

Lesson 1

JOB 1

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

Perspective

What do you and I need to know in order to face any challenge in life? The book of Job offers us the answer. Many challenges we bear with understanding: they make us wise. Some we bear with patience: they make us strong. But what do we do when extreme loss or prolonged suffering defies comprehension and shatters patience? Even the first chapter of Job offers an answer.

The book of Job does not necessarily answer what we *want* to know. Job, for example, asks repeatedly *why* he suffers. Although the Lord reveals to us some background information about Job's sufferings in the opening chapters, God never gives Job the direct answer he wants. In life and in Scripture, God reveals not necessarily what we want to know but what we *need* to know.

The good news is that every book of Scripture confirms, proves, and amplifies the elementary revelation about God and his relationship with us. Job himself, in the midst of his grief, bankruptcy and pain, gives us hope, for he opens (Job 1:21) and closes (Job 42:2) this book of revelation with words of praise, peace, and hope. Let us explore the book of Job to learn what we *need* to know so that we, like Job, may know the source of all comfort.

Searching Scripture

1. If the book of Job were about you or me, perhaps readers could suggest any number of reasons for our troubles (poor decisions, haste, lust, disobedience, temper, selfishness, lack of self-discipline, etc.). Therefore, God chooses a man whose character frankly awes people. What is Job like? Read Job 1:1-22.
 - a. How does Job please God? (Job 1:1-8, 20-22)*
 - b. What is Job's greatest concern for his children? (Job 1:4-5)
 - c. Describe Job's *actions* in the face of loss. Describe his *attitude* in the face of loss. (Job 1:20-22)

Actions

Attitudes

2. Just as the serpent entered Eden to tempt Adam and Eve to turn from God, Satan travels to Uz to tempt Job to turn against God. In Scripture God gives us information about the Enemy.

* For further study of the attributes of Job listed in Job 1:1, see Appendix A.

What is Satan like? What do the following verses tell us about Satan's character and goals? What do they reveal about the limits on his authority and power?

Satan's Character

Satan's Goals

Satan's Limits

- a. Genesis 3: 1, 4-5
 - b. Genesis 3:14-15
 - c. Job 1:6-7
 - d. Job 1:9-12
 - e. Job 1:13-19
 - f. I Peter 5:8
3. While we may be tempted to say many things about or to the Enemy, examine the following Scriptures for guidance on our attitude and speech regarding celestial beings:
- a. David speaks of man's position in the hierarchy of created beings in Psalm 8:1, 5-9. What is man's position in relation to heavenly beings?
 - b. According to Jude 8-10, who has the authority to rebuke Satan?
 - c. Read Job 1:20-22. Although Satan attacked Job, where does Job direct his speech? How does Scripture evaluate both the direction and the content of Job's words?
 - d. No matter what happens, where does Scripture direct our focus? (Hebrews 12:1-3)
4. How important it is to notice that nowhere in Scripture are we told to live in terror of Satan. Why not? One glimpse at God should answer that question. What is God like? What does each Scripture below teach us about God's power, character, or knowledge?
- a. Job 1:10
 - b. Job 1:6 and Revelation 4:8-11
 - c. Psalm 19:1-6 and Romans 1:19-20
 - d. Psalm 19:7-12
 - e. Psalm 33:5
 - f. Psalm 34:8-10
 - g. Nahum 1:7

5. Since God is so good, what is the central problem in the book of Job (and in life today)? What do the following verses show us?

- a. Satan tries to create a problem. The name “Satan” means “accuser.” Identify the person Satan accuses and name his implied or stated accusation in the passages below:

The Accused

The Accusation

Genesis 3:1, 4-5

Job 1:8-11

- b. In both Genesis and Job, whom is Satan trying to separate from God?
- c. Nevertheless, at the end of Job 1, has Satan succeeded in his goal of creating a problem between God and man? Read Job 1:20-22.
- d. What enables Job to withstand the attacks on him? Examine the following verses to identify precepts that will help us face any challenge in life.

Job 1:1, 20-22

Psalm 16

Luke 1:50

Meditation I on Job 1

The book of Job opens with a powerful lesson on godliness. How does Job please God? He fears God and shuns evil (Job 1:1). God does not itemize a list of Job’s good deeds for us but draws attention to Job’s heart attitude. Job’s entire life centers around his desire and goal to please his Creator. From this attitude of trust, submission, and humility, he takes care to behave in a manner that pleases God.

Job models godliness in his concern for his adult children. Scripture does not describe a father attentive only to the *behavior* of his sons and daughters; it shows us a man zealous for their *heart attitudes* toward God: “Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God *in their hearts.*’” (Job 1:5) Job understood the principle which Jesus later articulated:

What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’ (Mark 7:20-23)

In handling grief Job models godliness for us. In one terrible day Job loses all ten children, most of his servants, all his oxen, all his donkeys, all his sheep, and all his camels. How does he react? While some misguided people today try to convince believers that we must face all tragedies with smiles, Job models the God-given gift of sorrow: “Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.” (Job 1: 20). He mourns. According to the custom of his day, he tears his robe and shaves his head. Throughout Scripture, God gently teaches us we may mourn at hard times. When Moses and Aaron died, the Israelites mourned for thirty days after each death (Numbers 20: 29 and Deuteronomy 34: 8). Hannah expressed such “great anguish and grief” while in prayer concerning her barrenness that Eli thought she was drunk and rebuked her before learning the truth. (I Samuel 1: 12-16) When Naomi and her daughters-in-law were deciding their destinations after the deaths of their husbands, the women “wept aloud.” (Ruth 1: 9) Mary cried at Jesus’ tomb (John 20: 11). Even Jesus wept (John 11: 33-45).

Those who trust in God, however, do not “grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.” (I Thessalonians 4: 13) Those who hope in God move from sorrow to humility, submission, worship, and praise. Notice Job’s example. He wept for the loss of loved ones and for the loss of the fruit of his labors, not with anger or resentment or despair, but with acceptance and reverence and praise:

Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised. (Job 1:20-21)

Praise? How could Job move from sorrow to praise? How can you or I move from deep grief to praise? Why does God, in fact, command us (Deuteronomy 5:29, Psalm 33:1, Psalm 50:23, Psalm 147:1) to move from sorrow to praise?

The call to praise is the call to remember what our God is like – what His name is -- and what He has done because of His name. Praise will remind or encourage us to put our trust in God no matter what the circumstances. (Alexander, 118)

Job praises God. He moves from focusing on the loss he sees and feels to focusing on the God he knows and trusts. He sets an example for all who would move from sorrow to complaining, or from sorrow to bitterness, or from sorrow to hopelessness. He focuses his eyes, his hope, his heart on the proven character and faithfulness of the LORD.

Thank you for awakening me and setting Job before me as an example of a person who trusted you even in the midst of troubles he did not understand. Help me change my focus, Lord, from what I see to whom I know. Help me stop complaining. Help me start praising you for being my refuge. I know you are good, and I know you love me. Help me grow in knowing you and in trusting you so that I, too, may have a character that glorifies and praises you. Thank you, Lord, for these comforting lessons from your word.

Meditation II on Job 1

If only we could stop reading after Job 1:5. In all our fairy tales, the next sentence would conclude the story: “And they all lived happily ever after.” Whether we admit it or not, we all yearn for, dream of, and work toward the good life we find in the first five verses of Job. Job was “blameless and upright,” a man whose character we yearn to emulate. His children enjoyed one another’s company and actually took turns offering hospitality to one another. Such familial closeness seems an impossible fiction to individuals in our century. Job had achieved financial prosperity and prestige unprecedented in his day. Who would not hope for Job’s good life?

To stop reading at verse 5, though, would be to make the same error that the secular and ecclesiastical world made during the time of Copernicus and Galileo. The great thinkers and spiritual giants of the era believed Earth, the home of man, to be the center of the universe, and found any other theory to be scientifically untenable and symbolically heretical.

They were wrong. Neither man’s home nor man himself is the focus of celestial activity. The placement of the planets and sun in our solar system merely reinforces the truth revealed in the book of Job. Circumstances in life do not revolve around you or me. The greater end toward which everyone and everything moves is not my glorification or happiness or prosperity.

The center of all reality, physical and spiritual, is God. The great end toward which time itself moves is God’s glorification and revelation.

Verse 5 cannot conclude the book, because Satan exists. His only goal, to turn humans from giving God glory, infuses his every thought, word, and action. He tempted Eve, who tempted Adam, to reveal a stronger love for a thing than for God. In Job 1, he snatches away all Job’s possessions and kills all Job’s children to tempt Job to admit a stronger love for his things or his family than for God.

What form will your temptation take? Or mine? Satan spares no one. Neither does God. God himself tested Abraham, placing Isaac in the scale opposite God. Whom would Abraham love more? God’s tests strip away confusion and distractions, revealing truth. Abraham, while loving his son, trusted and loved God more. God’s test of Abraham brought glory to God, strengthened Abraham’s faith, and worked toward the ultimate revelation of God’s love in Jesus Christ.

Satan’s temptations, too, cannot thwart God’s plans; his efforts merely reinforce God’s grandeur. Neither good nor evil can supersede God himself. In Job 1, Satan’s cruel attacks only revealed that Job’s love for his good life was inferior to Job’s love for God, the giver of good things. Satan’s sly tempting of Eve, to which both she and Adam succumbed, led directly to the most powerful revelation of God’s character in all time: his forgiving grace through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All my anxious thoughts and bitter cries occur when I forget that God’s glory is the point of life. Everything around me may appear to go wrong, especially if I think my success, my happiness, or my comfort own the center stage of life. But the moment I remember that God’s

glory cannot be tarnished, I can see my troubles for what they are: temptations to indulge my love for me, or tests to reveal my love for God.

Lord, help me grow stronger daily in my love for you, so that neither the addition nor the subtraction of good, and neither the addition nor subtraction of ill can reveal anything but more love for you. Amen.

Searching Hearts

1. Reread Job 1:1. Job's attitude and behavior pleased God. Do yours? Meditate on the following verses as you take this matter before God in prayer. What, according to these verses, pleases God?
 - a. Luke 6:46
 - b. Romans 10:8-13
 - c. Colossians 1:9-12, 21-23
 - d. I John 1:5-9
2. Job had no clue of Satan's accusations or the purpose of his troubles. Perhaps you also have endured sorrows that you do not understand. What do you need to know? In the following verses, what encouragement or promises does God's word give you?
 - a. Psalm 23:1-6
 - b. Psalm 121:1-8
 - c. Romans 5:1-5
 - d. Romans 8:28-39

Applying Wisdom and Offering Comfort

1. What does Scripture mean when it calls Job "blameless"? What does it mean to "fear God"? See *Appendix A* at the conclusion of this study guide for a word study on the descriptive phrases of Job 1:1.
2. What do we need to know? Meditate on the answer supplied in the following passage of Scripture. Commit it to memory.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance
through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.
Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises,
so that through them you may participate in the divine nature
and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.
II Peter 1:2-4

For Group Discussion

At the end of this study guide, *Appendix B* offers additional questions which may be useful for group discussion or for deeper personal study.

