savior has delivered us through His intervention, His call to take up our own cross daily is a call to imitate his love and service for others. Everything from doing our chores, loving our siblings, helping a neighbor, or taking time to care for someone in need is part of imitating Christ. Jesus came for the sick, and sometimes we ought to imitate that more literally. Visiting the elderly in a nursing home, befriending someone with disabilities, or merely showing kindness to someone who suffers from a particular illness are ways we imitate Christ. Our giving up of time and energy to bless these needy people are ways we take up our cross and follow Jesus. These are small ways we can suffer with those who suffer and simultaneously grant relief, minister grace, and even in small ways point to the Resurrection, when all things will be judged and put right.

**Reading Assignment:**

Job 15–27
The collection of small intaglio etchings in this chapter are by artist William Blake. The series follows the story of Job but also adds elements from Blake’s own imagination.
SESSION III: Recitation
Job 15–27

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions for factual recall:

1. How many speeches do each of Job’s three friends have in total (Job 3–27)?

There are almost exactly three speeches each, although it is not clear if 27:13–23 is Zophar’s third speech or not. So there are eight or nine depending on how you count.

2. Eliphaz asks Job if he is the “first man” to be born and whether he has heard the counsel of God (15:7,8). If he is talking about Adam, how would Adam have “heard the counsel of God”?

Adam walked with God in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam instructions regarding which trees to eat of, and Adam was given the task to name the animals. God’s instructions and descriptions imply a very close relationship with God.

3. In chapter 15, what does Eliphaz say will consume the “tents of bribery”? What could he be alluding to in the events of Job?

Eliphaz says that fire will consume the tents of bribery (15:34). It was the “fire of God” that consumed Job’s flocks in 1:16. Perhaps Eliphaz is suggesting that the fire fell as a result of bribery.

4. What does Job call Eliphaz’s words in chapter 16?

He calls them “words of wind” (16:3).

5. What does Job request of the earth in chapter 16?

What does this mean?

Job asks the earth not to cover his blood. This means he wants his blood to be like Abel’s, which “cried out to God from the ground.”

6. According to Bildad in chapter 18, what is scattered on the dwelling of the wicked? What other biblical story does this remind us of?

Bildad says that “brimstone” is scattered on the dwelling of the wicked. This reminds us of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19).

7. How many times does Job say his persecutors have reproached him (Job 19)? Go back and count the speeches to this point. How do you think Job arrives at this number? What does it mean?

Job says that they have reproached him “ten times.” Job seems to be counting both his own speeches as well as his companions. It suggests that Job considers the reproach of his friends twofold: they are ignoring his words and have the audacity to answer with more folly.

8. What biblical doctrine does Job refer to in 19:26?

Job refers to the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

9. How does Job describe the thoughts of his friends in chapter 21?

“Curse God and die!” Job is counselled by his wife and his friends in this piece by William Blake.
Job says that they are “schemes” to wrong him (21:27).

10. In chapter 23, how does Job describe how he will emerge from the testing of God? 
Job says that he will “come forth as gold” (23:10).

11. What has God pierced with his hand according to Job in chapter 26? 
According to Job, God’s hand pierced “the fleeing serpent” (26:13).

Our next session will be a student-led discussion. As you are reading the following assignment, you should write down at least three questions from the text dealing with the issue listed below. These questions will be turned in to the teacher and will be used in classroom discussion. To get full credit for these Text Analysis questions you must create a question that is connected to the reading and to the issue that is the focus of our discussion; you must also answer the question correctly (and include a page or line reference at the end); and your question must be one that invites discussion and debate (“why” questions are excellent; questions that can be answered by “yes” or “no” are to be avoided).

You should also provide two Cultural Analysis and two Biblical Analysis questions. Cultural Analysis questions ask how our culture views the issue that we are discussing. Biblical Analysis questions ask what the Bible says concerning this issue. Again, to get full credit for each question, you must create questions connected to the issue we are studying, answer each question correctly and create questions that encourage and invite discussion and exploration. For an example of each type of question and answer refer to the examples provided in the next session.

If you are working alone, after creating your questions and answers, have your parent or tutor check over them. Also, if possible, share them with your family at the dinner table, helping them to understand why the issue is important, how the issue arises in your reading, how its importance is still evident in our culture, and how understanding this issue might change the way you and your family should think and live.

Issue
Friends and Envy

Reading Assignment: 
Job 28–37

Session IV: Discussion
Job 28–37

A Question to Consider

What are some ways that jealousy and envy can effect friendships? 
Jealousy and envy show up sometimes when someone new comes into the picture. Sometimes this jealousy or envy is right (as when a married spouse has a godly jealousy for his/her spouse), but sometimes it is not right, as when friends make new friends.

Students should read and consider the example questions below that are connected to the Question to Consider above. Last session’s assignment was to prepare three questions and answers for the Text Analysis section and two additional questions and answers for both the Cultural and Biblical Analysis sections below.

Text Analysis

Example: What kind of “friends” are Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar? What about Elihu?

Answer: They really are not friends. If they were at one time, their words to Job are not helpful, and they seem to grow more and more sharp. Elihu seems more reasonable, but he is still critical. God does not say he was “wrong” in the epilogue, so the reader is left to decide whether Elihu was right or not.

Cultural Analysis

Example: We find that Job’s “friends” are really more like little satans, mini-accusers. Frequently, envy is a root cause of mistreatment. And we can easily imagine a man of such great wealth and wisdom being envied. What does our culture think about envy and lust? What does our culture think about the Tenth Commandment?

Answer: Generally our culture says it is fine to do anything that does not directly harm others. So sins of the heart and mind are considered little or not worth worrying about. If envy and lust and covetousness stays in your own mind and heart, it’s not thought by our culture to really be a problem.

Biblical Analysis

Example: How does Jesus characterize sins of the heart (Matt. 5:28)?

Answer: Jesus says that sins of the heart cannot be consid-
The Book of Job

Session V: Writing
Job 38–42

Poetry

The book of Job is written in a highly stylized Hebrew verse. The arguments of Job and his companions are poems. To get an idea of what this is like, write a poem that is at least fourteen lines long in iambic pentameter that defends something or someone.

Iambic pentameter is one of the most common types of poetry in English. Poetry is made up of small groups of syllables called “feet.” In iambic poetry there are two syllables per foot, and the second syllable is stressed. Pentameter means there are five feet per line. Thus, iambic pentameter is poetry with lines made of five feet, each foot having a stressed and unstressed syllable. Thus, a really uninspiring line of iambic pentameter would be:

afraid, afraid, afraid, afraid, afraid

Shakespeare has many better lines of iambic pentameter. Here is an example from Act 2 in Macbeth, where Lady Macbeth is speaking to Macbeth after he has murdered King Duncan (the syllables in bold receive the stress):

And wash this filthy witness from your hand.

His poetry does not necessarily rhyme, and your poem may rhyme, but does not need to.

Example:

My son, give heed to what I say to you
Beware! Do not be led astray by cheats
Those fools who lie and beg for you to play their games
False joy is promised in their fields and courts
With rackets, balls, and pads, and hanging nets
Beware the lure of fame and false delights
Of violent striving, seeking self and gain
Of running back and forth beneath that sign
Desist to bow beneath that graven clock
That idol god whose face brings fear to hearts
O son, I beg you now to give your love
To that fair maiden, godlike sport of all
Where time does not enforce his tyrant hand
Where battle is not merely in the field
But looms in minds and faces and demands
The mind and body fully bound in love
To noble ends, to serve the common good,
To lead and to be led, to run and throw,
To hit, to dive and sacrifice yourself,

Example: What does James imply about coveting (James 4:2)?

Answer: James implies that coveting is the root of fighting and arguing.

Other Scriptures to consider: Josh. 7:1–26, Jer. 22:17, Luke 12:15, Col. 3:5

Summa

Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Why is it important to fight the sin of envy?

The sin of envy is important to fight for at least three reasons. First, it must be fought because it is sly. It may not immediately appear to be sinful envy or lust, and may initially appear to be something like godly admiration. We must guard against envy because of its ability to deceive. We must also fight envy because it can have disastrous effects on us and others. Not only is it sin and idolatry for us, and therefore poisonous for us, but it also cannot be contained. Sin in the camp has effects on everyone in the camp, and out of love for others we must not envy. Finally, James says that fights and war break out because of envy. If we want love and peace to reign, we must fight envy with thankfulness. Growing a robust gratitude for others and the gifts God has given them is a step in the right direction. Being thankful for what God has given us is also very important. This is called learning contentment. When we recognize that God has already given us so much and that He knows exactly what we need, it should make us relax and trust in the goodness of God. He will provide for all our needs, and He loves to bless us. We need to learn to present our requests before God with thanksgiving and to trust that as we seek first His kingdom, all these things will be added to us.

Reading Assignment:
Job 38–42
To lay your life and bunt upon the line.
There is no greater love than this on earth
As Christ our Lord has loved his bride the church
My son, of all the ways we play our lives
The sport of baseball far excels the rest.

Optional Session:
Aesthetics

Art Analysis

William Blake was not only a poet, he was also a great illustrator. Among his works is an illustrated commentary on the book of Job. Twenty-one drawings in his Illustrations of the Book of Job retell the story of Job, and wound through them are Blake's own interpretations, suggestions, and concerns. There were apparently four editions: a set of watercolors completed around 1820, a couple of others in or around 1821, and finally an edition of engravings dated March 8, 1825.

Refer to the thumbnail versions of these paintings in this chapter. For larger images to study, check out a book with these drawings or engravings from your local library or find them on the Internet. Answer the following questions about Blake's illustrations.

Content Analysis

1. Compare and contrast the first and last illustrations. There are several similarities: The sun and moon are the background in both. Job and his family are situated around a tree, and there are sheep in the foreground. However, in the first, the sun is setting, while in the last, the sun is rising. In the first there are musical instruments in the tree. In the last, Job and his family are playing the instruments. In the first, Job and his family are sitting; in the last, they are standing.

2. Why does Job have a book in his hands in the first two illustrations?
The book symbolizes the law, concerning which Job was "blameless." Job was faithful, and he meditated on the law of God day and night.

3. In Illustration V, what is Job doing?
He is giving a small loaf of bread to a poor, elderly gentleman. This illustrates Job's generosity and compassion.

4. How is Illustration V answered in Illustration XIX?
In V Job is giving something away to a poor man. In XIX, others are giving presents to Job, who has become a poor man.

5. What does Illustration VII suggest about Job's friends? His "friends" are actually accusers. They are little "satans" who accuse Job rather than comfort him.

6. How does Blake show Elihu's youth in Illustration XII?
The most obvious clue is that Elihu has no beard.

7. In Illustration XVII, what is God standing on? Where does this suggest they are?
God appears to be standing on clouds. This suggests that while God initially descended in the whirlwind to speak with Job, he has raised Job up and brought him up into the heavenly presence.

8. What shape does Job take in Illustration XX? What does that imply about these sufferings, depicted behind either hand?
Job's arms are extended, forming the shape of a cross. This imitates God's arms in the background directly behind Job. Surely Job is pictured as a type of Christ and the sufferings He endured at the Cross. He is now surrounded by three beautiful daughters, which indicates the glory that has now been granted Job through his suffering.

Endnotes

1 The Septuagint adds the following to Job 42:17: "and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up. This man is described in the Syriac book as living in the land of Ausis, on the borders of Idumea and Arabia: and his name before was Jobab; and having taken an Arabian wife, he begot a son whose name was Ennon. And he himself was the son of his father Zare, one of the sons of Esau, and of his mother Bosorha, so that he was the fifth from Abraham. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, which country he also ruled over: first, Balac, the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dennaba: but after Balac, Jobab, who is called Job, and after him Asom, who was governor out of the country of Thaeman: and after him Adad, the son of Barad, who destroyed Madiam in the plain of Moab; and the name of his city was Gethaim. And his friends who came to him were Eliphaz, of the children of Esau, king of the Thaemanites, Baldad sovereign of the Sauchaeans, Sophar king of the Mineaeans."

2 Most translations say that Job "repented in dust and ashes," but the Hebrew here is a little more ambiguous than that. At present it is not clear to me that we need to conclude that Job was wrong. It is possible that he has been reminded of God's greatness and glory, and he is merely reassuring his humility. But Yahweh's final word seems to be that Job has spoken what is right (42:7, 8).

3 At the time of publication these illustrations could be found at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/ashp/blake_job_text.html.