

Lessons from Job

Gospel Advocate: Christian Women

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Lesson 1 - Job's Temptations
Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6

Most of us know the story of Job, but we often overlook something of importance. Included in the first two chapters are two very interesting conversations. God and Satan are talking! WE do not normally think of them speaking to each other. Rather we think of them each leading an opposing side in a great spiritual battle in which we are all involved.

Not only is it amazing that they are talking to each other, but consider what they are talking to each other, but consider what they are discussing: one man, Job. This is an important lesson. The individual matters to God. That individual could be you. But do not forget that the individual also matters to Satan.

Let's look at their conversation and see what we can learn about how God and Satan interact. In their first conversation in Job 1, Satan is given permission to tempt Job. In the following verses, Job loses all his possessions and his 10 children, yet Job does not sin (v. 22). Job has defeated Satan, right? No, that was just one battle. The war continues.

Again Satan presents himself to God, and again they talk about Job. In Job 2:3-6, Satan claims that Job did not succumb because he was not physically hurt. So Satan is again allowed to tempt Job within the limits God sets.

This time Satan causes physical boils on Job from head to toe. Imagine the emotional and physical pain Job was suffering. But again the Bible tells us that Job does not sin (v. 10).

Someone might say, "But this is an Old Testament story. Things are different now." Yes, much has changed since the story of Job, but Satan is still busy. Remember, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). That is the same thing he was doing in Job's day, "roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it" (Job 1:7; 2:2).

Take comfort, though; God is in control. Notice each time how God sets limits for Satan. The first time, He told Satan not to lay a finger on Job. The second time, God tells Satan to spare Job's life. First Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

Satan is busy today just as he was in the days of Job. He is after each individual. He is after you.

We must remember that God is restricting Satan, and has promised us that we will not be tempted to the point that we cannot resist. Let us hope and pray that like Job, we will be ready when Satan comes.

Study Questions:

1. Read what Jesus says to Peter in Luke 22:31. How is this similar to the story of Job?
2. In the record of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4, what had Jesus just been through before Satan tempted Him? What does this say about Satan's timing?
3. What did Jesus use to resist the devil's temptations?
4. According to Luke 4:14, did Satan leave Jesus alone after He resisted the temptations?
5. What does Ephesians 6:10-18 say we should do to withstand the devil?
6. According to 2 Corinthians 11:14, how does Satan disguise himself?
7. How would it be if we were never tempted? Think about a baby who is never allowed a chance to fall. Do you think the baby would learn to walk?
8. According to Matthew 25:41, what has God prepared for Satan?
9. Does God tempt us (James 1:13)?
10. Do you think God and Satan have ever discussed you? What do you think God said about you?

Lesson 2 - Job's Suffering

Job 1:20-22

In Lesson 1, we looked at God and Satan's roles in Job's temptation. Now let's look at Job himself.

Two significant statements were made by Job. The average person asked to cite a phrase from Job would probably quote the last part of Job 1:21. What makes this comment so amazing is that Job had just faced devastating loss. He had lost all his material possessions, and they had been great, but more than that, he had lost every one of his children. The bad news comes one after another. For most of us, we can only imagine what Job was going through, but we do not want to imagine it. Job 1:20-22 is Job's initial response after he receives the bad news: he is still able to praise God after his great loss.

Job's suffering does not end. A second trial comes. Satan is allowed to afflict Job with painful boils from his head to his toes. Job's wife tells him just to curse God and die, but Job sees things differently. "He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said" (2:10).

In both cases, Job recognized the power of God and accepted what happened to him without blaming God. This may sound easy when things are going well, but try it the next time you are suffering.

Although Job did not sin, Job did grieve. Grief is not wrong. Notice how great Job's grief was. He wishes he had never been born (3:3). Job says that his anguish, if it could be weighed, would outweigh the sand of the seas (6:2-3). Job has trouble sleeping; he wishes for morning. The night drags on, and he tosses until dawn (7:4).

When we think about suffering and grief, remember that Jesus, God incarnate, suffered and felt grief. "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission" (Hebrews 5:7).

Also, remember how Jesus wept at Lazarus' death (John 11:35)? Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, yet He still grieved (v. 11).

Why would Jesus suffered and feel grief? "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). He suffered so He could understand and help us when we are tempted.

We will all suffer at times, whether innocent of wrongdoing as in the case of Job, or because of our own sin. Let's remember the perseverance of Job. But remember that Jesus came and suffered of His own free will (Philippians 2:6-8) and for us.

Study Questions:

1. What was Job's initial response to his sufferings?
2. After such a loss, would you have the faith to praise to God?
3. According to 1 Peter 4:19, what should we do when we suffer?
4. Does God know when I am suffering?
5. What does 1 Peter 5:10 say will happen after we have suffered?
6. According to Matthew 5:4, what blessing is reserved for those who mourn?
7. What does Romans 8:18 say about suffering and affliction on earth?
8. Why should we rejoice in trials (James 1:2-3)?
9. In Hebrews 5:7 we read how Jesus suffered. Read verses 8-9, and find out what Jesus learned from His suffering.
10. Write what your response would be if you were suffering like Job.

Lesson 3 - Job's Friends

Job 2:11-37

Job has lost his children and most of his servants, but he still had friends. We all know the value of friends. Take a minute and imagine your life with no friends. Think about times of sorrow and need but also remember times of joy and how we enjoy sharing them with friends.

The end of Chapter 2 introduces three of Job's friends - Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. They come to mourn with Job and comfort him. They had great sorrow for Job. They lifted up their voices and wept, tore their clothes, and sprinkled dust on their heads (2:12). If that is not a sufficient show of love for Job, look what happens next. For seven days and seven nights no one spoke.

How many of us could do that? Are we not quick to offer words of advice? Words of comfort are important, but sometimes it might be better just to listen. This was definitely the case with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

After the seven days, Job begins to talk. He tells about his great grief in chapter 3. Then Eliphaz decides he has it figured out. Job has sinned and is being punished by God (Job 4-5). Job's response is to deny any wrongdoing.

Bildad also decides Job needs to repent (Job 8). Zophar urges Job repent in chapter 11. The last thing Job needed in his time of grief and suffering was judgmental friends. Job calls his friends miserable comforters (16:2).

Job's friends have nothing specific with which to accuse him. But they are sure he must have done something sinful to be suffering like this. Why else would this be happening to him?

Job's friends were passing judgment and were a stumbling block to Job. Their care for Job is evident, but their comfort is unsuccessful.

In chapter 42 we find that Job's three friends are wrong. Job is not suffering because he sinned. God tells Job's friends they should repent and to ask for Job's prayers on their behalf (v. 8).

How should we act as friends? Proverbs 17:17 tells us, "A friend loves at all times." Also remember what we refer to as the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). This would have helped Job's friends had they tried to put themselves in Job's shoes.

Galatians 6:1-2 instructs us about what to do when a friend is sinning. It tells us to restore those caught in sin gently. Notice also that this passage talks about helping each other with our burdens. We all need help from friends at times. Let's hope we act properly as friends when the time comes for us to help.

Study Questions:

1. How did Jesus comfort His grieving friends in John 11:35?
2. According to John 15:14, how can we be a friend to Jesus?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:26-27. How should we react to our fellow Christians' suffering?
4. In Job 2:9 what kind of friend is Job's wife? As a wife, how could one be a hindrance or a helper?
5. Did Job's three friends have anything specific in their accusations? What about Elihu, a fourth friend of Job (Job 32:2)?
6. What does Matthew 7:1-5 say about judging others?
7. Are there times when we should judge specific sins of those within the church? What about those outside the church (1 Corinthians 5:11-13)?
8. What separates friends (Proverbs 16:28; 17:9)?
9. Proverbs 17:17 says "a friend loves at all times." How does this relate to 1 Corinthians 13 and how a friend should act?
10. What kind of friend are you?

Lesson 4 - Job's Complaint
Job 9:14; 13:3; 16:12-14; 23:1-9

Job did very well in chapters 1 and 2 responding to his pain. But the more Job defends himself to his friends, the more his speech changes. Job begins to show great boldness in what he says to God. In Job 9:14 and 13:3 Job talks about wanting to argue with God. Job also accuses God. Job 16:12-14 describes how Job felt toward God. Job created a vivid word picture in these verses. He obviously felt great anger.

At times, all of us wonder why something has happened in our lives. Christians are not promised a life on earth free from trouble. God "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). In fact, everything that Job lost was temporary. Possessions, life on this earth, and health will not last forever.

Look at some of the things Job says and consider how they relate to us and our relationship with God. First, notice that Job still believes in God. In the middle of all his accusing and arguing, he acknowledges God: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25). In chapter 28 Job asks the whereabouts of wisdom and understanding. He says that only God knows, and later declares that the fear of the Lord is wisdom (vv. 23, 28). Job was still able to have faith.

In Job 23:1-9, however, Job complains about being unable to find God. He says he wants to argue with God and find out how God would answer.

How do we find God? God never hides; He is always there for us to find. When Saul and Silas were in prison, they knew how to find God. They found God in worship, through praying and singing (Acts 16:25).

We should go to God in prayer as Paul and Silas did, but we also find God by listening to Him. He speaks to us through the Bible, yet, how seldom we listen to Him.

Romans 15:4 says, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Not only do we grow in knowledge, but we receive stamina and encouragement through listening to His Word.

Job also wishes for someone to arbitrate between him and God (Job 9:33-34). Christians now have an arbitrator, a mediator! Hebrews 12:24 tells us that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. First John 2:1 says that Jesus speaks to the Father in our defense when we sin. What a blessing to have Jesus speak in our defense. In lesson two, we discussed how Jesus came to earth and suffered, so that He could help us in our suffering (Hebrews 2:18). Jesus is qualified to understand us and defend us.

Study Questions:

1. Have you ever accused or questioned God?
2. Do you ever have trouble finding God?
3. How do we communicate with God, and how does God communicate with us (Romans 15:4; 1 Peter 3:12)?
4. Does living a Christian life come with the promise of less suffering than those of the world?
5. What are some of the temporary things in life that we value? What should we value?
6. Name some of the promises we have as Christians.
7. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What do these verses say to us about our worries and how to find peace with God?
8. What does Romans 8:38-39 say about us being separated from God?
9. Look at Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-45) and Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 1:10-11). Were they comforted by their prayers? How were their prayers answered?
10. How does the fact of Jesus coming to live among men, to suffer for us, make you feel?

Lesson 5 - **Job's God**
Job 38-41

Have you ever wanted something but when you finally got it, it was not at all what you expected? Job knew that feeling. He wanted to confront God, to find out why he was suffering. He wanted answers.

In Job 38 God spoke to Job out of a whirlwind, but God did not provide answers. Instead, God questioned Job. Read chapters 38-41. It may seem lengthy, but it will only take about 10 or 15 minutes. Do not forget what has just happened, Job's loss and his accusers. As you read, imagine how Job feels.

Let's look closely at how God began this conversation. God told Job that he was speaking without knowledge (38:2). God told him to brace himself (v. 3). Can you imagine your Creator - the One who knows all, sees all and is all powerful - telling you to brace yourself? God then told Job whom God is.

In the first part of God's speech, He talked about how He created the world and controls it. God then told about the care He has for the different animals. God knows about all His creatures, and He knows about us. He even knows how many hairs are on our heads (Matthew 10:30).

Matthew 6:25-34 tells us not to worry. God takes care of the birds of the air and the lillies of the field. He will also take care of us. We often forget who He really is and that He is in control.

God stopped for a moment and gave Job a chance to respond. Job can only admit his unworthiness and covered his mouth with his hand (Job 40:3-4). God again questioned Job.

This time God compares His strength with the Behemoth and the Leviathan. These are fierce, frightful creatures, but they are nothing compared to God.

We should take courage from this. God is with us. We should be like David facing Goliath - brave because God is with us. We should have confidence in God.

Notice what God asked Job, "Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (40:8). What a rebuke! Are we not guilty of this sometimes? Are we ever proud before God? Do we forget who He is? Do we question the accuracy of what He has told us?

Look at one other statement God makes to Job: "Let him who accuses God answer him!" (40:2). God demands an answer from Job and from us today. We cannot ignore God. If we try, we have given Him our answer. We cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

Remember Joshua's demand from the Israelites that they choose today whom they will serve? We must answer as Joshua did in Joshua 24:15, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Study Questions:

1. Have you and your friends ever discussed your perception of God? What do you think His response might have been if He had replied?
2. Think of a time when you prayed for something, but when you got it, it was not what you expected.
3. Do you think Job was scared as God spoke to him? Would you be scared in the same situation? Read Job 28:28 and Romans 13:3. Discuss fear.
4. How do we come to have words of knowledge.
5. Give an example of how one might condemn God to justify himself (Job 40:8).
6. Discuss some of God's attributes and what they mean to you.
7. Did the Israelites wandering in the wilderness ever forget who God was?
8. How does remembering who God is help us in times of suffering?
9. Do you remember to listen to God, and how do you answer Him?
10. How do you know who you are serving?

Lesson 6 - Job's Response
Job 42:2-6; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Philippians 4:13

In Lesson 5 we looked at what God had to say to Job. Now it is Job's turn. How should he respond to God? What could he possibly say? What would you say to God? Job responds in 42:2-6. In Job's response, he admits to speaking without understanding. He is humbled, and he repents.

God did not answer Job's questions. Job still does not understand why he has suffered, but he has come to realize that some things he cannot understand. Job agrees that God is able of all things, any plan.

So many times we feel the need and maybe even the capability to completely understand. Part of our maturity is realizing that some things are beyond our human understanding.

Job may not have come to a better understanding of why he suffered, but he did come to a better understanding of who God is. In verse 5 of Job's response, he says that before he had just heard of God, but now he has seen God. Think of the difference in hearing about something and actually getting to see it.

I grew up seeing the ocean on television. I had talked to many people about their visits to the ocean, but I did not see it for myself until I was a young adult. When I first walked onto the beach, I was amazed at how huge the horizon was! You could see how the earth curved. The ocean was calm, but the wind was strong and the sound of the waves made me almost yell to be able to talk with the person standing right beside me. I was awestruck! I felt smaller. God seemed bigger. I was seeing a part of His creation I had not seen before. Think about the difference when we actually get to see Him. We have heard so much about Him and read about Him, but seeing Him will be different.

The second part of Job's response is humility. If we were to pick characteristics missing in many Christians today, humility would surely be one of them.

In our society we are told to believe in ourselves and "be all that you can be." A healthy self-esteem is not wrong, but our self-confidence should originate in what God has made us, not because of pride in ourselves. First Corinthians 10:12 says, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" As a Christian, believe you can do all things, but remember why you can (Philippians 4:13).

The third part of Job's response is his repentance. We all have this need. Repenting is more than changing your mind. It involves changing actions. We are often commanded to repent in the New Testament. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." Repentance is one of the requirements for forgiveness of sins.

Job has set a wonderful example for us. He admits his lack of understanding, he is humble, and he repents. How closely these are all tied together. If I believe that I have great understanding, would I have humility? Can a person repent without first humbling himself?

Questions:

1. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. Can we understand God's thoughts?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 12:10, when are we made strong?
Read James 4:10. When does God lift us up?
3. Who does God want to repent (2 Peter 3:9)?
4. How should we feel about ourselves in relation to others (Luke 10:27; Romans 12:10)?
5. In considering the differences in hearing and seeing, read John 20:24-29. What were the differences in Thomas' reactions between when he heard and when he saw that Jesus was risen from the dead?
6. Does it bother you not to understand certain things, especially why good people sometimes suffer?

7. Are you humble before God and others?
Are you confident that God is working in you? Was Moses confident at the burning bush (Exodus 3)?
8. Does a Christian have to continue to repent of wrong? When was the last time you recognized a sin and sorrowfully repented of it?

Lesson 7 - Job's Reward
Job 42:7-16

We have briefly covered the story of Job, except for the last 10 verses. They are the icing on the cake. Let's look at how God rewards Job for his endurance.

The first reward is God's statement to Job's three friends: Job, not they, had spoken what was right concerning God (Job 42:8). God even tells them to ask that Job pray for them so they may be accepted. Because Job was a righteous man, he was above saying, "I told you so."

Job, who had been "the greatest man among all the people of the East" (1:3), is blessed more in his later days than he had been before (42:12). His material possessions are doubled from what they were (v. 10).

Notice also that Job called the first three friends miserable comforters (16:2), but now Job's brothers, sisters and other acquaintances come and truly comfort him. They also bring food and gifts. Here is an example of the reward of friendship.

Job has seven more sons and three more daughters. The girls are very beautiful and are given an inheritance among their brothers. Job also lives to see his children and grandchildren to four generations (42:13-16).

Notice the last verse in Job: "And so he died, old and full of years" (v. 17). Job's perseverance was rewarded.

We also are promised a reward (Hebrews 10:5-36). We can have confidence that we will receive a rich reward. Jesus Himself tells us in John 14:1-3 about the place that is prepared for us.

Many times we are so caught up in living our busy lives that we fail to remember our goal. We fail to live what is taught in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." We often focus on what we see and on things that are temporary. Do you think the Israelites ever forgot where they were going when they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years?

At times, the suffering in our lives may not seem worth the reward to come. Jesus addressed this in John 16:21-22: "A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her times has come; but when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice; and no one will take away your joy."

Questions:

1. Why did Moses chose disgrace with the people of God rather than the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:25-26)?
2. Discuss the rewards of those people mentioned in Hebrews 11. Were they physical or spiritual?
3. What rewards do we have as Christians that apply to us on earth today?
4. How often do you think about your heavenly reward?
5. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 Paul compared living the Christian lie to running in a race. Are you running for your prize?
6. Can you earn your reward (Ephesians 2:8-9)? Can you lose your reward?
7. What should motivate obedience (John 14:14)?
8. Are you living for what you can see and touch or for what is not seen? How can one tell?
9. Discuss your perception of heaven (Revelation 21:1-4).
10. Are you confident you will receive your reward from God?
- 11.

Lesson 8 - God's Intentions

Job 42:5; Proverbs 3:5; 2 Corinthians 6:18; James 1:2-4; 5:1

We have studied the story of Job. After reading it, one might say, "But why did all this have to happen? It seems like a lot of pain and grief to end up where you started in the first place."

But Job is not back where he started. Have you ever noticed James 5:11? "Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (NKJV)

This verse follows several others in which we are encouraged to be patient. After studying the story of Job, compassion and mercy would not be the first words to come to my mind to describe God's role. Should God have told Satan to leave Job alone? We do not understand God's plan for Job. We tend to look mainly at Job's suffering and forget the big picture. After Job endured he realized that he had come to a better understanding of God (Job 42:5). He matured.

James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (NIV). It is joy when we face trials. Why? Through the trials and the testing of our faith, we perfect perseverance. God wants us to be mature and complete. But should there not be an easier way to grow up?

I do not believe God causes bad things to happen to righteous people so they will mature. But sometimes He does allow the devil to tempt them - as in the case of Job - and the end result can be spiritual growth.

Understanding why things happen the way they do is often difficult, but we know that God's intentions for us are those of a loving Father (2 Corinthians 6:18). We cannot expect to understand every aspect of how God works in our lives or how He allows others to work in our lives. Just as a little child does not understand the need for immunizations or the need for plenty of sleep, we do not always understand why things happen to us. But we do know that God is watching out for us.

Let us try to be patient and persevere when we are tested. God can use these trials to help us mature. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not on your own understanding."

We cannot always understand, but we can trust in Him. With His help, we will persevere. As our priorities and focus become more like God's priorities and focus, maybe we will even learn to count trials a joy.

Questions

1. Can you think of a time in your life when your faith was tested but it brought about good?
2. Could suffering be discipline from God (Hebrews 12:6-11)? Does discipline have to be punishment?
3. What does Romans 8:18 say about our current suffering compared to the reward we will have one day?
4. When we mature as Christians, does it mean that we must learn not to grieve in times of suffering (Matthew 5:4; John 11:35)?
5. Look at the times in your life when you feel you grew spiritually. What triggered those times of growth?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-19. How does a Christian's outlook on life affect him during times of troubles?
7. What instructions does Romans 12:12 give us?
8. Psalm 27:14 tells us to "wait." For what are we to wait? Is this an easy thing to do?
9. Share your favorite verse(s) that shows God's love and care for us during troubles.
10. What do you think God's intentions for you are?