

# Job 1-2 When Disaster Strikes

1. How do unexpected disasters/tragedies and ongoing suffering challenge our faith?
2. Read Job 1:1-5. What do we learn here about Job, his life situation, and his relationship with God?
3. Read Job 1:6-12.
  - a. What does it mean that Satan was roaming the earth? (See also 1 Peter 5:8)
  - b. What accusation does Satan make? Can you put it in your own words?
  - c. What do we learn from these verses about the power of God and of Satan?
4. Read 1:13-22. How does Job respond to the disasters that strike him? How much does he know about why he is suffering? What do you think enables him to respond with worship? According to the passage, how could Job have sinned?
5. Read 2:1-10. Job's physical suffering sounds awful. His wife wants him to "curse God and die". What does Job think of this response?
6. To what extent do your circumstances dictate your trust in God? What can you do to be ready to keep trusting God even when disaster strikes?
7. Read 2:11-13. Job's friends come to comfort him, but can say nothing? Why do you think they say nothing? What might this imply about our human understanding of suffering?
8. What questions does reading this opening to the book of Job raise for you?
9. Can you think of any ways that this passage might help us to understand and appreciate Jesus and his suffering?
10. Spend time praying together.

# Job 3-28 Where can Wisdom be found?

1. When disaster strikes, the big question often asked is – “Why?” When disasters of all kinds, bringing suffering and death are so common, why do you think people keep asking “why”?
2. In chapters 1 & 2 God’s assessment of Job is proved correct – his faith is genuine and not based on his enjoyment of God’s physical blessings. For the rest of the book however, we find that Job also experiences much grief and together with his friends, begins a search for understanding and wisdom.

Read Job’s opening words in chapter 3. How would you describe how Job is feeling? Do you think Job’s words here contradict what he said in 2:10? Why or why not?

3. Chapters 4-27 contain 3 long cycles of speeches between Job and his 3 friends. The speeches gradually get shorter, with the conversation breaking down before the 3<sup>rd</sup> friend (Zophar) has his final say.

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Eliphaz	4-5	15	22
Job	6-7	16-17	23-24
Bildad	8	18	25
Job	9-10	19	26
Zophar	11	20	-
Job	12-14	21	27

The long discussion reaches a stalemate. To oversimplify - the friends apply much sound theology to Jobs situation and call on him to repent of whatever sin he has committed. Job refuses to acknowledge that he has sinned, yet he can’t see why God allows him to suffer. The length and structure and outcome of the dialogue all lead to the same conclusion – the human search for answers has failed. Even the best minds are ‘in the dark’.

As time permits ‘dip into’ the conversation in these passages. 8:1-9:20, 11:1-20, 22:1-11 & 22:21-23:17 & 27:1-6. What is the essence of what each speaker is saying?

4. In chapter 28 there seems to be another voice (or is it Job?) reflecting on the situation. Read chapter 28.
  - a) What is the main theme of this chapter? How do you think it functions at the end of chapters 3-27?
  - b) Try and give a one line summary to each of the main sections
    - v 1-11
    - v 12-19
    - v 20-27
  - c) According to this chapter, what is true wisdom and where can it be found?
5. When suffering comes (and better still – before it comes) - what does the book of Job encourage us to do?
6. Where can wisdom be found in our time? See 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 & Colossians 1:15-20 & 2:2-3.
7. What are some of the ways that suffering can help us to know God better? (If you have time see also Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 12:7-13, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:5-9 & 4:19.
8. How does this study help us to help Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering?
9. Pray that we would be better equipped to handle suffering in our lives, and to help others.

# Job 29-31      Where is God?

1. Would you speak differently to (say) the Prime Minister, then you would to the friend you see every day? If so, how? And Why?
  
2. In the long discussions with his three friends Job has sought a 'day in court' with God. In response to the charge that he must have unconfessed sin that has brought his suffering upon him, Job wants to establish his righteousness – to be justified before God.
  - a. Read chapter 9. What problems does Job see in 'taking God to court'?
  
  - b. Read 16:18-21. What does Job see that he needs?
  
3. In the second main section of Job (Chapters 29-41) there are 3 monologues. It's as if each the two cases are summed up – first by Job (29-31), then for the friends by a young man Elihu (32-37), then the judge – God himself speaks (38-41). In this study we will focus on Job's words, as he "rests his case". Read chapters 29-31 (It won't take too long!).
  - a. What do you find most impressive about Job?
  
  - b. What do you make of his bold words in 30:20-23, and then in 31:35-37? Do you think it is right for Job to speak to God like this?
  
4. What verdict is given in these verses about Job's words? In what ways did Job speak inappropriately? (We will look more carefully at chapters 38-42 in the next study)
  - a. Elihu – 32:1-3                      (Do you think this is a true perspective, or just that of an angry young man?)
  
  - b. God – 38:1-7 & 40:1-5. (Job called out for a day in court with God – and that's what he gets!)
  
  - c. Job – 42:1-6                      (What does Job repent of? Is it the sin his friends urged him to confess?)
  
5. What do we learn here about how to speak to God, even when we're suffering? Do you think its right for a human being to question God? What about complain to or criticise God? How about make demands of God?
  
6. Job wanted his day in court. He wanted to summons God to come and speak, and he longed for an advocate to mediate with God for him. Look how these New Testament passages fulfil Job's hopes...

1 Timothy 2:5-6

Hebrews 4:14-16 & 5:7-10

Acts 17:30-31
  
7. Spend time praying. Give thanks to God that he has provided a mediator for us, that we can approach him with boldness now, and that he will one day judge the world with complete justice.

# Job 38-42 The Real Questions

1. What are the most common big questions that people have about God?
  
2. In Job 38-41 God speaks. Instead of answering Job's (or our) questions, he challenges Job with a series of questions of his own. Read chapters 38-41 (take a chapter each). Or you can get a good feel for it by reading these excerpts – 38:1-18, 39:1-12, 40:1-14, 41:1-11.
  - a) What point(s) does God make?
  
  - b) What criticism does God make of Job?
  
  - c) Why do you think God asks Job questions like this?
  
3. Read Job 42:1-6.
  - a. What lesson has Job learnt? (ie. what enables him to withdraw his complaint against God?)
  
  - b. Of what does Job repent? Does this mean that Satan's challenge (1:8-11) is vindicated?
  
  - c. Some might say that God's message to Job is "I am big – so be quiet". Is this right? How do you feel about God's words and Job's response?
  
  - d. Job had the benefit of God speaking to him from a whirlwind. How might we know God/Jesus better to prepare for 'when disaster strikes'?
  
4. In Job 42:7-9 God speaks to Eliphaz. He says "you have not spoken the truth about me as my servant Job has". What exactly did Job get right, and what did his friends get wrong?
  
5. Read Job 42:10-16. Job's possessions are double what they were at the start of the book. His new children are in the same numbers as before. (Why are his daughters named??)
  - a. How do you feel at the end of the book? Happy? Confused? Surprised?
  
  - b. Can we conclude anything from Job's restoration about the relationship between faith and physical blessings?
  
6. What do you see as the main message(s) of the book of Job? What has challenged/comforted/struck you particularly?

(Taken from [gotherefor.com](http://gotherefor.com), "The Eye of thy Storm", an interactive Bible Study by Bryson Smith, Pgs 47 & 49)...

## **And they all lived happily ever after...**

The book of Job has taken us into the world of a man who experiences unimaginable suffering. At the beginning of the book, and unbeknown to the human characters in the story, Satan claims that Job is a selfish man who only follows God for what he can get out of it. So to test Job, God gives Satan permission to make Job's life a misery, a task that Satan performs particularly well. Job loses everything. It only adds to Job's suffering that he hasn't a clue why any of it has happened to him. Job's friends think they know why. They turn up saying that it's all punishment for an unconfessed sin. But both we, the readers, and Job know that this is not the case.

Finally, after what seems to be an endless debate between Job and his friends, God himself appears. God doesn't tell Job why he has suffered, or offer any explanation at all. Rather, God reminds Job of who is God and who isn't. God rebukes Job for demanding an answer as if he was owed one. And so for virtually the entire book, most of us wouldn't swap places with Job for anything. His life is a mess, his children are gone, his health is in tatters, his wife is telling him to curse God and die, his friends are telling him to repent of a sin that he knows he hasn't committed, and God himself is hauling Job over the coals for being disrespectful. And at the end of it all, Job still doesn't know why his life has been made a misery.

Yet here at the end, halfway through the very last chapter, things suddenly turn good just as quickly as they turned bad. Job has another family: seven more sons, three more daughters. No women are more beautiful than his daughters. Job becomes wealthier than he ever was. He gains herds twice the size of what he had. Job himself lives to a ripe old age, seeing his children and their children to the fourth generation. eventually Job dies, "an old man, and full of days", which is a biblical epitaph reserved for the great ones such as Abraham and David.

So Job goes out with a very happy ending—except that as well as being a happy ending, it's also a little confusing. No reason is given for Job's return to good fortune. Is it a reward because he passed Satan's test? And what about Satan anyway? God tells Job's friends that they have been in the wrong. But what about Satan? He was the one who started all the trouble in the first place! What does God say to him? And what about Elihu? Elihu was the young fellow who had kept quiet until chapter 32. He doesn't rate a mention here at the end. God speaks to Job and to Job's three friends, but not a word to Elihu. Not a word about Elihu. The book ends without us even being sure who he was! Job's ending may be happy, but it's also a little frustrating because of all the loose ends still dangling. We wish we were told more—which is exactly the point, because that's what life is like.

## **Life is a mystery**

The book of Job is exactly like life. Both the book and life can be confusing and surprising at times. Unexpected bad things can happen. Unexpected good things can happen. Long periods of struggle and anguish and grieving can happen. And there are times in this life when we wish God would tell us more about what is going on.

Job wishes God would tell him why he is suffering, but God never does. We wish God would tell us more about Elihu and what happens to Satan at the end. But God doesn't. It's frustrating that he doesn't, but that's just the way life is. All this mystery only serves to reinforce the main lesson of the book of Job. It is the lesson that if we want to live this life to the full, it's not a matter of knowing why things happen; it's a matter of knowing the God who knows why things happen.

The book of Job, like life, is full of confusing and surprising and sad and happy times, none of which we may ever fully understand. And the way through it all is not to try to figure out the meaning of every event. That's what Job's friends tried. They wanted to nail everything down and have all the answers. In the end, God condemned their attitude. No, the wise way to live is not by knowing why everything happens, because we'll never achieve that. The way through the struggles and changes of life is to know the God who knows everything. The way to negotiate life is to know Jesus Christ. For this reason, when bad or good things happen to us, the main question to grapple with is not, "Why is this happening to me?" The main question to consider is, "Since this is happening to me, how can I use it to know God better through Jesus Christ?" This is what the book of Job has been about from start to finish. It is about staying close to God, and trusting him, even when bad things happen, because staying close to God is more valuable than not suffering.