

A People of the Book
8-Year Curriculum
Year 7, Quarter 2

A Study of
Selected Texts from

Job

Mike White

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Job

Read Job Chapter 1

Lesson Purpose: The Curtain is drawn back.

The Book of Job stands as one of God's gifts to all of us as we attempt to learn in the school of Christ as to what is important in this life. What is a key for us to remember as we study Job is that God has allowed the readers access into His throne room to observe a "council of heaven" where Job's nature and character as a servant of the Lord is recognized in a commendable manner by God. That God has blessed Job's life and put a "hedge" around him and his family and possessions is undeniable in a review of the book. However, lurking in the shadows is the Satan who accuses men (Revelation 10:12), and true to his devious character accuses Job to the face of God that he is only loyal and faithful to God because of the good things that God has done for Job. As Satan asks God, "does Job serve God for nothing?" With that question one of the most difficult stories of the Bible begins that will result in Job's great suffering on the "ash heap of Uz".

What Job learns through his perseverance in suffering (James 5:11) is the gift of instruction to all of us who follow after our brother Job, and must deal with suffering both fair and unfair in this world. That difficult circumstances will find their way into our lives there can be no doubt, but that is not nearly as important compared to how we respond or react to adversity in our lives. Job chooses the noble thing and struggles mightily with his God on the ash heap while his three closest friends come to console him, but then without notice turn into his critics, accusers, and opponents as they attack Job's protestations that he is blameless before the Lord and does not deserve God's harsh treatment. This starts a cycle of three speeches between Job and his friends which ends with a long colloquy by Job followed by the interruption of the young man Elihu who steps up the criticism of Job. Finally in mercy God speaks to Job out of the storm, and Job when confronted by God repents recognizing that he is not worthy of dealing with God. Job

repents and acknowledges the sovereignty of God and is restored to a greater prosperity than he had at the beginning. And what about Job's three friends? They got it all wrong when they argued that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Job's intercessory prayer on behalf of his friends reconciles them to God. God increases Job's wealth twofold, and scriptures record that God blessed the latter days of Job more than the beginning. Job's story is one of perseverance of faith through suffering and struggle and is commended to us as an example of faithful perseverance in the New Testament (James 5:11).

In Chapter 1 we come to know of this Job and his exemplary character and great wealth (Job 1:1-3). Job is very diligent in his religious practice and devotion toward God (Job 1:4-5). The Book of Job provides the readers access to the throne room of God which is crucial to a proper understanding of the Book as it unfolds. Simply put the Satan when asked by God to consider His servant Job states that Job only serves God because of the good things He does for Job (Job 1:6-10). God allows the Satan to touch Job but not to lay a hand on Job himself (Job 1:11-12). The Satan proceeds from the throne room of God and inflicts great suffering on Job with the loss of his wealth, servants, and children all in a moment of time (Job 1:13-19). Experiencing this overwhelming loss in a compressed moment of time causes Job to tear his robe and shave his head and make one of the greatest statements of faith known to mankind (Job 1:20-21). Chapter 1 closes with the affirmation that Job did not sin or blame God (Job 1:22).

The lessons from Job Chapter 1 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

1. Bad things may and often do happen to good people.
2. Satan is an accuser of men.
3. We must never blame God for the evil we suffer in this life.
4. No one leaves this world alive nor takes anything from this world with them.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. What and where is the land of Uz (Job 1:1)?
2. How well off was Job (Job 1:2-3)?
3. Was Job a religious man (Job 1:1, 4-5)?
4. What is a council of heaven and who showed up (Job 1:6-7)?
5. What did God say about Job (Job 1:8)?
6. What question does Satan pose to God and why is it so significant (Job 1:9)?
7. What does Satan suggest God do with Job (Job 1:10-11)?
8. What then happens to Job (Job 1:13-19)?
9. What was Job's response (Job 1:20-21)?
10. Why does it say that Job did not sin (Job 1:22)?

Thought Questions

1. Why does God not promise us that only good things will happen to good people, and by corollary only bad things will happen to bad people?
2. What do you think Job's secret was for keeping perspective in the midst of his loss?

3. Job lost everything. What kind of things matter enough in your life that you would be tempted to question God at their loss?

4. How do you feel about the truth that Satan not only is free to roam the earth but also to have access to God's throne?

5. Was Job treated fairly by God?

Devotionals from Job chapter 1

Job 1:1 "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil." (NIV)

The Book of Job is about a real man who lived a righteous life. Job was a man who practiced the presence of God in his prayers, sacrifices, and obedience to his understanding of God's instructions for his life. Job's life was lived according to regular worship patterns and based on godly principles. Job lived in the land of Uz east of Israel in the desert, and God blessed him with great prosperity. Job had seven sons and three daughters, 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys, and a large number of servants. Job had it all, and the Bible refers to him as the greatest man among all the people of the East (Job 1:3). Job feared or revered God, and was so attentive to his responsibilities before the Lord that Job would rise early in the morning to sacrifice for each of his children following a feast day to plead with the Lord on behalf of his children because they might have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. The Bible says this was Job's regular custom. Job was serious about his relationship with God and there was no other person, thing or place more preeminent in Job's heart than almighty God. So our opening in the book of Job presents a man at peace in the world, guided and protected by God to such an extent that God's blessings had raised up Job to the greatest man in society at that time. However, Job's life is about to experience serious disruption and loss, and Job has no earthly idea about what devastation is to hit him. It is important for each one of us to remember that we are either in the midst of a life's storm, or going into one, or coming out of a storm, and since we have no guarantees we must stand prepared to face spiritual challenge, trouble, and adversity at any point in our lives. Not one of us is prepared for the ordeal that will unfold in Job's life, but we

know with absolute certainty that all of us will experience storms to sail through, and high mountains to cross in our own lives. Each one of us to face Today must have access to the strength and the power of God living on the inside of us by being connected to the vine that is Jesus Christ (John 15:15) or we will not persevere. Therefore, let's depend in faith upon the strength of Jesus Christ daily to address the adversity that may rise up to strike us down in this life (Philippians 4:13). Job had some awesome spiritual practices that each one of us should consider to prepare ourselves for life's future storms:

- (1) *Job feared God and shunned evil.* Proverbs 1:7 states that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline." Without wisdom which is to see the things the way God sees them we will be uprooted and off balanced in this world, and unable to respond with a steady spirit and sound mind as chaos encroaches about us.
- (2) *Job had a spiritual worship discipline or custom of rising early in the morning and interceding with God on behalf of his children.* We too must have spiritual worship habits in our life if we are to be rooted in our faith so as not to be blown about in the fierce winds of adversity!

Job had no idea about what was coming his way but he was an honorable man who walked consistently before God and even though God allowed him to be challenged with great severity, Job's life withstood the stress of devastating loss and uncertainty to honor God before the Council of Heaven by withstanding the fiery darts of Satan (Ephesians 6:16). **FATHER PREPARE MY MIND FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND HELP ME TO BE ENABLED TO STAND FIRM IN MY FAITH! AMEN!**

Job 1:8 "Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." (NIV)

Job before God was a blameless and upright man who feared or revered God and shunned evil. When God spoke His testimony about the man Job we know he was a seeker of God in all things at all times in all ways. Simply put Job was living a righteous life before God and God was blessing him greatly. This is the reality of Job's life which is to soon be disrupted by Satan as controlled by the will of God. This scene we have before us in Job 1 is the necessary background information to enable readers to understand the events that led up to Job's devastation, ruin, and even the suffering of sores so great that he had to scrape himself from the top of his head to the soles of his feet (Job 2:7-8). It is clear from all that we know of Job that he did not deserve to receive the afflictions that he was to endure. What I want us to see at the beginning of this epic story about Job is that God knows us and even Satan knows us by name. God loved Job so much for his manner of life that he pointed him out to Satan who also immediately knew who Job was. Never think for a moment that we live our day to day lives outside of the unseen eye of Almighty God. Also never think for a moment that the evil Satan is not nearby to devour you if you leave the protective power of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:8-9). There are three lessons that all Christians should learn from our brother Job's testing.

- (1) *God knows us individually as we live our lives, and he can take pleasure in our living righteously before Him.* We are neither nameless nor faceless to our God because he even knew us when we were in the womb (Jeremiah 1:5). Think about pleasing our God because of our obedience before Him.

(2) *Satan is as real as our next door neighbor and we should never delude ourselves into thinking he can be assigned as a harmless costume character dressed in a red suit with horns and a pitchfork.* Always remember that only the Lord is faithful to strengthen and protect us from Satan (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

(3) *God is sovereign in each of our lives and only sovereign God can allow anything to touch us but never to defeat us as we grow us up into His faithful servants.* Each one of us must understand the truth of how God works in our circumstances to achieve His glory and our good (Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:13).

May we remember throughout our lives that we will be tested in this world, and when this occurs we must immediately turn to God in prayer to ask Him for wisdom to persevere through the testing of the storm (James 1:2-6). **THANK YOU LORD FOR YOUR SERVANT JOB WHO IS AN EXAMPLE OF ENCOURGEMENT ON HOW TO RESPOND WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN IN THE LIVES OF YOUR CHILDREN SO THAT WE WILL NEVER GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART UNDER THE PAIN OF AFFLICTION.**

Job 1:9-10 “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.” (NIV)

Is it wrong to fear or reverence God and to love Him for the blessings that flow into our lives as Christians? The answer to that question is no for we know that choosing God in our decisions makes for a straighter path in our lives which produces a life that enjoys God’s very best (Proverbs 3:5-6). Blessings from God always give us His power, strength, and competence to deal with anything that would move us off God’s purposed path for our life. That doesn’t mean all God’s blessings are for our comfort, ease, and pleasure; but rather are provided to enable us to achieve whatever task God has called us to. We only need examine the examples of Moses, Abraham, Joshua, David and many more to see that blessings are intended to strengthen us and help us to overcome with faith even in the midst of the low points and struggles of our lives. *Remember that blessings always result from our obedience* as we can see in the life of the three Hebrew children who defied the great Nebuchadnezzar refusing to bow down even though the fiery furnace stood there to accept their mortal bodies, and God abundantly blessed them because of their obedience (Daniel 3). So in our devotional text we find the great accuser Satan accusing Job before God that Job only fears God because of the good things God gives him. In our devotional text we learn three very important spiritual truths that we must keep in the forefront of our minds as we live by faith:

- (1) *God is in control and nothing can touch our lives unless it is allowed by an omnipotent God.* Does that mean only good things happen to us? No, since we all have lived in the world long enough to know that defeats, pain, and sickness can touch anyone of us in our fallen world. But the material point for the Christian is realized in Romans 8:28 where Paul declared that we know God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, and who are called according to His purpose.
- (2) *Satan is real and he hates us and desires that we deny God and turn our backs on Him.* Satan is the great accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), and he desires our destruction (1 Peter

5:8). But if we are in Christ, Satan is powerless to touch us (2 Thessalonians 3:3). During a satanic attack we must obey God and leave the consequences to Him (Ephesians 6:16)

(3) *All blessings have as their source our loving God.* Job enjoyed great prosperity and recognition that stemmed from his relationship with God. We find in the Book of Job that this was due to Job's overwhelming desire to have an intimate relationship with God and to understand God's workings in his life. But look at Ephesians 1:3 to see that today those of us in Christ are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

HELP ME FATHER TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO YOU AND CONFIDENT IN YOUR CARE FOR ME REGARDLESS OF MY CIRCUMSTANCES BECAUSE I KNOW YOU LOVE ME. AMEN!

Job 1:11-12 "But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord." (NIV)

When we think on God we all need to appreciate that God knows us individually, intimately, and our limitations. God never puts us in a position that with His strength and help we cannot persevere through the struggle (1 Corinthians 10:13). The key is to understand that God did not place us on this earth for our comfort, ease, and pleasure; but rather we are here to glorify Him. The Satan was allowed by God to go out and touch Job but with definite limitations. Satan is a strong adversary and a formidable enemy to all men, but Satan is under the authority and check of God in our lives (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Satan hates man and desires man to separate himself from the love of the Father and fail in our mission to glorify God. We must remember that Satan is aware of who we are and where we go and what we do, and Satan stands ready to accuse us for every misstep and fault (Revelation 12:10). Our only hope stands in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us of our sins and to make us continually righteous before a holy God (Revelation 1:5, 1 John 1:5-7). We are called to live by faith and not by sight which by definition means we will not know why all things happen to us, but we do know that we must trust an omnipotent God who promises to work all things out for our good and God's glory (Romans 8:28). Job did not know why these cataclysmic events occurred in his life, but he knew God and stood riveted in his trust in his Lord. Job received this great test not because he was a sinner or a bad person or unrighteous, but he felt the devastating impact of these events because he was blameless, upright, feared God, and turned away from evil. Job didn't know the scenes that we as readers are allowed to view as background information to understand the faith of the man Job. What we do see as the story starts is a man who will trust God even though God may take his life. Although Satan is the vehicle to deliver these painful blows to Job, Satan's power and role is limited by God and Satan will soon exit the story in Job 2. The real story about Job and about each one of us is our relationship with God. Will we stand firm in our faith no matter what clinging to God as Job did or will we falter, fail, and fall under our own power? God designs each one of our lives in such a way that if we do not stand firm in our faith we will not stand at all (Isaiah 7:9). Job learned in his suffering and Paul learned in 2 Corinthians 12 that our trials and painful struggles when addressed with an eye of faith in God will always lead us to know that God's grace is sufficient for us in every circumstance, time, and place. God's power is always perfected in our weakness because that is when we are most

reliant upon Him. As Paul said when I am weak then I am strong. Job through great suffering, misunderstanding, abuse, and accusation never left God because Job needed to know about the God he worshiped. God calls us to this same faith which trusts God even in the storms of life! **GOD I WILL CLING TO YOU EVEN IN MY AFFLICTIONS BECAUSE I KNOW YOU ALONE HAVE THE POWER TO DELIVER ME. AMEN!**

Job 1:20-22 “At this Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. 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.” In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.” (NIV)

The Bible is filled with great statements of faith, but few rise to the heights of Job’s who lost everything he had to include his beloved children, and yet, rose to worship God and not to curse Him in direct contradiction to the Satan. I cannot express the height of astonishment that I have of seeing this display of overwhelming faith in God. All of heaven was looking on to see what Job would do, and he prostrated himself before holy God and worshiped Him! Notice the words of Job that recognize God is the source of every blessing to begin with, and what he had was not his own for he was simply a steward of God’s blessings. Now that is a great place for anyone who would desire to live by faith and not by sight to begin. Job was the greatest man of the entire East yet he was not controlled by his possessions or power, but rather, by his all-important relationship to his God, and we see it on display that even when absorbing bad news that Job worships God. When I read Psalm 112:7 which says of a righteous man that “He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord” I think of Job’s decision to worship God rather than to curse Him. My friends this is the faith that James 1:3 talks about that the testing of our faith develops perseverance. Who cannot say that the entire Book of Job is the testing of Job’s faith in God, and as readers we are privileged to see Job’s struggles and understand that his great desire was to understand God’s ways in his life. In the end Job was greatly blessed for many reasons but the ultimate blessing is found in Job 42:5-6 when Job realizes that “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Job’s blessing was to gain more insight into the glory of God, and the absolute need that man has for holy God. As a result God blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first (Job 42:12). Job’s faith was refined by fire and with all of us as witnesses to Job’s response it was to worship God and not to curse Him despite Satan’s assurances otherwise. The question for each one of us was presented by Jesus to his disciples in John 6:67: “You do not want to leave too, do you?” to which Peter replied: “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” Job had persevering faith in the face of harm and calamity because he would not surrender his faith knowing that God had a purpose for his suffering and for his life. **HOLY FATHER, I WILL TRUST YOU IN MY AFFLICTIONS BECAUSE I KNOW THAT I HAVE NO WHERE ELSE TO GO AND IN THE END MY OBEDIENCE WILL ALWAYS RESULT IN YOUR BLESSING AMEN!**

Job**Read Job Chapter 2****Lesson Purpose: The Righteousness of Job**

Chapter 2 opens up with the "council of heaven" when the sons of God came to present themselves and the Satan shows up again (Job 2:1). God again brings up Job even though Job has been through so much and has experienced overwhelming loss while maintaining his integrity (Job 2:3). The Satan again accuses Job before the face of God that "skin for skin, all that a man has he will give for his life". Further the Satan tells God that if you will put forth your hand on Job's flesh he will curse you to your face (Job 2:5-6). Having secured God's permission to afflict Job he smites Job with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the top of his head which causes Job to be isolated on an ash heap scraping his sores with a shard of pottery (Job 2:7-8). Job's wife is so inconsolable to see her husband in this pitiful condition she urges Job to curse God and die to which Job refuses (Job 2:9-10). Job's three friends Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite make an appointment together to come and sympathize with and comfort Job. Seeing Job at a distance on the ash heap at Uz they could not even recognize him and they wept over him. These friends were in such a state of shock and despair they sit on the ash heap with Job for seven days and seven nights without speaking a word (Job 2:11-13).

The lessons from Job Chapter 2 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

5. Never think matters can't grow worse. They very well may.
6. We can endure with God's help whatever God allows into our lives.
7. In the midst of great trials even those closest to us may turn their backs on us.
8. Friends must focus on strengthening one another with the sympathy and comfort of the Lord if we are to be true friends at all.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. Where had the Satan been and what was he doing (Job 2:2)?
2. What did the Lord say about Job (Job 2:3)?
3. The Satan agreed with God and Job lived happily ever after (Job 2:4-6)? TRUE or FALSE
4. What could the Satan not do to poor Job (Job 2:6)?
5. What happened to Job (Job 2:7-8)?
6. What was the reaction of Job's wife (Job 2:9)?
7. In what manner did Job respond (Job 2:10)?
8. Who were these friends of Job's? (Job 2:11)?
9. When they saw Job how did they react to him (Job 2:12)?
10. How long did they go without speaking and why (Job 2:13)?

Thought Questions

1. Looking at the suffering of poor Job should we pray for trials to develop our faith?

Chronicles 16:9). The material point is that God always knew that Job's integrity would preserve his faith in Him. Yes, I believe that God already knew the outcome of Job's sufferings, and that God strengthen Job to endure them. Not one of us can withstand the brutal onslaught of the world on us unless we depend upon the strength of Christ (Philippians 4:13), and I firmly believe that God didn't withdraw His presence from Job during his sufferings. Think about this self-same power which enables us in Christ to withstand great pain and duress sufficient to overcome the world (1 John 4:4). God brought His servant Job's name up to the Satan to mention his integrity in not breaking faith and staying in the circle of the will of God throughout his great suffering. We cannot be God's servant if we are not prepared to participate in the sufferings of Christ (Romans 8:17). Job met that test of suffering and remained firm in his faith in God. Job reminds us that when we follow Christ we must pick up our cross and follow Him every single day no matter where it leads us or what it costs us. The question Job presents to us is the question of whether or not we will stand firm in our faith even as we rejoice in participating in the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13)? Not one of us can endure without God's protective presence in our life to strengthen us to the end. Let us remember the words of Jim Elliot the missionary who was martyred as he taught the Indians of South America: "One is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." My friends God call us to be servants who will obey Him regardless of the consequences as we live our lives in this world. The Satan is real and will attack us but he cannot harm us if we walk in the circle of God's will for He will protect and strengthen us as we pray for each other (Ephesians 6:18). James reminds us to remember the perseverance of Job because God is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:11). The bottom-line of our devotional text is simply that we must hold the hand of God as we walk through the fire of suffering and never let go (Isaiah 43:2) just as Job did. **THANK YOU FATHER FOR THE FAITH OF JOB WHO NEVER SURRENDERED HIS INTEGRITY EVEN IN THE MIDST OF GREAT SUFFERING AND RECEIVED THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN BLESSING HIS OBEDIENT LIFE!**

Job 2:7-10 "So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" 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." (NIV)

Have you ever had a boil or painful blister? Even a few sores spell trouble for us when we get them. When I was in high school I ran an automated car wash during the summer, and because my feet were continuously in water and chemicals every day I experienced 2nd degree burns on my feet. I cannot begin to tell you the pain and discomfort I felt even to the point of missing my high school graduation ceremony because I could not get my shoes on my burnt feet. But consider poor Job and the pain he suffered when God allowed the Satan to afflict him with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. The greatest man of the East was reduced to setting in a garbage dump and scraping himself with a shard of pottery. Job was in such a mess that his wife could not bear to see him in this condition and told Job to curse God and die. My opinion is that the poor woman was broken by the loss of her children, and could not bear to see her husband in this miserable and painful state when she uttered those thoughtless words. Bad things happened to Job, but as with all men it is not what

comes into our lives that is defining, but rather it is how we respond to those things both good and bad that we must face daily. Job's response even in his state of pain, exhaustion, and destitution rises to a magnificent statement of faith: "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Our devotional text states in all of this Job did not sin. God's call to each one of us is to walk with Him daily totally dependent on Him for our every need whether in good days or bad. Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount to seek first His kingdom and his righteousness and not worry about tomorrow. However, Christ ends his instructions with the claim that each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:3-34) meaning that trouble never takes a day off in our lives. Job saw trouble coming from the same source that good things come from namely God. Job rightly understood that he must accept through faith whatever measure he was dealt in his life while trusting Almighty God the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Please remember the response of Job to this dreadful and painful test because if we are to honor God in all things we must understand three principles of spiritual comfort to cope with adversity in our lives:

- (1) *Remember to stay focused on God and don't over react to extremes in our lives.* Ecclesiastes 7:18 closes with: "The man who fears God will avoid all extremes." This means that our lives must be thermostats and not thermometers as was Job. God expects us to control our response in a godly manner and not just react to whatever happens whether good or bad!
- (2) *Remember to stand firm in your faith no matter what the consequences because our only security and strength is found in God.* Never drift from God for He alone is the source of our blessings and prosperity in the Lord. (Psalm 128:1-2)
- (3) *Remember the purifying power of pain allowed by God in our lives is never there to destroy us but only to make us holy before Him.* (Hebrews 12:10-11)

Job is our great example of persevering faith because he realized that regardless of what he was going through he was wholly connected to God and all answers were ultimately to be found in Him. Job never allowed himself to grow weary and give up on God for Job knew that God alone had the answer and the help he needed for his life. **HELP ME FATHER TO RECOGNIZE YOUR COMPASSION AND LOVE FOR ME EVEN IN PERIODS OF GREAT SUFFERING, AND TO NEVER LET GO OF YOUR ALL-POWERFUL HAND REGARDLESS OF WHAT I FACE IN THIS LIFE. AMEN!**

Job 2:13 "Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."

Nothing has a greater impact on a human soul than to be there with them in the dark and painful times to comfort them in their distress. The Apostle Paul writes to us that God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we have received from God (2 Corinthians 1:4). May we always seek the blessing in the difficult times to comfort others based on what God has comforted us with in similar troubles. Rest assured that whatever struggle God has allowed in your life will be used by God to bless others if you learn from God's presence and support in your adversity. Often times no words need to be spoken but only our presence or a hug or a soft touch is necessary to convey our love and God's care when a life is hurting. The essential point is that we must be there for one another in whatever capacity God calls us to in comforting one another in

Jesus Christ at the point of human need. If we are in Christ and wholly connected to one another in Him then Paul's admonition in Romans 12:15 is to be a way of life for us: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." So we find it admirable that Job has three friends that hear of his great affliction and come to him from faraway places to sit down with their friend and sympathize with him. As Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar approached their friend something awful happened. The three friends looking at a distance could hardly recognize their friend who had been ravaged with personal loss and bodily pain. The three men were so shocked and full of distress on seeing Job in such a miserable state that they began to weep aloud, tore their clothes, and sprinkled dust on their heads. In a state of shock and unable to account for this sudden devastation in Job they sat on the town's garbage heap in the decay and stench and nary said a word for seven days and seven nights as they watched impotently at Job's great suffering. I cannot begin to imagine sitting in a garbage dump for a week looking at my friend scraping his running sores with a piece of pottery. But Job's friends did that very thing and for that commitment to their friend Job they are to be commended. They may have waited in silence even longer, but finally Job raised his voice and cursed the day of his birth. What follows in this story is a tragic display of placing unnecessary burdens on their friend rather than comforting him. It is a shame because their intentions were noble and they began their vigil in great sympathy and mourning for Job that week on the garbage heap. But something happened that changed these men and opened Job up to criticism, ridicule, and judgment as he struggled to find out why God had allowed this unfair treatment into his life. Unfortunately Job's friends became entrapped in the art of unjust judgment because they began to attempt to explain the cause and effect of Job's sorry state and it took them down the road of judging by appearances. Jesus Christ warns the Pharisees in John 7:24 "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment". May we always bring the love and comfort of Christ to our most tender and vulnerable moments, and reject the advice of the Satan to accuse and judge those who need acceptance and not judgment. FATHER MAY I COMFORT IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES WITH ALL MEN AT ALL TIMES WITH THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF THE MASTER OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. AMEN!

Job

Read Job Chapter 3 & 4 & 5

Lesson Purpose: Suffering On the Ash Heap of Uz

After seven days and seven nights on the ash heap of Uz Job finally speaks out. Job first cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:1-10). Next Job asks why he did not die at birth given the extraordinary suffering he must now endure (Job 3:11-12). Job then expresses longings for being in the grave and not having to suffer even asking God "Why is light given to him who suffers, and life to the bitter of soul?" (Job 3:20) Job is beyond consolable he is despised, isolated, humiliated and most of all in search of answers as to why God could do this to him. Job cannot eat and his cries pour out like water (Job 3:24). The great "dread" has befallen Job (Job 3:25). For Job there is no ease, quiet, or rest but only turmoil (Job 3:26). What a wretched state the greatest man of the East finds himself in scraping his running sores on a trash dump without understanding why or how such a thing could have happened to him.

Then Eliphaz the Temanite speaks as one of Job's closest friends who had come to sympathize and comfort Job (Job 2:11). Eliphaz spoke first to Job since he likely was the eldest and would speak first. But something remarkable had happened during these seven days and nights on the ash heap with his attitude that was there to initially comfort and sympathize becoming judgmental, critical, and accusing. Eliphaz didn't like what Job had said because he didn't admit and declare his guilt and sin. Job's protestations of his innocence in the matter simply turn Eliphaz off because he felt Job didn't get it. Everyone knows bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people. Since Job had been brought low by God he must be a bad person who had sinned causing his suffering. No one who is innocent has perished nor has the upright been destroyed (Job 4:7). Eliphaz asks a rhetorical question "Can mankind be just before God?" Eliphaz is telling Job that no one can be just before God, and it must be that all this mischief in

Job's life has been caused by his sin. So here at the very start of what is to be constant back and forth arguments between Job and his friends we find them talking past one another with Job claiming his innocence and Eliphaz and the others demanding he confess his sins. Eliphaz challenges Job that his calling for his present relief will do no good since there is no one to call to who will answer Job (Job 5:1). Eliphaz argues with Job that trouble just doesn't sprout from the ground so Job better seek God and place his cause before Him (of course this is what Job precisely wants to do). Eliphaz further urges Job to accept the discipline of the Almighty who gives pain and relief in retribution for a man's sin and subsequent repentance (Job 5:17-18). Eliphaz is absolutely convinced in the theory that bad things only happened when a man sins against God that he tells poor Job that we (Eliphaz & friends) have investigated it and it is so. Job better get the message and get with it before God overwhelms him. What a rough start to this "sympathizing and comfort" of Job's friends who in a moment begin kicking a good man when he was down because he must be a sinner and all of this will go away if Job only repents. Unfortunately, we know that Job has not sinned and is only being afflicted because God is teaching Satan a lesson about the blameless integrity of Job who now sits on the ash heap without a family, wealth or dignity. Now we know even his friends will pile on since they have it all figured out and Job doesn't get it so he must be hit over the head with his sin and wrongdoing.

The lessons from Job Chapters 3-5 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

1. Always bring Ephesians 4:29 to remembrance when supporting those who suffer.
2. Be careful of what we say when we are too hungry, too angry, too lonely, and too tired, and particularly when we are in pain and suffering.
3. It is helpful to listen and not speak unless we have Christ in our hearts for His comfort is the only comfort we can share with a suffering soul that will help!
4. In the valley of life turn to Christ and cling to Christ and never ever let go for only He will never fail us.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. Job _____ the day of his birth (Job 3:1) after sitting on the ash heap 7 days and 7 nights with his friends.
2. Why does Job groan? (Job 3:24)
3. Did Job have any peace while sitting on the ash heap of Uz? (Job 3:25-26)
4. Eliphaz his friend stands up and speaks to a suffering Job. How would you characterize Eliphaz's attitude toward Job? (Job 4-5)
5. Does Eliphaz's attitude bother you?
6. Eliphaz does ask Job some probing questions. What are they? (Job 4:17, 5:1). How would you answer these questions today?
7. What does Eliphaz suggest to Job as a remedy for his present relief? (Job 5:8)
8. Eliphaz tells Job that a man whom God reproves should be happy and not to despise the discipline of the Almighty. Do you agree with what Eliphaz says? (Job 5:17)
9. How would you characterize Eliphaz's claim that what he told Job is the way it is and Job should hear it and know it for himself? (Job 5:27)

Thought Questions

1. Job's friends made the mistake of feeling like they needed to give an explanation for Job's situation. Why do you think we often feel that pressure when we see someone suffering?
2. How do you reconcile Job's suffering to the truth that obedience brings blessing?
3. What comfort can we offer to someone who, as in Job's case, is experiencing a kind of suffering we have never faced?
4. Job had sat in silence with his friends for seven days. What was he asking for when he asked them to look at him?
5. Was it a sin for Job to wish he had never been born? explain

Devotionals from Job chapters 3, 4 and 5

Job 3:11 "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" (NIV)

In chapter 3 following seven days and seven nights of sitting on the ground among the ashes, Job finally spoke. What Job said can be overlooked by us as we see his great suffering, but what Job said was also both harsh and fatalistic as he searched for answers as to why God had allowed this tragedy into his life. I'm not sure if I had overheard Job at that moment that I would have been encouraged to seek God, but I do know that Job was struggling with a moment of pain and grief that stretches our

imagination. Have you ever said something under stress that you later regretted? I know I have, and when we see poor Job dealing with his loss, pain, and suffering we are reminded of just how frail and vulnerable we are to the winds of change in this life. In times like these it is important to remember that God has compassion on those who fear him because he knows how we were formed and that we're but dust. (Psalms 103:13-14) God always understands our grief and despair and He wants us to share it with Him. God is faithful and He will treat us gently always with His purpose in mind to help us and never to hurt us. Isaiah points out the excessive gentleness of our God in Isaiah 42:3: "A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguished." God can handle anything we take him, and he can turn around any situation we place before Him so the real lesson that we must learn when we are broken by this life is that God loves us individually and infinitely so much so that we will never be separated from God's love for us (Romans 8:31-39) unless we choose to do so. When we think things we shouldn't or say things we shouldn't during the most difficult of moments please remember three points:

- (1) *Recall that our God is loving and faithful to us and He will never let us go.* He understands us intimately because it was He who formed us even in our mother's womb (Psalms 139:13).
- (2) *Immediately repent of thoughts and remarks that are selfish, uncaring and unloving by turning them over to God who is responsible to pull us out of the pit of mud and mire, and transplant us to firmer ground* (Psalm 40:1-2). Whenever we are in trouble we are to cry out to God for help (James 5:13)!
- (3) *Return to our daily routine of prayer getting on with life with the help of God.* Only God is able to strengthen us through all things, and give us His peace which transcends all understanding (Philippians 4:4-7).

When we fall into one of life's difficult ruts and our lives seem broken then we must return to God who is the only source of power, grace, strength, and love that helps us to renew our attitude and not grow weary or faint in the days ahead. **THANK YOU FATHER FOR YOUR POWERFUL PRESENCE, AND HELP ME TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO SEEK YOU EVEN IN MY DARKEST MOMENTS SO THAT YOU MAY PLACE ME ON MORE STABLE GROUND!**

Job 3:25 "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me." (NIV)

Fear is paralyzing and it robs us of our joy, erodes our confidence, and makes us uncertain in our choices. In short fear is debilitating undermining our lives and harming our future! Life is uncertain and there are no guaranteed outcomes except one and that is the security we have in our relationship with Jesus Christ. In our devotional text we find Job trying to understand all that has befallen him, and he simply cannot fathom why these black things have come his way. Job's life was in shambles and Job was a broken man, but he doggedly clung to His Lord because he trusted Him with his life and he had to know why had God left him and allowed this evil into his life. It is unfortunately more frequent than we would like to see, but bad things do happen to good people. Job who had led the protected and blessed life from the hand of God, and who was religious in his practice of worship toward God

was clueless as to why God had allowed all of this into his life. When I read our devotional text the “nameless dread” for Job was not the loss and pain that he had experienced, but the loss of intimacy Job felt as he tried to explain God to Himself. No matter what “dread” comes into our lives we must have faith that God allowed it to enter, and therefore, there is purpose and meaning to endure the circumstance with God’s grace because we know that God’s grace is sufficient IF we cling to God and don’t quit (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)! Whenever we are hit hard in this life we must not succumb to self-pity, doubt, fear or bitterness and turn our backs on God. That will not do! We must follow the example of Job and seek to understand God’s operation in our lives and accept by faith that God is sovereign and whatever we face (if we trust Him) will be worked out for our good and His glory. We never have to fear the loss of our personal relationship with God as Job struggled with because we have Jesus Christ and we know that we can never be separated from His love (Romans 8:31-39) since he died for us! Once we are in Christ Jesus through baptism (Colossians 2:12) our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3) and we are secure in Him because His love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). Let us draw great encouragement that as Christians no matter what strikes at us in this world we always may begin with the absolute confidence that we will overcome and achieve God’s blessing regardless of how painful the episode because God is with us. Never start with a defeatist attitude because we have secured the victory in Christ if we only hold on to it. God is reliable to take us by His hand and tell us not to fear because He will help us no matter what the difficulty (Isaiah 41:13).
FATHER REGARDLESS OF MY CIRCUMSTANCES I WILL NOT FEAR BECAUSE YOU HOLD BOTH THE FUTURE AND ME IN YOUR HANDS, AND THEREFORE I WILL TRUST IN YOU NO MATTER WHAT. AMEN!

Job 4:7 “Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?” (NIV)

Eliphaz was a friend of Job’s and was likely the oldest of his three friends that visited him as he was suffering, and therefore, he should have known better than to address Job’s suffering with logic rather than with love. *Let us fully understand if LOVE is not our motivational theme in interacting with anyone particularly a Job who is suffering then we will get it wrong and do more harm than good with our conversation.* Eliphaz reacted to Job’s words and not his suffering, and sought to correct him on the spot with how God operates in his life. Unfortunately, Eliphaz like many of us in a similar situation was absolutely clueless as to what was going on in Job’s life and the “why?” of it. If the story of Job’s friends teach us anything it is that we must never judge from mere appearances (John 7:24), and if we are there to comfort we only have the comfort of God to share or we have nothing beneficial at all (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). As Eliphaz sought to correct Job and teach him a more perfect way he began to use general principles that did not apply uniquely in this case to Job because Eliphaz did not know the origin of Job’s suffering which had nothing to do with Job’s sin or disobedience toward God. In our devotional text Eliphaz makes a broad statement singularly based on the presumption that if you are doing right things only good things will happen to you. In fact in the next verse Eliphaz admonishes Job with words that sound a whole lot like: “you reap what you sow” (Galatians 6:7), unfortunately they do not fit in Job’s case. My friends we must have a close walk with Jesus and the insight of the Holy Spirit to minister to the soul that is struggling under the burdens of life. Always remember when approaching someone who is in the midst of tragedy, struggle, or suffering that we must:

- (1) *Pray for insight into that person's life that we might share the sweet comfort of God with them as EQUALS because God has comforted us in our distress and now we choose to share God's comfort with them (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).*
- (2) *Possess love for that person as our motivation if we are to step into the breach (Psalms 106:23) because we must be "all in" to comfort, support, and sustain that person through their struggle. In short we cannot be guilty of drive by consolation. No, God demands our intimacy be for always and that our love never fail. (1 Corinthians 13:7-8)*
- (3) *Remember that our consistent presence, prayers, tears, and touch far outweigh words and any thoughtless "commentary" during moments of great personal pain and trial. (John 11:32-36)*

Always remember that when God calls us to service in behalf of another it is never to judge, but always to lift them up in intercessory prayer. MY FATHER, MAY I LOVE THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING AND IN NEED OF YOUR LOVE AND COMFORT SO THAT I MIGHT SELFLESSLY SHARE YOUR LOVE AND COMFORT WITH THEM. AMEN!

Job 4:17 "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" (NIV)

Eliphaz had a dream and a mysterious revelation was left with him that no man was more righteous or purer than God, and, therefore by implication Job's protestations of his innocence were patently false and a challenge to a holy God. While I don't think Job was guilty at all of any foolish comparison of his character to God's character, Eliphaz does raise a key question that each one of us must come to grips with: can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his maker? The obvious answer to these questions that Eliphaz posed toward Job is an emphatic no! Nevertheless the Bible teaches us that without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). Poor Job is left suffering on an ash heap while fending of the ever increasing hostile charges that he must have sinned greatly since his suffering is so great, and all men intuitively know that if you do right things only good things will happen to you in this life. We know this not to be true both by the Word of God, and our own experience when unfortunately all too often we see bad things happen to good people. What Eliphaz's question leads us to is trying to understand how we are justified in the sight of God? Being right before a just God requires something to happen or occur to us in our lives that make us so not based on our own feeble merit, but on the basis of a relationship with an intermediary between a holy God and fallen mankind. We know this intermediary now in the New Testament Age as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In fact our justification may only occur if our sin problem is dealt with and Paul writes: "He made Him (Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Simply put we know that Job searched for a go between God and himself, and that intermediary we now know is Jesus Christ and Him alone (1 Timothy 2:5). Eliphaz got Job wrong because he never understood the character of God who is loving, just, and always sufficient in making a way for man if he but will obey and follow God. The Book of Job begins to answer many of these questions that vexed Job and throws our own lives off balance if we are not fully resolved to cling to Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus I now can approach God freely with full assurance that he will hear my petition and provide help in my time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We all benefit by Eliphaz's question to Job because we seek an audience with holy God, but are not worthy to enter His presence without something else. That something else is Jesus Christ who is

the way, life, and the truth (John 14:6). Job struggled mightily with what to do and we see his pain openly displayed before us throughout the book. But just below the surface we begin to understand that there is someone there who is willing to help in all our momentary afflictions. You cannot read of Job's struggles and how he is left to his own devices without coming to a full appreciation of the role and work of Jesus Christ in this world. **FATHER HELP ME TO LEARN THROUGH THE SUFERING AND PAIN OF JOB THAT MY ONLY ANSWER IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT IS THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST. AMEN!**

Job 5:1 "Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?" (NIV)

Eliphaz continues his condemnation of Job by letting Job know that until he admits his sin and wrong that he has nowhere to go and no one to speak to. Sometimes I think that Eliphaz enjoyed pouring it on Job while he was down. May we ever be mindful of having a presumptuous heart and speaking without knowing all the facts which is even made worse when our motivation is not love but rather correction. Eliphaz makes a big mistake in sizing up Job's unhappy state since he attributes to God a distant, cool, and retributive personality! **GOD IS NONE OF THESE THINGS BECAUSE HE IS INTIMATE, WARM & LOVING, and a GOD OF FORGIVENESS.** So the question posed by Eliphaz is to solicit a predictable response from Job of discouragement, defeat, and delay. Like Job may we never give in to such satanic impulses, but always continue to strive to press on forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead (Philippians 3:12-13). The question posed to Job by Eliphaz was bankrupt of any goodness, kindness, or hope and was certainly not motivated by love. How do you walk away from a drowning man as life ebbs out and simply tell him "Buck up because you're on your own with no one to answer you and no one for you to turn to!" This view of Eliphaz simply mischaracterizes the very nature and will of God the Father who loves us unconditionally having sent His only Son to die in our steads at the cross of Calvary for our sins. To his credit we shall find that Job would have none of this as Job clings to his integrity while searching out God's purpose for his suffering. Always remember the nature and purpose of God when your love to Christ grows weak and recall to your memory three truths:

- (1) *Nothing and I mean nothing can separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ.* (Romans 8:31-39)**
- (2) *When you are in trouble God wants to hear your prayers and He will answer.*(James 5:13)**
- (3) *God has empowered you with the strength of the Holy Spirit and has assured you that you will overcome whatever you face because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* (1 John 4:4)**

Eliphaz ignorantly sought to drive a wedge between Job and God by his unfeeling comments to Job that there was no God to talk to or turn to. This is the devil's lie and if you ever get depressed because you feel wholly unconnected to God then get on your knees repent and stretch out your hand to a loving God. God's reaction will be swift and very certain: "For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13) **FATHER MAY I NEVER DOUBT YOUR ABIDING PRESENCE, CONSTANT CARE, AND WILLINGNESS TO HELP EVEN IN MY MOST EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES. AMEN!**

Job 5:7 “Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” (NIV)

Eliphaz furthers his complaint against Job’s protestations of his integrity by telling Job that trouble doesn’t sprout from the ground, but it is the sin in Job’s life that has given rise to God’s hostility toward him. Eliphaz is emphatic that man is born to trouble as surely as the sparks fly upward. There can be no doubt by observation that every man has his share of the world’s troubles since that is the consequence of sinful man living in a fallen world. Even Jesus tells us that each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:34). Jesus also told His disciples the very night He was betrayed that “in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Trouble should never separate us from God as suggested by Eliphaz, but should do quite the opposite since it is designed to create a desire to turn to God for His help and His blessing in our time of trouble and affliction (James 5:13). I attended a high school graduation of a class of seniors in Washington State several years ago who had been home-schooled, and the commencement speaker was very brief in summarizing his comments around a singular thought: Whenever, wherever, and with whomever you are in trouble; stop, get on your knees, and cry out to God in prayer for His help. His point was that God would never let them down, and He would bless them with wisdom and direction for the way ahead. Oh, if only each one of us would adopt these great truths from the commencement speaker. Even if trouble comes from our own stubborn resistance to the will of God, we must turn toward God and appeal for His awesome help and intervention in our lives. Jesus told us that each day will have trouble so it is not how best to avoid it since trouble is inevitable. The issue is how do we deal with trouble and those sparks that fly upward? The answer is found in Psalm 107 where there is an account of the Israelites in the desert on their journey to the Promise Land. Time after time through their own stubbornness they were at their extremity of crisis, but whenever their times seemed most desperate they would cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and God would deliver them from their distress. The Lord is faithful as a God of deliverance and the last verse of Psalms 107 tells it all for us: “whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the lord.” (Psalms 107:43) Trouble will come into our lives just as it did in Job’s life, and our response is to always be the same: stop, repent, cry out to God, and move forward in obedient faith. WHEN TROUBLE STRIKES, MY FIRST RESPONSE WILL BE TO TURN TO GOD FOR HIS HELP BECAUSE HE IS SUFFICIENT TO PROVIDE FOR ALL MY NEEDS.

Job 5:17 “Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.” (NIV)

Eliphaz now turns to a point of great truth on the disciplining hand of God in our lives and tells his friend Job that if he will only accept God’s discipline and repent of his sin then God will restore him to his previous state. Although the discipline of God is a correct teaching for those of us in Christ (Hebrews 12:7-11), unfortunately it did not directly apply to Job because this wasn’t the cause of the afflictions Job was experiencing. Unlike Eliphaz we must learn to fully understand the background of a person’s life and struggles before blurting out a solution which is unconnected to the will of God. What Job was experiencing wasn’t for his discipline but for God’s glory, and poor Eliphaz put canned answers into a box and brought them out if the circumstances seemed to apply. This will not do for those who operate in a spirit of love because every word is to make a difference in the lives of those we touch and love demands we understand the person before speaking (Ephesians 4:29). So Eliphaz

got the general principle right but applied it wrongly to Job's unique circumstances. As a general principle as stated in Hebrews 12:7-11 we understand that God motivated by love disciplines us as His children for our good. Remember to accept or submit to the discipline of God in our lives through the obedience of faith regardless of the consequences. When God corrects us as he may do it through the Word of God, other people, or the circumstances of the moment. Regardless of the vehicle God chooses to discipline us please understand there is only one acceptable response: submit to the Father and live! Discipline only comes into our lives because:

- (1) We are children of God.
- (2) It is for our good.
- (3) It makes us more holy IF we submit to it.
- (4) It is for our training not our punishment.
- (5) It produces a harvest of righteousness and peace in our lives.
- (6) We will be enabled by the strengthening process of discipline to help others endure their trials.

All of us know that God's discipline is not easy and we understand it is very painful while we are enduring it. But we know that God never stretches us beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13), and if we will submit to this training in the School of Christ we will be blessed for it. Although Eliphaz got the general principle right, he erred on its application to the life of Job. My opinion is that the key for us is to learn to be trained by God's discipline by submitting to God who will take care of everything else. **THANK YOU FATHER FOR GODLY DISCIPLINE THAT TRAINS ME UP TO BE YOUR PERSON BY DEPENDING ON YOU FOR ALL MY NEEDS!**

Job

Read Job Chapter 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10

Lesson Purpose: When Friends Go Wrong.

I find it astonishing that Eliphaz was so tough on Job, don't you? The poor man had lost his children, his possessions, his wife could barely tolerate him, and he was afflicted with running sores from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. That doesn't even account for his new address which was the ash heap at Uz. Job's grief, suffering and pain were beyond limit and none of it was his fault. God had allowed Satan to intervene in Job's life to test his integrity (Job 1). *Something went dreadfully wrong with Job's friends while sitting silently on the ash heap at Uz observing Job. Their plan was to sympathize and comfort him (Job 2:11), but Eliphaz and those friends that will follow him chose to critique, criticize, and accuse.* Poor Job is really in for it as he sits there scraping away at his skin and listening to men who thought they were doing the Lord's business. Now when in the unhappy situation when someone thinks they need to teach you God's lesson while you are searching for help and understanding one always finds no common ground between friends. *Job and his friends all believed in "Retribution Theology" which states that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.* Since bad things clearly had happened to Job it must be because he had sinned against God and that was all there was to it. But Job knew he was innocent of bad things and did not sin; and therefore his present miserable state was all a big mistake by God. These two opposing views between Job and his friends are un-reconcilable with no happy outcome in sight. *All of the discussion between Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and their friend Job must consider the theory of "Retribution Theology" as the backdrop.* Let me say right up front that Job's friends lost sight of why they were there, and forgot that the only purpose for being there was that they loved Job so they might comfort him, and not to correct him.

Job's response in chapter 6 is pitiful when he says that his grief is heavier than the sands of the sea (Job 6:3). Job holds God responsible for the terror he is experiencing, but holds fast to his integrity and states in Job 6:10 that it is still his consolation in unrelenting pain that he has not denied the words of God. Job insists on his innocence even though bad things have happened to him. Job wonders out loud why his friends will not give him words of kindness to help him and encourage him not to forsake God (Job 6:14)? Job compares his friends to a wadi (stream) in the desert where torrents of water rush down, but when you need the stream in the heat there is no water to be found. *Job's friends are failing him in the most basic of respects because they have forgotten why they are there on the ash heap of Uz.* As Job suffers, he maintains his righteousness and asks his friends to teach him and show him how he has erred in this judgment.

In Chapter 7 Job really turns his mind and talk to address God, and tells God that his days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and they come to an end without hope (Job 7:6). He tells God that his life is but a breath and he will never see happiness again (Job 7:7). Job is at the end of himself in terms of his capacity to endure what is happening to him, and he tells God plainly that he is speaking to him in anguish of spirit and bitterness of soul (Job 7:11). Although Job had benefited from the favor of God for many years, he now wonders aloud to God as to why God is so concerned about him. Why does God have to examine and try him every moment? Finally totally exhausted Job tells God that soon he will lie down in the dust and God will search for him, but he will be no more (Job 7:21).

Job's second friend Bildad the Shuhite takes the stage in Chapter 8, and immediately confronts Job very directly. Bildad has it all figured out and asks does God pervert justice or does the Almighty pervert what is right (Job 8:3)? Bildad goes beyond the pale and even tells Job that their sins caused the death of his children (Job 8:4). Sorrowfully none of Bildad's self-righteous reasoning applies to Job. Bildad is guilty of loveless presumption toward his friend Job! Bildad exhorts Job to seek God and implore His compassion and all will be ok, and even assures Job that God will not reject a

man of integrity nor will He support evil doers (Job 8:20). Bildad in the harshest of ways tells Job to "shape up or ship out"!

Job responds to his friend Bildad's harsh critique of Job's life and defense in chapters 9 and 10. Job begins to separate himself from his friends' conversation and strikes one up directly with God. I think this wise of Job since God alone has the answers for us in our grief and despair. His friends Eliphaz and Bildad should have been comforting and encouraging Job to be faithful to God not blaming Job's sin for his epic suffering. What Job begins to see is that he or any man must have an audience with God to raise his grievances. Job asks "how can a mortal be righteous before God?" (Job 9:2) Job goes further in his thinking and acknowledges should he get before God he will need someone to speak for him before a holy God (Job 9:14). Job maintains that he is blameless, and finally demands of God a court date. Job's problem is that there is no "umpire" to arbitrate between God and Job and judge the matter between them (Job 9:32-33). We now know that our "advocate" is Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1) who is the answer to so many of the questions Job had for God on the ash heap of Uz. Job continues his struggle with God, but even in the midst of his desolation and pain Job observes that God had given him life, showed him kindness and providentially watched over his spirit." Sadly Job begs God to turn away from him so that he might have a moment's joy before going away to the land of deepest gloom (Job 10:20-22). Job's pain and suffering is wearing him down and grinding him up as hears the volley of abuse from his friends.

The lessons from Job Chapters 6-10 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

5. Always bring Ephesians 4:29 to remembrance when supporting those who suffer.
6. Don't repeat the mistakes of others when you see them. Always learn from your experiences.
7. All answers to life's struggles, problems, and needs should be directed toward Jesus Christ who is our Life!
8. God knows what we are going through so we can be brutally honest with God in our suffering

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. How much weight did Eliphaz's comments place on Job's anguish? (Job 6:2)
2. What did Job say about his integrity? (Job 6:10)
3. Job makes a very important point about friendship in times of adversity, what is it? (Job 6:14)
4. Is Job optimistic that God will straighten out his unfair treatment of him? (Job 7:6-7)
5. What does Job really want from God now? (Job 7:16-21)
6. Bildad now takes the stage on the ash heap and is very comforting of Job. True or False? (Job 8)
7. What does Bildad believe that drives his thinking with Job? (Job 8:4-6)
8. Job even in his grief begins to discuss with God the need for a courtroom in which he could confront God. But Job recognizes there is a problem for him. What is it? (Job 9:33)
9. Job even in his pain makes a statement that shows he still hopes in the grace of God even in the midst of his suffering. What is it? (Job 10:12)

Thought Questions

1. What could Job's friends have done to bring some actual comfort to the situation?

change that God might mercifully take his life. Even in this moment of despair Job states; “Then I would still have this consolation-my joy in unrelenting pain that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.” (Job 6:10) Job was drowning in pain and suffering and his friends were trying to correct his life by insisting on his sin and guilt as the cause of God’s mischief towards him. Job compares his friends to an intermittent stream in the desert that floods, and yet when you need it to survive it is dried up and useless to you. This leads us to the material point found in our devotional text that as friends even if our friend forsakes God we must be there to encourage him gently to turn back to the Lord in patient, gentle, and loyal devotion and love for our friend. What good is being a friend that simply piles on when tough times come? Where is the compassion in that? Where is the support in that? In fact Job wonders out loud whether or not his friends are worried about having to pay a cost or give something up for their friendship as an explanation of their lack of loyalty toward him (Job 6:22-23). Job deserved much better than he received from his friends who cared about defending their own “cause and effect” retribution theology than binding the wounds of their friend. Where was the Good Samaritan on the ash heap of Uz as Job suffered? If there is anything that we should take away from this passage it is what not to do when we minister to anyone in the midst of pain and suffering. Please do quite the opposite from Eliphaz and consider the following suggestions for comforting others in their suffering:

- (1) Don’t presume you know what God is telling them through their pain.*
- (2) Always pray for them. Intercede continuously for them. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*
- (3) Encourage them in the Lord always pointing them toward God that he might comfort them. (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)*
- (4) Persevere in your care, conversation, and comfort with your friend from a spirit of love. (1 Corinthians 13:8)*
- (5) Remember eye contact and touch is so very important to friendship and dealing with fear and hopelessness which can only be dispersed by the love of God. (1 John 4:18)*

FATHER I KNOW THAT WHEN MY FRIEND IS SUFFERING THAT THE ONLY COMFORT THAT I MUST SHARE IS THE COMFORT OF JESUS CHRIST WHO LOVES US AND WILL NEVER LEAVE OR FORESAKE US NO MATTER WHAT. AMEN!

Job 7:6-7 “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.” (NIV)

In chapter 7 Job appeals to God expressing the futility of his feelings as he struggles with what he interprets as God’s abandonment of him. Job tells God of sleepless nights with no peace or rest, and he mentions his physical condition which is almost unspeakable. His flesh is clothed with worms and a crust of dirt while his skin hardens and runs. Job is suffering and he knows that God has something to do with it and he is in a deep soul searching struggle to understand why should this be? As Job contemplates his sorry condition on the ash heap of Uz he speaks to God and not his harsh and judgmental friends. In our devotional text Job laments that his days are passing quickly without any hope in sight. Further Job pleads that his life is but a breath and it is being lived out in unbearable suffering without the possibility of knowing sweet happiness again. The theme of the brevity of our

short period in this world is a common one in the Bible. James writes in James 4:14 that our life is like a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. The point Job is making to God is that he is suffering greatly and unless there is some intervention on God's behalf his situation and future is hopeless and helpless. Job's plea is not simply based on making him feel good again; rather it is more about knowing why God has dealt with Job in this manner which has been so different than being the focal point of God's blessings. Job wants to know why God doesn't enjoy his intimate friendship anymore. Job cannot contain himself nor be consoled over the loss of his relationship with God, and his mouth will not be shut as he speaks to God in anguish of spirit and bitterness of soul (Job 7:11). It is very unsettling to see Job suffer in this way but it teaches us three things that all men need to know about life itself.

- (1) *Life is short and opportunities are at a premium. Only in the wisdom of the Lord will we seize opportunities rather than to surrender and lose them.*
- (2) *The focus of prayers and requests are rightly placed with God for only He can help us. (Psalm 121)*
- (3) *Hope and happiness are intertwined in the affairs of men and it is God who bestows both. Without our surrender to His power we will never realize these essential characteristics in our lives. (Ecclesiastes 3:26)*

The powerful example of Job on the ash pile of Uz is one of not giving up or giving in to the satanic temptation of throwing one's arms up in the air and saying it is too much for me. That would not do for Job because his relationship with God demanded from every fiber of his being reconciliation to Him. Job cannot walk away from his relationship with God and move on with things not right between them. FATHER AS YOUR SERVANT JOB MAY I STAY CLOSE TO YOU AND NEVER LET YOU GO REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES UNTIL I RECEIVE YOUR BLESSING. AMEN!

Job 7:17-18 "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?" (NIV)

Have you ever longed for a drink of water or to lie down and shut your eyes in sleep because you are so tired? I have been in those situations many times but primarily related to my Army years when I knew that all things were momentary. There was always another day or the future that I could think on and draw hope from. But poor Job finds himself surrounded by three friends that seek to pound a confession out of him to deny his integrity, and a God who once blessed him and now stands seemingly aloof from suffering Job which leaves him in a hopeless state. Men can handle almost anything if they have hope, but if you take hope away most men will simply quit and succumb to their circumstances. So is it any wonder that after day upon day of suffering Job's speech toward God grows so pleading for his present relief. Job speaks to God in a very clear and alarming manner that he is wasting away and his time is growing short. Job even seeks God to pardon his transgressions and take away his iniquity so that he might lie down in the dust and be no more. In short Job is in such a suffering state of physical pain and mental exhaustion that he asks that God spare him further torment and take his life. I have never reached this point in my own life and I pray I never do, but to understand Job's despairing cry to his God gives some insight to what the man was experiencing

without any understanding as to the why of it all. In the land of Uz and the people of the East the cause and effect retribution theology must have made it unbearable for Job in all facets of his life. So we see in our devotional text that Job complains as to the microscopic attention God is giving Job in making his life miserable for him. Job is tired of being target practice for God and simply needs relief from His attention. Job was quite correct in that God is attentive to all men everywhere in minute detail but he makes one big mistake of judgment. Job's mistake was to assume that God's presence is to assure his torment rather than his blessing. God will never let anything come into Job's life that Job cannot endure (1Corinthians 10:13). So as Job continues to struggle with God by talking to him, little does Job realize that with each word he prays to God he is being strengthened to endure the affliction and discomfort he feels. Even though things seem so unbearable for Job that he would ask God to take him, the fact that Job continues talking to God and struggling with understanding what has happened to him is in fact the vehicle of his transformation as he works out in conversation with God (prayer) what he is to think and do during his suffering. The light that should come on for all of us is that because God examines us, knows us, and stays with us; we have his powerful protective presence and security to guide us through this sin filled and fallen world. When we suffer let us remember:

- (1) *God is present there with us and knows our suffering and how much we can endure with His help.*
- (2) *Affliction and pain in our life should always draw us closer to God or we will not withstand our suffering.*
- (3) *Prayer in our momentary afflictions will change us as we pray. Prayer may not change my circumstance but it will change me as I pray on.*

We must always remember the blessing comes from endurance during tough and difficult times because God never forgets, forsakes, or provide what He has promised to us. My God is attentive to all the details of our lives. He can be trusted! FATHER MAY I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO PRAY ON WHEN TIMES ARE BLEAK AND HELP IS NEEDED BECAUSE I KNOW YOU HEAR ME AND YOU WILL DELIVER ME BECAUSE OF YOUR FAITHFULNESS. AMEN!

Job 8:20 "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers." (NIV)

James writes in James 1:19 that we should be quick to listen and slow to speak. The reason for this James makes evident in 1:22 when he writes that we shouldn't just listen to the Word, but we must do it or put the Word into practice. Job's friend Bildad would have been well advised to consider this before taking the baton from Eliphaz and verbally launching into Job as he suffered on the ash heap of Uz. *In Christian communication, as in medical practice, our first goal should be to do no harm. In reality God calls us to far more responsibility in our speech to one another in Ephesians 4:29.* So what began as a journey to sympathize with and comfort an old friend in grievous distress turned into a mission to correct, instruct, and insult Job in his suffering. What is so sad about this episode was the lack of understanding and comfort displayed by his friends as they "reached" out to Job. The problem begins with what we now would call retribution theology which says if you sin bad things happen, and if you don't then good things happen. By the way Job too believed in retribution theology, He just didn't feel he ought to be God's target since he had not sinned. Therein lays the problem since Bildad

can see bad things had happened to Job, therefore by reason Job had sinned and must repent of his sins to get back on the right track with God. Opposite of this thought was Job who knew this punishment was not the result of sin and was desperately trying to understand why his affliction was happening. Of course as readers we know that Job was right and Bildad was wrong from the mouth of God (Job 1:8). So when Bildad accuses Job's speech in chapters 6 and 7 as a blustering wind, it is clear he is not there to comfort Job, but to accuse and "shake" him up a little in an effort to motivate him to repent of his hidden sins. Bildad next does the unthinkable when he states plainly to Job that his children died because of their sins, but Job still has time to repent and get "right" with God. What we do know about this story is that Bildad is guilty of the sin of presumption because we know factually that the children did not die because of their sins. Bildad then uses "proofs" of tradition and natural processes to encourage Job to repent and allow God to make his future what his past was. In this respect Bildad is a forerunner of the modern TV preacher who promises prosperity IF you send a faith seed to him of some \$ amount. As Bildad confidently, presumptuously, and arrogantly delivers his message to Job he speaks our devotional text: "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hand of the evildoers". What Bildad says is absolutely true in spiritual principle but falsely applied to Job in his abysmal circumstances. *The truth is that Job suffered not because of his sin, but rather as directed by the sovereign will of God to refute Satan and bring glory to God!* Here is the material point that regardless of what we suffer we must stay true to God as Job did, and trust Him to strengthen us through the ordeal. **FATHER, I TRUST YOU THROUGH THE SUFFERING BECAUSE I KNOW YOUR LOVE WILL SUSTAIN ME, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOUR GREAT BLESSING IF I REMAIN FAITHFUL. AMEN!**

Job 9:2 "Indeed, I know this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?" (NIV)

Job in response to Bildad's assertions asks three questions in his speech of chapters 9 and 10. Job's practice in carrying on this conversation is less about responding to Bildad and more about talking to his God to understand the reason for his suffering since he knows the source of his suffering is God. *The first question Job frames is our devotional text: how can a mortal man be righteous before God?* In other words Job knows that every man is not without fault in his life and cannot be perfect by any method of measurement. Job doesn't agree that he is suffering because of his sin, but he understands the limitations of Bildad's belief that God will "punish" you if you sin and bless you when you don't. Job understands in his particular instance this is not true for he feels he is suffering unjustly from God's "punitive" action. This raises the question in Job's mind as to how any man can conform to the perfection required to avoid God's afflictions on his life when he sins and is unrighteous before God. What Job immediately realizes is that he cannot challenge God as a man since God is the all-powerful creator and lowly Job has no way to present his case to Him. How would it be possible for a mere man to enter into a dispute with a righteous God? Job is stuck on a fundamental reality of the spiritual life: how can man stand before God and discuss his life circumstances with Him. By what means and in what way may Job talk to God about what Job considers to be his "unjust" suffering. Surely there must be a way if there is to be any fairness in the world. The question is not answered directly for Job as he seeks answers from Holy God, but Job raises the question that God will answer on Calvary's cross in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of the living God. Paul speaks to

this great truth in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." *The answer to Job's question of long ago is found in the person of Jesus Christ since by him alone may we become righteous before God!* Paul further states that it is through Christ and him alone that we may become pure, blameless, and filled with the fruit of all righteousness (Philippians 1:10-11). The question that Job raised when suffering on an ash heap continues to be crystal clear in its meaning for all mankind. How can sin soaked man be made righteous before God? The answer is found in the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ whose blood has freed us from our sins (Revelation 1:5). **MAY WE LEARN FROM JOB'S LIFE WHO SENSED THAT THERE MUST BE A WAY TO BE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD, AND WE NOW KNOW THAT ONLY OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MAKES US RIGHTEOUS BEFORE HIM. GOD HAS MADE A WAY FOR US ALL. AMEN!**

Job 9:32-33 "He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both." (NIV)

I love the idea of advocacy when one person stands up and speaks to protect and promote a weaker person. Back in the day when old cowboy westerns were the entertainment staple they were it was comforting to know that no matter how difficult folks were being treated our cowboy hero would rescue the day and make it all right in this world. When we come to Job's life story where he is on top of the world as the greatest man of the East only to find him soon thereafter sitting on the ash heap scraping his sores, he begins to recognize the need for an advocate. As Job endures through his tragedy the Book of Job seeks to make sense of what has befallen him. Job's story only progresses because of his persistent faith in God who knows his present circumstance and will surely explain the "why?" of his suffering to him. Job recognizes that he is no match to dispute or argue with God even though he thinks himself blameless (Job 9:21). What Job begins to understand as he struggles with his painful predicament is the idea of an advocate or an arbiter between Job and God as indicated in our devotional text. This idea of a "go between" God and man has been around for a long time in Biblical history. Moses stood in the breach for the Israelites after they worship the golden calf made with their own hands when he sought the favor of the Lord not to destroy the Israelites for their idolatry (Psalms 106:23). The prophet Ezekiel tells of God looking for a man who would stand in the gap on behalf of Judah so he would not have to destroy the land with the Babylonian armies (Ezekiel 22:30). In the New Testament what Job longed for is realized in the person of Jesus Christ. Let's examine some of the comforting verses:

- (1) *Jesus Christ is our advocate* (1 John 2:1): Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father based on his willingness to shed His blood on the cross. Jesus Christ speaks on our behalf to the Father. So even as Satan accuses us (Revelation 12:10) Jesus Christ defends us against his accusations.
- (2) *Jesus Christ is our mediator* (1 Timothy 2:5-6): Jesus Christ is our mediator or arbiter between us and holy God based on His willingness to give Himself up as a ransom for all men at the cross. Jesus Christ is our Savior of love.
- (3) *Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead* (2 Timothy 4:1): Jesus Christ will serve as our judge on that last day.

In Job's suffering he remained committed to the God he worshipped and he knew by faith that there must be one to represent him on this earth before God. Many years later this thinking was fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus Christ the Son God. *How can one go wrong since Christ is our Savior, defender and judge?* Absolutely nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39). FATHER THANK YOU FOR JOB WHO EVEN IN HIS MISERY FORECASTED THE NEED FOR SOMEONE TO PLEAD OUR CASE BEFORE A HOLY GOD. WE NOW KNOW THAT THIS PERSON IS JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVOIR, ADVOCATE, JUDGE, AND FRIEND. AMEN!

Job 10:12 "You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit." (NIV)

In chapter 10 Job turns from Bildad to directly address God by remembering God's over watch of his life. Job simply cannot understand why God has turned on him in such a painful way even to the point Job would say "I loathe my very life" (Job 10:1). What can one do under such pressure and stress as Job experienced in his life? Job made the right decision and took his complaint straight to God the Father! *God will hear our cries and pleas because our conversation with God or our prayer life is essential to our understanding God's will for our life and our growing into the fullness of Christ Ephesians 4:13*). The material point is never to turn our back on God even in the midst of those times which are like a fog in our lives and we desperately seek answers but find none. We simply must keep persevering in prayer and ask God those penetrating questions that we must have answered to make our way to the light. *Never be ashamed to tell God how you feel for if you do, you will find healing in His wings as you work through the night's struggles*. This is Job's great example and legacy for us in that he persevered in order to gain the blessing (James 5:11). *If you want the blessing you must persevere, and to persevere you must be engaged with God in continuous prayer always remembering the great compassion and mercy of our Lord*. This is one of the hidden secrets to Job's perseverance in prayer with his God in that he always remembered the past involvement of God in his life as he sought with all he had the blessing of God. In our devotional text we have recorded one of those sweet remembrances from Job that help buoy his hope in those hard times as he sought the blessing of God. There were three truths that Job brought to remembrance about God that apply equally to us today.

- (1) *God gives us life*. John 3:16 says it best "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Job always knew the source of real life was God. We should too.
- (2) *God shows us kindness*. God had provided unlimited kindness to Job before his suffering began but he longed for a return of the great kindness of God. Let us recall Ephesians 2:7 when we are hurting as Paul writes "in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." We all are dependent upon the kindness of God most particularly when we're in the midst of our suffering which demands that we look to the cross of Christ!
- (3) *God watches over us in His providence*. Job had the blessing of God's providential care in his life and as we shall see God restores this great blessing to Job at the end of this book. But in-

between when all hung in the balance one of the great truths that Job cherished was God's providential care.

Please remember that without God we have no life and we should seek Him even in the darkest days of life....never give up or quit on God. God's strength and power will see you through IF you will look to God for life, kindness, and providential care. As Paul said "If God is for us who can be against us." (Romans 8:31). FATHER LET ME FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JOB AND PERSEVERE IN PRAYER EVEN IN HARD TIMES BECAUSE I REMEMBER YOUR GREAT COMPASSION AND MERCY. AMEN!

Job

Read Job Chapter 11, 12, 13, & 14

Lesson Purpose: Zophar's Rebuke and Job's Probing Questions on the Ash Heap

There is purpose in suffering if one seeks to find it. *I call it the "purifying power of pain" in a person's life. It is in suffering that the clarity of our need for God is fully established beyond any doubt.* We only have to look at 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 for the truth of this understanding as we view Paul's reaction to his "thorn in the flesh". In our lesson today it is Zophar the last of Job's three friends that came to sympathize and comfort Job who speaks out. In the same fashion as Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar rebukes Job for reaffirming his integrity that he is not guilty of sin against God to cause this unfair suffering in his life. Zophar also believed in "retribution theology" and he saw Job's miserable state, and knew this must only come from Job's great mischief and sin against God and men. Zophar appealed to his friend to spread out his hand and direct his heart toward God asking for his mercy and putting away sin in his life. If Job would repent then God would make his life brighter than the noonday (Job 11:17), and finally Job would be able to look around and rest securely (Job 11:18). But if Job refuses to confess to the Lord then Zophar leaves the conversation with the happy thought that there is no escape nor hope for the wicked person (Job 11:20). In summary all three friends came to sympathize and comfort Job, and the good fellow Zophar leaves Job with the thought that he is trapped and hopeless before God. How badly this mission has gone for Job's three friends and for Job himself as they set staring at one another on the ash heap at Uz.

We expect Job to punch back with words against these three erstwhile friends, and Job doesn't disappoint us. Job refers to himself as a joke to his friends, and remarks that a just and blameless man is a joke (Job 12:4). Job has fallen from the greatest man of the east (Job 1:3) to being the butt of jokes. What a wretched state for Job to find himself in. But as Job struggles in his pain and suffering, his mind constantly is engaged with a great struggle

with God to discover why this misfortune had befallen him. Job begins by acknowledging that with the Lord there is wisdom, might, counsel, and understanding (Job 12:13). Job points to the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men (Job 12:23-25). Job fully concedes that God is in control of his suffering, and God alone has the power to provide him present relief from it!

Job is unimpressed with his friends' "help", and calls them out with the terms "proverbs of ashes" and "defenses of clay" (Job 13:12). Job and his friends are talking pass one another at this point and no good is being done. *We ought to remember that when our efforts are counterproductive in our ministry we should consider retreating to be alone with God and reassess our intent and motivation.* Job's friends would have been wise to do so since they desperately need an "adjustment" of attitude toward poor Job. Job on the other hand has turned his attention and focus toward God for it is from God alone that the truth of Job's situation will come. It is a great moment of faith in the entire Bible when Job isolated, suffering, and without money family or friends stands on the ash heap and states: "Though he slay me yet will I hope in him." (Job 13:15) Even through this ordeal Job's faith and integrity has not cracked. If only Job could have a conversation with God on his unfair predicament that he finds himself in, possibly God would remove this suffering from him (Job 13:22).

In chapter 14 Job states the obvious that a man born of woman is but a few days and full of trouble (Job 14:1). In his struggle Job understands that his suffering may not be removed which causes him to ask a profound question of faith: "If a man dies, will he live again?" Job wants a relationship with God but cannot fathom why all this is happening to him. Job thinks that maybe God will not keep track of his sin and his offenses will be sealed up in a bag so that God might cover over his sin." (Job 14:16-17). Finally, Job compares himself to a great mountain that is being worn down by natural forces just as God destroys man's hope." (Job 14:18-19) Job is beginning to see some things that are important to man's life with God but not yet clearly enough.

The lessons from Job Chapters 11-14 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

9. When we are talking past one another then it is time for us to go to God and pour open our hearts and examine ourselves to see what God wants done with our attitude.
10. Even in our deepest pain, loneliness, and grief we must never let go of God or quit on him. Let us remember the perseverance of Job in these storms of life (James 5:11).
11. Always remember this physical life is not all that there is, and God's mercy is always sufficient to deliver us from whatever we face!

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. How would you characterize Zophar's attitude toward Job in chapter 11?
2. What had Job become to his friends? (Job 12:4)
3. What does Job say about God in chapter 12? (Job 12:13-25)
4. What does Job think about what his friends are telling him? (Job 13:4)
5. What great statement of biblical faith does suffering Job make in Job 13:15?
6. What does Job really want from God at this point? (Job 13:15-28)
7. Job asks and answers a question of importance in Job 14:4. What was the Q&A? What is the answer in the New Testament Age?
8. Job asks another profound question in Job 14:14. What do these questions of Job really mean to you?
9. What does Job compare himself to in Job 14:11-12?

Thought Questions

1. If you had been in Zophar's place, what would you have said to Job about God?
2. Think of people whom you have seen suffer. When they prayed for relief (as Job did), what kind of relief were they hoping for?
3. What kind of confidence can we have in God if we know that He sometimes lets bad things happen to us?
4. How would you explain the reason why Job did not give over to utter despair?
5. Job asks a question "if man dies will he live again?" in Job 14:14. Why did Job ask this question? How do we answer this question today?

Devotionals from Job chapters 11-14

Job 11:5 “Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.” (NIV)

There are times when I speak without understanding and later come to a realization that I neither understood the circumstances or the person I was speaking to and was left only to be ashamed of my words. Hopefully, you have not fallen victim to preconceived notions or assumptions about people based on appearances. Unfortunately in our devotional text Zophar, the youngest of Job’s three friends, falls into this unenviable trap of speaking without full knowledge of Job or his circumstances. In the case of Zophar we have a friend who came to comfort Job only to find him defending Almighty God by criticizing poor Job who was in the midst of great suffering and pain on the ash heap at Uz. *How is it that a good man can show up to comfort a friend and then turn on him without even remotely understanding the circumstances of his affliction? I think it starts when we lose the focus of love for that person and take our focus off of sharing the comfort of God with them. When we divert from love then we walk into mischief in our dealings with others.* Poor Zophar did this exact thing because he was upset at Job’s continual defense of his innocence when it was obvious to Zophar that Job was steep in sin and rebellion or why else was he suffering so? Zophar believed that Job’s suffering was caused by his sin and his mission was to drive Job to repentance to change his position of innocence before God. Zophar judged Job and lit into him without understanding the source of his suffering which was never Job’s sin (Job 1:22, 2:10). *Life is complex and we better be careful of over simplistic homemade remedies to straightening out peoples problems.* In Zophar’s thinking Job could not have been blameless because he had none of the appearances of the righteous man given his suffering and sorry physical condition. Let’s use Zophar as an example of what not to do in speaking to a friend by remembering some principles that if adhered to will increase our tendency toward bringing God’s comfort to the hurting soul:

- (1) *Humble yourself and recognize that you don’t have all the answers, and can only point people to God for strength in difficult times (Philippians 4:13).*
- (2) *Never judge by appearances (John 7:24) for if you do you will lose all understanding of why you’re there in the first place.*
- (3) *Be motivated by love and share the comfort of God (2 Corinthians 1:3-7), and not your personal critique of what’s wrong in any given life.*

Zophar had much to say to Job with most of it right on target from the standpoint of truth, but all of it lacked the influence of love and without love it meant nothing at all. *Good intentions always turn to ashes when they lack the presence of the love of God as Zophar finds out at the end of the Book of Job.*
FATHER HELP ME TO APPROACH OTHERS WITH A HUMBLE HEART, SPIRIT OF LOVE, AND A NON-JUDGMENTAL MIND SO THAT I MAY BRING GOD’S COMFORT TO THOSE WHO HURT. AMEN!

Job 12:13 “To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.” (NIV)

Whenever we need anything at all in our lives our first thought must be to turn to God. Today I was explaining to a young man the wisdom of AAA as an emergency service whenever some unfortunate event happens to your car such as a flat tire or dead battery. The service is always responsive and reliable from my experience to get me back on the road. Over time I have grown in confidence in using AAA and it is the **SECOND** thing I do after saying a prayer to God and calling out for His help in my trouble (James 5:13). Job in his response to Zophar correctly points out that our Lord is the source of wisdom, power, counsel, and understanding. Given all of this then it should follow that a close and intimate relationship with God is essential to our healthy outlook on life. Unfortunately when you look at the full context of Job’s reply to Zophar in Chapter 12, he sees God as negative in His impacts on the human condition. Job talks about tearing down, imprisoning, flooding, and drought as consequences of God’s involvement with mankind (Job 12:14-15). Job goes on from there in a sense of despair and lists the negative condition of God’s all powerful impact on mankind. We must remember that Job sits deep in the suffering seat and we can understand his emotions in his view of God’s dealings with him. *However, Job gets it all wrong because he doesn’t know the whole story of God’s dealings with all of us so elegantly recorded in John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* God views every man through His great love demonstrated astonishingly when Jesus Christ the Son of God died that we might have eternal life. God’s dealings with the world emanate from love and a desire to reconcile all men to Himself through His grace. *I can understand Job’s negative view but I cannot agree with it since God uses His great power shown so vividly in our devotional text to help us, save us, preserve us, and enable us to be victorious in this world and ready for the next one.* God’s invitation is crystal clear that if we would but turn back to Him and ask for His help in providing wisdom, power, counsel, and understanding in our lives, He would surely do it! *How can we go through this life knowing God is alive in our world without turning to Him in praise and thanksgiving for His help?* If we do our confidence in His loving presence will grow and grow. **FATHER HELP ME TO KNOW YOUR WISDOM, POWER, COUNSEL, AND UNDERSTANDING AND DEPEND ON YOUR RESOURCES FOR MY EVERY NEED. I LOVE YOU DEAR GOD!**

Job 13:15 “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him; I will surely defend my ways to His face.” (NIV)

Have you ever experienced a situation where there was no way out and you had your back literally against the wall? I remember a few times I was there and I can only say it was a moment of great fear for me. What I have found in those special circumstances is that God is in control and there is no real alternative other than giving my burden to God and trusting Him regardless of the consequences (1 Peter 5:6-7). For me it occurred in a tent in Germany when my military career hung in the balance. There are Biblical examples as well including Esther who entered the throne room of King Xerxes to save her people with the words on her lips “if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). Nehemiah faced a similar situation with King Artaxerxes when the King wanted to know what he wanted and Nehemiah prayed to God before asking for the King’s permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild it (Nehemiah 2:4-5). Let the record show that for Esther, Nehemiah, and me that God delivered us from our extremity and provided a way forward. *God always will do this IF we seek His face and inquire of Him*

as to what we should do. In our devotional text we find Job with his back against the wall and there is no way out except to confront God on his present predicament of what appears to be God's devastating blows against his life. Job recognizes that his friends are wholly unable to comfort him in his misery and only by facing God will he be able to speak his case before the Holy One who can do something about it. *My friends let's always remember that ONLY GOD is able to hear our pleas and understand the true joy and pain that we experience, and ONLY GOD is able to act in a manner wholly consistent with what is the very best for us in this life and in the next.* Job reached this point of understanding and he faced his desperate need to approach God and speak his case before Him. Job was compelled to understand how God had moved in his life, and even in his great suffering this determination represented a testimony to the persevering spirit of Job referred to in James 5:11. As I examine Job's persevering spirit and the great endurance he displayed through it all, I must search for reasons that will point me toward that same determination to endure even if it costs me my life. I find two critical truths that we must adopt if we are to follow in the path of our brother Job:

- (1) *I must understand that God loves me and wants the very best for me regardless of the circumstances I face.* (1 John 3:1)
- (2) *I must pursue as the most important relationship and priority of my life that of God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son.* Unless we seek the face of God in all things, by all means, at all times we will never experience the persevering spirit that drove Job forward to that moment when he conversed with Holy God in Job 42. David says it best on this attitude of the persevering spirit: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." (Psalms 42:1)

None of us will get out of this world alive, but all of us MAY (it is our choice) with a persevering spirit cling to God the Father with our last breath because we know only God gives us His very best. *Let us rest assured that God will be there at the end as we exit this world just as he was at the beginning when we entered it.* I STAND IN AWE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND I REMEMBER JOB'S GREAT WORDS OF FAITH "THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I HOPE IN HIM". AMEN!

Job 14:4 "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!" (NIV)

Job directly addresses God in chapter 14 of Job as he continues to seek some relief from his present condition. Job is getting tired and worn down as water over time erodes a great mountain (Job 14:18-19), and he begins to ask some deep rhetorical questions that he thinks he knows the answers to in order to emphasize the difficulty he is in before God. Job understands that no one is perfect and as a believer in the principle of God's disfavor toward the sinner, he raises a question before God of who can make pure what is impure or said another way, no one is sinless. Job answers this question quickly and spouts out "no one!" He does so because he cannot reach such a pristine condition before God sufficient to deny God's wrath based on his own merit, and Job seeks relief from his great suffering. What is Job to do in such a wretched state? My friends so many people in this world arrive at the same place as Job with the same question and with the same answer. *Let me state emphatically that the answer to what can make the impure... pure is not "no one!" rather it is "Jesus Christ!"* This great question that Job contemplates in his grief on the ash heap at Uz points us to the great hope of

the world Jesus Christ who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The answer to this question makes all the difference in the world to Job and to each one of us because God is at work in us through the blood of Christ who loves us and freed us from our sins (Revelation 1:5). The great secret on how we may become pure is revealed by John in 1 John 3:2-3: *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he (Christ) appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”* What can make the impure, pure? The answer should be shouted out on the housetop: Jesus Christ and our hope in Him! Job will go on and commiserate with himself that even the stump of a tree gets another try at life in Job 14:7-12, but not so man. We know today as we look back on the cross this to be untrue because Jesus Christ has led the way for us into eternal life, and we are only able to tread that course because of our hope in Jesus Christ. It is through the shed blood of Christ that my impure body has been made pure in the sight of God. THANK YOU FATHER FOR YOU HAVE ANTICIPATED MY WRETCHED SIN CONDITON AND IMPURE STATE, BUT HAVE MADE A WAY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST TO MAKE ME PURE BEFORE YOU. AMEN!

Job 14:14 *“If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.”* (NIV)

A Christian has no real right to be depressed in this world. Even Job who struggled through his affliction and pain; was always seeking God who he knew had the answers to his present afflictions. Job was tired and under great stress but he never gave up on striving to understand what God was doing in his life. Through this ordeal Job asked some very tough questions, and in fact the biggest one of all is found in our devotional text: *“Is this life all that there is?”* Job worked his way through to his remarkable understanding recorded in his great affirmation of faith in Job 19 *“I know that my Redeemer lives...and after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God.”* Job never gave in and he never gave up as he worked through his afflictions with God, but he always was bold enough to ask the tough and difficult questions of God as he sought to do His will. Of course, Jesus answers this great question found in our devotional text in John 11:25: *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”* The great beauty and privilege of the Christ filled life is that we have open access to the throne room of God to take whatever questions and burdens we might have to Him with the absolute assurance that He will help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). So we must follow Job’s example and not become depressed and drop out from seeking God. For we assuredly know that His great promise is to stay with us and never let us go throughout this life, and the eternal life that will surely come (Romans 8:39). MY FATHER MAY I ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE GREAT THRILL OF THE CHRISTIAN WALK TO KNOW THAT ETERNAL LIFE IS MINE EVEN AS I WALK HAND IN HAND WITH YOU TODAY. AMEN!

Job

Read Job Chapter 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, & 21

Lesson Purpose: The 2nd Cycle of Speeches with Friends Talking Past One Another on the Ash Heap

Chapters 15-21 of Job contain the second cycle of Job's friends talking to him and Job responding to what they have to say. What we can begin to detect in this second cycle is much frustration between both parties and increasingly Job focusing less on his "friends", and more on God in order to get an audience with God so that he might present his case. This great desire by Job for an opportunity to discuss the unfairness of his suffering with God will ultimately be provided to Job at the end of the Book of Job when God speaks out of the storm. As we shall see Job doesn't say too much to Almighty God when he gets his opportunity. However, as Job struggles with this unquenchable desire to talk to God he begins to understand that he must have an advocate, mediator, and arbiter...someone to talk to God on his behalf. *The great value of this section of Job is to understand the necessity of the person and work of Jesus Christ even in early Biblical literature.*

Eliphaz the likely oldest of Job's friends gets his second chance to "comfort" Job and again accuses Job of insincerity and "hot air" because Job refuses to admit his guilt and repent. In this matter we as the readers know that Job is right and Eliphaz has it all wrong from Job chapters 1 and 2. *When I read of these ungracious words of Eliphaz I think of those that would rather prove a point than heal a soul.* True to the nature of those that would argue and condemn, Eliphaz thinks he has all the answers. Eliphaz appeals to older and wiser men (Job 15:10), and his observations of life made over many years to prove his points (Job 15:17-35). Unfortunately Eliphaz got all his "facts" wrong and did much harm to Job in the process of "comforting" him.

In chapters 16-17 Job responds to Eliphaz, but increasingly focuses his conversation on God as he seeks an audience before the Creator. Job knows

the source of his troubles is God and blames God for his woes (Job 16:6-8). Job is tired of God running at him like a warrior and his face is flush from weeping and there is deep darkness under his eyelids. This is happening to poor Job although there is no violence in his hand and his prayer is pure (Job 16:14-17). Job is at the end of himself and he pleads for a witness in heaven and advocate on high to present his case (Job 16:19). His friends are of no help, and his eye weeps for God as he yearns that a man might plead with God as a man pleads with his neighbor (Job 16:22). Job now admits to God that he is broken and the grave is ready for him (Job 17:1). He complains to God that God has kept his friends from truly understanding his plight (Job 17:4). Job in chapter 17 verse 9 seems to be saying that a righteous person who maintains their integrity will grow stronger. Certainly Job is putting this theory to the ultimate test. Finally chapter 17 ends with Job saying "where is my hope?" As long as we have our hope then we can get through it, can we not? Paul writes to the Church at Thessalonica that their endurance has been inspired by their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Where is Job's hope to endure?

Bildad now takes his second opportunity to talk to Job, and follows true to form with criticisms designed to prove Job wrong. We know that Bildad is no longer operating from a spirit of love for he has personalized his discussion with Job (Job 18:1-3). Bildad rubs salt in Job's wounds in verse 19 when he says that the wicked have no offspring or survivors in reference to Job's loss of his children. I cannot think of a more unkind, uncaring, and unloving thing to say to Job. Bildad ends his speech not with an appeal to encouragement borne of love for Job, but a fatalistic outcome of the wicked man. Job's friends have absolutely failed him.

Job answers Bildad by reaffirming his integrity before God that God has wronged him (Job 19:6). Job quickly moves on to address God more than his friends as he complains that God has isolated him from his family and friends (Job 19:13-19), and even his own wife. He pleads to his friends that they pity him because he has lost everything and he is in the midst of great suffering. *Then Job moves to a mountain peak of spiritual thought in the*

entire Bible when he says in Job 19:25-27 that he knows his redeemer lives and he will stand on the earth. But most importantly Job speaks by faith that from his flesh he shall see God! Even in the very crucible of pain and loss, God gives Job enormous insight into His plan for salvation of the nations.

In chapter 20 the last of Job's friends Zophar has his second opportunity to speak to Job, and he simply doubles down on criticizing Job for not admitting his sin before God. Zophar speaks vile accusations to Job that he has no real knowledge of (Job 20:19). Zophar's presumption and exaggeration is fueled by his theology that only bad things happen to bad people. No righteous man would undergo this treatment by God so Job must be a very wicked man and his loss and suffering prove it!

In chapter 21, Job counters with arguments about the wicked to Zophar. Job's first point is to look around and see the prosperity and happiness of wicked men (Job 21:7-9). This is a fact by observation so how can you say that I am wicked because of my suffering? Then Job does all of us a great service to remind us of who the wicked person is in Job 21:14-15. The wicked person's character is fixed by the following:

- They say they don't want anything to do with God.
- They have no desire to know the ways of God.
- They see no reason to serve God.
- They see no gain in seeking God.

Surely Job's friends can see in all around them that the wicked succeed on this earth even though death is their outcome (Job 21:22-26). Job ends by telling his friends they have not comforted him and their answers are full of falsehoods (Job 21:34). What a tragic scene we have between these four people. The lessons from Job Chapters 15-21 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

12. Never speak if you do not know the facts. Presumption is a scandal in the life of a Christian and separates us from the character of God.
13. Hold on and keep holding on to the great thought that "I know my Redeemer lives"!
14. Never judge another person on their circumstances.
15. The wicked are ambivalent toward God! They don't hate God per se; they just don't think God is relevant to their life.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. How would you characterize Eliphaz's attitude as he "comforted" Job in chapter 15?
2. What does Job realize about his circumstances before God? (Job 16:13-22)
3. How would you describe Job' attitude now? (Job 17:1-2)?
4. What has Job lost that he is desperately in search of? (Job 17:15)
5. Bildad goes well over the top in his vicious criticism of Job. What one point by Bildad seems way out of line? (Job 18:19)
6. What does Job feel about what God has done to him? (Job 19:6)
7. What is Job worried about happening since he has gone through this great suffering? (Job 19:23-24)
8. Does Job think one day he will have the opportunity to see God? (Job 19:25-27)
9. How would you describe Zophar's talk to Job in chapter 20?
10. Job is concerned that Zophar's logic fails in two points. What are these two points? (Job 21:7-16)

Thought Questions

1. As Job insisted on his innocence, his friends became even more adamant about his guilt. Name some reasons why they may have feared the truth that Job could be innocent and yet experience suffering.
2. If we cannot assume that because someone suffers he or she is being punished, then what can we assume about someone who is suffering?
3. Name some ways we can worship God even as we are suffering?
4. As you watch people who are struggling, what makes it difficult to "get inside their world" with them?
5. Job asked his friends to listen to him. How important is listening in ministering to someone who is suffering?

Devotionals from Job chapters 15-21

Job 15:9 “What do you know that we do not know? What insights do you have that we do not have?”
(NIV)

There is an old saying when one loses the sense of what is going on that “he can’t see the forest for the trees”. At one time or another all of us have arrived there where either the complexities of life, disruption of life, or simply the daily ups and downs which often throw us off balance cloud our vision and understanding leaving us unsure of our footing as we move forward. Life has a way of doing that to us and it is to our credit if we follow the advice of James 2:19 to be quick to listen and slow to speak. This scripture should appeal to us as obvious since we don’t know all things, or all people, or God’s purposes in dealing with those souls that we meet along the way. Therefore, our overwhelming desire should be to provide present relief and encouragement to our fellow travelers and lighten their burdens rather than to add to them. Unfortunately, Job’s friend Eliphaz does neither with his insistence that Job’s sins were the cause of the great disturbance and pain in his life. Eliphaz makes this great mistake of accusation which we as readers know to be untrue concerning Job from Job chapters 1 and 2 when God affirms the righteousness of Job. Why did this happen and how should it be that Eliphaz and the others who seeking to be Job’s friends become his greatest accusers and judges? *I think the big mistake of Eliphaz and the others is when they became so convinced in the correctness of their position that only Job’s sins could cause his suffering that they lost their humility of heart which is essential to discerning the will of God for any person in the midst of suffering, pain, and grief.* Our devotional text demonstrates the truth of this insight into the heart of Eliphaz because it shows him to be arrogant and not open to any real discussion with Job on his suffering. My friends when we do not operate from a spirit of love we only add more baggage, steal more joy, and create more hopelessness in the lives of suffering people. How do we avoid playing the role of Eliphaz as we reach out to encourage those in their suffering?

- *We approach with a heart of humility and provide a shoulder on which to listen, console or comfort those that are suffering.*
- *Never assume you have the answer for suffering since YOU ARE NOT THE ANSWER unless you point those in their suffering to the comfort of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1).*
- *Never ever forget the royal law of Christian communication found in Ephesians 4:29 which must always guide our speech. There are always four questions you must answer yes to in order to be in obedience to this Christian law:*
 - a. *Do I love this person (wholesome talk is only stimulated by love)?*
 - b. *Will what I have to say benefit this person?*
 - c. *Is now the right time to say what I have to say to this person?*
 - d. *Will what I have to say bring God’s grace into this person’s life?*

FATHER MAY I ALWAYS APPROACH THOSE WHO SUFFER WITH A HEART OF HUMILITY SO THAT I MAY PASS ON THE COMFORT OF JESUS CHRIST CONSISTENT WITH THE PATTERN FOR CHRISTIAN SPEECH FOUND IN EPHESIANS 4:29. AMEN!

Job 16:19-21 “Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.” (NIV)

At the end of all things whether good or bad there is no real comfort, peace, or hope unless we are one with our God. No matter how good or close our family or friends are, and regardless of our wealth or power, when it comes right down to it the end of all things for each one of us rests with our God. Job describes this precise state when he acknowledges life’s big reality after learning of the loss of his possessions, servants, and children that “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 1:21) No matter how deep our valley or strong our storm, and even though we may have lost everything near and dear to us, and all may have deserted us, we must always recall that the Lord will stand at our side and give us strength (2 Timothy 4:17). Job laments in verse 16:16 that his face is red with weeping and deep shadows ring his eyes as he endures his grief of loss and confusion as to why God has allowed this to happen to him. His friends have been unhelpful and added to his grief and burdens instead of lessening them. Job realizes in the deep pit he finds himself in that his vindication and relief can only come from God who knows he does not deserve the pain inflicted upon him. In our devotional text Job senses that which must be true if God is perfect in His nature that there must be an advocate and intercessor who even in the midst of Job’s tears will plead his case to God as a man pleads for his friend. When your soul hits the wall of overwhelming loss and grief there is nowhere to go that will meet our need except to God. Job knew exactly what was needed for him and he desperately hoped that it would be true. Job was 100% right in his longing which we now know was provided for us in the New Testament Age by Jesus Christ who is our intercessor (Hebrews 7:25), and our advocate (1 John 2:1). That Job in an earlier time of God’s relationship with mankind could so clearly see his deep spiritual need for someone who could sympathize with him in the courts of Holy God is a testimony to the spiritual insights imparted to him in his striving through it all to understand his God. The Book of Job is above all else a testimony to the providence and provision of God that no matter what we may face or how difficult it may become our only alternative at the end of the matter is to cling to Him and never let go! Job learned first what David knew that any soul must cling to God (Psalms 63:8) regardless of the circumstances because there is where our hope lays. DEAR FATHER I THANK YOU FOR JESUS MY FRIEND, ADVOCATE, AND INTERCESSOR WHO ALLOWS ME TO CLING TO YOU THROUGH MY VEIL OF TEARS. JESUS IS MY COMFORT, PEACE, AND HOPE. AMEN!

Job 17:9 “Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.” (NIV)

Military doctors would always tell me whatever didn’t kill me would make me stronger. We all understand this general truth when we receive the flu vaccination which infects us with a small dose of the flu virus so that our immune systems might grow stronger to fight off the full onslaught of the flu virus later. As we enter our devotional text we see that poor Job has been through it all losing his possessions, servants, and health and then only to have his three friends speak critical and accusative toward him was more than anyone should have to bear. Against a barrage of negativity and accusation thrown at Job by his friends, when Job was hanging on to his precious faith to understand

why God had allowed such misfortune into his life, he made two life giving observations that we must practice when we face the hard times of this life.

- (1) *Job's first observation was that despite all the adversity, pain, and loss the righteous may face, they will hold to their ways or stay true to Almighty God through the trials and storms of life. For the righteous there is no turning back but simply resolve to move forward hand in hand with Jesus Christ in strong faith that God has the power to deliver us.*
- (2) *Job's second observation is that IF we do hold onto our faith the outcome of our trial will make us even stronger in the Lord.*

A young man recently asked me about his struggles in this life as he studied to be a preacher. He was becoming discouraged for his lack of faith in God's ability to address his future. I told him that faith without testing is no faith at all since it is only through adversity that we truly understand if we are real diamonds of faith or only the cheap imitation of glass when our faith is tested. *I want each one of us to look again at Job's two observations and be reminded that God doesn't allow testing unless He loves us and has a great purpose for us IF we endure the test.* Even James writes to us in James 1:2-4: "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." *Strength in the Lord is proportional to our holding firm to our faith in the Lord and being unmoved by the trials (tests) that come our way.* Just look at Job to see the real demonstration of this truth. TODAY FATHER I WILL CHOOSE TO STAY FAITHFUL TO YOU BECAUSE I KNOW MY STRENGTH IN YOU WILL GROW IF I DO. AMEN!

Job 18:20-21 "Men of the west are appalled at his fate; men of the east are seized with horror. Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who knows not God." (NIV)

May judgment on another human being never pass from our mind through our lips if we are not grounded in the principles of Jesus Christ and wholly motivated by His love for others. Never play Bildad the Shuhite with those you either love or hate by throwing "darts of criticism" against suffering brothers which is a practice beyond the pale of the Christian character. In short, our presumptuous accusations and judgments meant to harm and cause pain are unfeeling, unloving, and unholy before a righteous God! Unfortunately for Job in the midst of enormous suffering brought about by Job's righteousness and not his sin breaks the mold of Bildad's erected understanding of life, and nothing he puts together in his mind can possibly serve Job because it is full of ignorance and delivered with venom toward his one-time friend. Why is it easier for all of us to deliver savage blows when someone is down and out? Could it possibly be that when someone is down that they are not as useful to us? *Always remember a friend is a friend regardless of their attitude or material condition or emotional need. God designed us to help one another and every example and appeal of Jesus Christ is to touch others with His love even if it costs you much.* Job would be at the extremity of this test of friendship for anyone of us, but never be so presumptuous as to declare God's intent or position toward another fellow traveler when you don't know the mind of God! In our devotional text we have the judgment of Bildad delivered on the suffering wreck of poor Job whose is down, depressed, and diseased without one scintilla of compassion. Come on! We must do better if we are in Christ and claim Him as

sovereign of our lives! *Before leaving your house in the morning commit Colossians 3:12 to memory* “*Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*” There it is! Always filter what we say through the knowledge that we are secure in the Savior’s love and that we only deal with others in compassion with kindness based on humility and always delivered with the gentleness and patience of the Lord. My friends if you will heed this call you will never play Bildad the Shuhite in the lives of anyone God has called you to touch with His love. **TODAY IS MY DAY TO HONOR MY GOD BY SHARING HIS LOVE AND MERCY WITH THOSE HE HAS BROUGHT INTO MY LIFE. FATHER PLEASE GIVE ME THE COURAGE AND AWARENESS TO ALWAYS ACT IN YOUR GRACE AND COMPASSION. AMEN!**

Job 19:25-27 “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (NIV)

My friends God never brings suffering into our lives to destroy us but only to test us and build us up in our confidence in His ability to deliver us through every struggle, trial, or storm we may face in our lives. In fact, times of suffering are never deserts of thought and growth; quite the opposite they are those times which are most productive in giving us insights into the mind of God and His will for our lives. Poor Job could not have been more at the end of his tether with his suffering and isolation so overwhelming that even his servants wouldn’t respond to him and his wife and intimate friends were revolted by him (Job 19:6-19). Add to this lonely state the sorry diseased condition of his body which was nothing but skin and bones (Job 19:20), and we can see in a small degree what the man was experiencing. Job’s cry to “have pity on me, my friends, have pity” strikes at the heart of someone who has come to the end of themselves and stands without pretense or hypocrisy in his life. *Job’s vision has been clarified by the purifying power of pain in his life, and he now stands ready to speak on a spiritual peak of the Old Testament.* In our devotional text I believe Job is given insight by God through his suffering to see clearly the great truth of salvation history of the great Redeemer which we now know in the New Testament Age to be Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! This is what Job sees and we must too if we are to appreciate the great prize we have received in Jesus Christ:

- (1) *Our Redeemer lives*-Jesus Christ is alive today!
- (2) *Our Redeemer will stand upon earth*-Christ emptied himself to come to earth so that he might be made perfect in the things that He suffered!
- (3) *Even though I die I will see God with my own eyes*-God will resurrect us on the last day and we will behold Jesus our Lord and Savior each one of us and not another!

Could there be any clearer or more compelling an invitation to the Lord than the one poor Job is priviiged to see through watering eyes and an emaciated body on the ash heap of Uz? *How could anyone of us squander this great opportunity of love and mercy bestowed by Jesus Christ the suffering servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53)?* **FATHER THANK YOU FOR MY REDEMPTION IN CHRIST THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RICHES OF GOD’S GRACE. AMEN!**

Job 20:3-4 “Surely you know how it has been from old, ever since man was placed on the earth that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.” (NIV)

Job’s friend Zophar beginning his second speech to poor Job will regurgitate the stale old charges against Job that his suffering is a direct cause of his sin, and Job’s failure to realize this fact and repent is the cause of his suffering. On this point even if one were to agree with Zophar we would be so horrified and moved at Job’s suffering to do anything we could to relieve it. Even for an enemy we would not want this great suffering prolonged much less for an old friend like Job. Wearily Zophar has lost his way in the matter and there is no happy end for him until God allows Job (Job 42) to intercede in prayer for his poor unloving friend who has no understanding into the true nature of Job’s great suffering. But Zophar in an effort to make his case begins to detail that the prosperity of the wicked is short lived, and since Job’s prosperity has been removed from him then it must be known that Job is wicked or why is he no longer prosperous? We find Zophar’s observation in our devotional text, and immediately recognize that its entire objective is aimed at Job in retaliation to Job’s insistence on his innocence before God. That sin has its consequences there can be no doubt since we know from Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. But one must view life from its totality both on this earth and beyond the pale of eternity before one can be adamant that our devotional text is accurate in all respects as to the brevity of mirth and the joy of the wicked. *A simple observation of life will teach us that in not ALL instances do the wicked not have happy and useful lives even into the grave. We simply cannot make this guarantee that wicked people will receive God’s righteous judgment while in the flesh.* It simply is not a universal truth which is well illustrated in Luke 16:19-31 by the story of Lazarus and the rich man. *Please avoid the sin of presumption by over simplification when attempting to diagnose the struggles of another soul such as Zophar was guilty of with Job. This will not do!* None of us can discern with absolute certainty that people are unhappy and unsatisfied when in sin and only those who are striving to live righteously have mirth and happiness. Just from the experience of life we know this is not true 100% of the time. In my adaptation of a verse of an old poem the great reality of truth lies:

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne, ---

Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, beyond the dim unknown,

Standeth God within the shadow, ready to right the wrong.

The truth is that all things will be brought in order on that last day by a holy God under His great grace, mercy, and love demonstrated in Jesus Christ. What God will do in the final accounting may not mean comfort ease and pleasure for his followers while on earth. Quite the opposite is the case according to 1 Peter 4:12-19. *Zophar got it all wrong about Job not because of his theology but because he lost his compassion of love for Job which blinded him to what his true business was on the ash heap at Uz.* That was the business not of judgment, accusation, and ridicule; rather it was the calling of compassion, mercy, and understanding that was needed in the moment. **FATHER NEVER LET ME APPROACH OTHERS UNLESS I LOVE THEM WITH THE LOVE OF CHRIST OR ELSE I HAVE NOTHING TO SHARE AT ALL. AMEN!**

Job 21:14-15 “Yet they say to God, ‘Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What should we gain by praying to him?’” (NIV)

Throughout the Book of Job we have as the center piece of thought that bad living produces bad outcomes in this life. Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad, and even Job hold to these principles that righteous people are taken care of and the wicked suffer. Job and his friends talk past each other because Job insists on his innocence, and Job’s friends insist on his guilt or why should Job suffer so? There will be no compromise or understanding on this point until God rectifies all of this squabbling in Job 42. But Job in his defense points to the wrongness of the friends’ position that only bad things happen to wicked people which we all know by life observation is not absolutely true in all cases with all people. Further Job defines what constitutes the character and nature of the wicked man which manifestly is not Job’s attitude, speech, or behavior in any way. Therefore Job would reason that since he does not fit the character of the wicked man then he cannot be one, and therefore, Job is suffering unfairly at God’s hands. *So the devotional text is extremely important for pointing out to us the nature of the wicked man. David in Psalm 10 essentially endorses what Job had to say about the wicked man.* I think Job has hit on a very important point about what true wickedness is at its core not symptomatically with vices of the flesh and mind. Notice what Job states in our devotional text as characteristics of the wicked person:

- (1) *The desire to be separated from God! “Leave us alone they say to God!”***
- (2) *There is no desire to learn the ways of God. Wicked persons are not God seekers.***
- (3) *There is no intent to serve God. The focus of the wicked person is on serving self alone.***
- (4) *There is no desire to pray for they do not see the advantage in doing so. Prayer which is faith spoken has no meaning when there is no faith.***

We know from Job 1 and 2 that Job is not the wicked man, and, in fact, Job is quite the opposite. God tells Satan that Job is His servant and a man who is blameless, upright while fearing God and shunning evil. Satan’s reply was does Job fear God for nothing? All of this takes place beyond the pale but here we have the demolition of only good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. *Men are to serve God because they love Him and not simply what they get from Him. God is not an ATM dispensing goodies.* God is the sovereign Lord of the universe and He demands our worship, submission and love. Job’s suffering and his endurance through it all is proof of the righteous character of Job! Job’s friends didn’t see this and Job doesn’t understand it, but all of us are to learn from it. *We are only wicked when we turn our backs on God or quit on God or simply don’t care about God (agnostic).* The lesson must be learned of Job’s perseverance and that is precisely why James includes reference to Job in the New Testament Age (James 5:11). **FATHER HELP ME TO LEARN FROM THE LIFE OF JOB WHO NEVER BROKE HIS FAITH WITH YOU THROUGH MUCH SUFFERING SO THAT I MAY PERSEVERE BY NEVER LETTING GO OF MY LORD!**

Job

Read Job Chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25

Lesson Purpose: The 3rd Cycle of Speeches with Friends Talking Past One Another on the Ash Heap

The third cycle of speeches between Job and his friends shows how quickly the energy is leaving Job's friends to continue to grind away on him in an effort to get Job to admit and repent of his sins, and find some relief from God for his suffering. However, Job continues to maintain his integrity in this matter, and insists that his suffering is not associated with sin on his part, and, therefore God must have gotten his specific case wrong. Job further contends with his friends that if he could just have an audience before the Lord he would tell him of the unfairness of his ordeal. These comments frustrate his friends to the point of distraction, and create some real spite for Job that he would have the audacity to claim his innocence before God when all these bad things had happen to him. Job and his three friends certainly believe that bad things only happen to bad people, but Job knows this does not apply to him and so we have three friends and Job talking past one another on the ash heap at Uz. Eliphaz speaks to Job and Bildad only says a few words with Zophar saying nothing at all in the third cycle of speeches. *So the intervention of Job's three friends which began with such good intentions ends in a whimper with Job and all three friends the worse off for it.* In the end it will only be the intercessory prayer of Job which reconciles Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to the Lord because their folly was great in misspeaking the truth of the Lord to Job (Job 42:7-9). This ought to get us all to a sober thinking of what it means to be presumptuous with the word of God, and speak in ways that are displeasing to God. *The big hint here is that if we don't speak to others in love then we have no part with the Lord!*

Eliphaz gives his last and final appeal to Job in chapter 22. I must say I believe Eliphaz comes unhinged in his accusations towards Job. In Job 22:5-9, Eliphaz makes allegations that we know are patently wrong and Eliphaz has no

substantiation of them since they didn't happen. *I can't tell you how sad a sight it is to see an honorable man so emotionally overcome in his own thinking that he viciously attacks his friend. Please Father keep us all from this wickedness in our time!!* What Eliphaz says to Job in 22:21-30 is generally true in principle but it does not specifically apply to Job. This chapter is a point of emphasis for each one of us to filter our words through Ephesians 4:29. Remember the criteria we are to use based on this passage when speaking to anyone:

- (1) *Do I love this person I am about to speak to?* If you do not love them...get out of there since you have no heart for helping.
- (2) *Is what I'm going to say beneficial for this person?* Negativity is not beneficial for anyone at any time.
- (3) *Is what I'm going to say needful for the moment?* Is now the proper time to say this or should it be delayed?
- (4) *Is what I'm going to say provide God's grace in their time of need?*

Friends if you cannot answer with yes for all of these questions then please leave before becoming an Eliphaz on the ash heap at Uz.

In chapters 23 and 24 Job's remarks are far more directed toward God than they are in response to Eliphaz's commentary since Job and his friends have parted their ways emotionally. *This reminds me that when we are working with another person we only have a limited time to make an impact so we must not squander our opportunity as Job's friends did with their opportunity.* In chapter 23 Job struggles with trying to find God so he might talk to Him. Job goes forward, backward, and left and right but cannot find God (Job 23:8-9). Then Job makes a great statement of faith in Job 23:10: "But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job realizes that if he cannot find God then God will find him. This thought is well illustrated in Psalm 139....please read this Psalm! Job is convinced that if he can see the Lord and discuss his suffering with Him, that Job will come forth as gold. Job then makes a comment about his own character that he has not departed from God's commands since he has treasured the words of his mouth more than his necessary food. What Job is saying is that God and He alone is

Job's highest priority. In chapter 24 Job attempts to come to grips with evil in the world and finally decides that God does not pay attention to it or why would the wicked prosper? (Job 24:12-13) Then Job laments that all of us are here only a short time, and then like heads of grain are cut off (Job 24:24). Job ends his remarks with a challenge for his friends to prove him wrong!

Bildad speaks very briefly in chapter 25 seemingly exasperated as to what he had heard from Job. But in his brief words Bildad raises a profound question for all mankind: "How can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?" Of course the answer at that time is man can neither be justified nor clean. However now in the New Testament Age we know the answer is found in Jesus Christ who freed us from our sins by His blood (Revelation 1:5). We also know that we have been justified through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ so that we might have peace with God (Romans 5:1-2). These questions posed by Bildad on the ash heap at Uz are answered in full with Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection!

Now only Job remains to speak about what he has endured before God with his three friends exhausted and silent.

The lessons from Job Chapters 22-25 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

16. Every opportunity to comfort, touch, talk, and counsel with a friend is precious, and if we do not arrive with the love of God in our hearts we will waste it.
17. God knows the way we take! Never think that for a moment you are outside the eye or reach or touch of your God. His abiding presence is always with us!
18. Obedience to our Lord is correlated 100% with respect and reverence for God's word.
19. The answer to all the hard questions we find in Job is JESUS, PRECIOUS JESUS, OUR LORD & SAVIOR!

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. Was Eliphaz guilty of the sin of presumption and judging wrongly? (Job 22:4-9)

2. Is there anything that Eliphaz says in Job 22:31-30 wrong in general principle?
3. Did these words from Eliphaz benefit Job?
4. How hard is it for man to find God? (Job 23:8-10)
5. Do you think that Job's endurance through this terrible ordeal was inspired by his devotion to the words of God? (Job 23:12)
6. What did Job say God had done to him? (Job 23:13-17)
7. Was Job perplexed by God's ambivalence to the evil in the world? (Job 24:12-13)
8. For the saved and wicked alike what is the great leveler in this life? (Job 24:24)
9. Why do you think Bildad ask the question about man being just or clean before God? (Job 25:4)
10. What's your explanation for why Zophar did not speak to Job in the third cycle of speeches?

Thought Questions

1. If you suffer as badly as Job and if you were accused as Job was what would you say to others? (1) It's unfair, (2) I'm innocent, (3) I deserve this, or (4) something else?

2. What do you think God is doing when you are struggling or suffering?

3. Job admitted that God perplexed him at times. What perplexes you about God?

4. What would you say to Job about his confusion in regard to God's interaction in his life?

5. If our goodness doesn't earn God's love, what does it accomplish in our relationship with him?

Devotionals from Job chapters 22-25

Job 22:2 "Can a man be of benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him?" (NIV)

How important is any man to God? Does God have time to care about even the wise man much less the common man? Does it really matter to God that men benefit Him? All of these rhetorical questions asked by Job's friend Eliphaz on the ash heap at Uz have eternal consequences as to how they are answered. We must remember that Eliphaz was frustrated by Job's claims of being blameless and of righteous character versus the character of the wicked man that Job describes in chapter 21 which clearly is not the character of Job. Eliphaz is mightily agitated that Job seems to desire a special and personal audience with God so that he might discuss the unfairness of his suffering with God. This is simply too much for Eliphaz so he begins to ask questions about God and why He would care about Job so that Job would understand that God knows of his sin and, therefore he should repent to secure the favor of holy God. We know from Job chapters 1 and 2 that Job is not a sinner, but quite the opposite so we also know that what is occurring to Job is not because he is a bad person. *In fact, in this instance of Job we have bad things happening to a good person, and our theology must*

accommodate this reality if it is to have any meaning for us. Job's struggle with his suffering leads him to discoveries of spiritual meaning that are not formally revealed and understood until Jesus Christ enters this world. But let's examine some great truths about Jesus Christ that directly answer the questions of Eliphaz:

- (1) First, God demonstrated his love for ALL men when Jesus Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). Are men important to God regardless of who they are and what state we may find them in? The answer is absolutely yes, and the sacrifice of Jesus proves it.*
- (2) Second, a man may benefit God by letting his light shine so that his good deeds might be seen, and his Father in Heaven might be glorified (Matthew 5:16).*
- (3) Third, God knows us from the moment we are conceived in the womb (Psalm 139:13, 15), and He knows us so infinitely that God knows the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30), and He cares about us so deeply that we can never be separated from His love (Romans 8:31-39).*

Is man important to God? Does God care about man? Does man benefit God? In Jesus Christ those answers are all a resounding yes! God desires that we have a personal, unique, and intimate relationship with Him so that we might approach Him with absolute confidence that He will hear us and we will find grace in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). *Because of Jesus Christ I know that I am important to God and that I have every right in Christ to open myself up to the Father to ask for his help in my time of trouble (James 5:13).* FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW THE STRUGGLES OF JOB SO THAT I MIGHT UNDERSTAND WITHOUT HESITATION THAT YOU SEE ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL THAT YOU LOVE AND WILL USE IN YOUR SERVICE TO GLORIFY YOUR NAME.

Job 23:10 "But he knows the way I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." (NIV)

Have you ever lost your cell phone? I hate to admit it, but sometimes I ask my wife to call me so that I might find where I last "hid" my cell phone. When I hear my cell phone ringing then I know exactly where to go to find it. There have been times when on a trip we have rung my phone not to hear any sound in the car, and then only to go back to the gas station or restaurant to retrieve it. *The point is a simple one that things very precious to us can get away from us in the blink of an eye.* Given all the personal data on a cell phone these days I think you can understand my point of something very precious being lost to us which most assuredly includes our intimate relationship with God. In chapter 23 of Job we find him committed to seeing God face to face in a court room, however there is one key problem, which is that Job doesn't know how to find God (Job 23:3). As Job thinks through his predicament he begins to realize that when he goes forward or backward or left or right that he cannot find God. *Then he comes to recognize a great spiritual principle of walking with our Lord, and that is that God knows the way we take!* The Psalmist points this out beautifully in Psalms 139 where in verse 3 he states: "You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways." Francis Thompson memorializes Psalm 139 in his great poem "The Hound of Heaven" which vividly

pictures in verse a pursuing God for poor lost souls. God knows the way we take, and if we will but seek Him we will find Him. As David points out in Psalm 142:3 "When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me." *People lose their way but God never loses His.* God knows where we are at, and He perfectly understands our troubles so there is nothing that will surprise God the Father when we come to Him. *The question when we are lost is not whether God knows where we are but will we ask for His help in our time of trouble?* No person can withstand the trials and tests of life divorced from the strength and power of Jesus Christ living on the inside of us (Philippians 4:13). This is our great secret in Christ to overcoming the world by fully comprehending that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). Job states that if he is tested by God he will come forth as gold, but we find in Job 38-42 that no one comes forth as gold unless it is through the providence, power and love of God who always gives us the strength to overcome because we can never be separated from His great love (Romans 8:31-39). *I love God because He will never lose me or forsake me or forget me and because He guarantees that I will never be snatched from His hand (John 10:29).* THANK YOU FATHER FOR YOUR LOVE THAT WILL NEVER LET ME GO BECAUSE YOU KNOW MY WAY SO THAT WHEN I CALL TO YOU IN MY TROUBLES YOU WILL COME. AMEN!

Job 23: 11-12 "My feet closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread." (NIV)

*The correlation between obedience and loving the Word of God is 100%! We will never find our way in this world within the circle of the will of God unless we truly treasure the words of God. What does it mean to treasure the words of God? Job answers this question for us in our devotional text when he compares them to his daily bread, and flatly states he needs the Word more than he needs his daily bread! Job was not the beneficiary of the Bible as we are, but nevertheless Job was committed to seeking out and doing what God had spoken for him. What perplexes Job is that he struggles with his suffering as to why should this suffering be happening to him when he walked so closely in the Lord's steps. *My friends what Job is finding out through the purifying power of pain in his life is that we must lean on and internalize the Word of God in our life not to avoid trouble, but to be enabled to persevere through the most difficult of our troubles.* The Word of God is not a book to dust off and retrieve from the closet when bad things happen, but rather it is our very life to be read and digested to strengthen us through whatever comes into our path. Remember what the Lord says about Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:19 that "He (God) was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground." Moses challenged Israel as he made his departure from them on the importance of the life giving word of God. In Deuteronomy 30:14 he states "No, the word is very near you; it is on your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it." *If we don't cherish, love, and use the word of God we will never obey it, and we will never use it to guide us in our most difficult of days.* Do you cherish the word of God more than your daily bread? Do you desire the presence of the Lord as a deer pants for water (Psalm 42:1)? If you do apply these practices daily to your life in Christ:*

(1) *Hide the word of God in your heart that you might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).*

- (2) *Pray that God will open your eyes that you may see wonderful things in His law BEFORE opening your Bible (Psalm 119:18).*
- (3) *Meditate on the Word of God all day long (Psalm 119:97).*
- (4) *Use the Word of God as a lamp in a dark world (Psalm 119:105).*
- (5) *Learn to hate every wrong path so that you might follow faithfully the word of God (Psalm 119:128).*
- (6) *Obey the word of God because you love God! (Psalm 119:167)*

THANK YOU FATHER FOR YOU HAVE GIVEN US THE PRECIOUS LIFE CHANGING, SOUL SAVING, SIN CLEANSING, ALL POWERFUL WORD OF GOD. MAY I CHERISH IT MORE THAN MY DAILY BREAD!

Job 24:24 "For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like heads of grain." (NIV)

The other day in listening to a radio sports talk show the commentator said that no one beats "Father Time". Of course what was being referred to was that even the greatest athletes in the world sooner or later find their great skills eroded by the passing of time and the diminishment of age. The inevitability of growing old afflicts every person that is fortunate to pass that way in life. Getting old is natural and inevitable if we survive on this planet. That life is brief should come as no surprise to those of us alive in the world and who say good bye all too frequently to members of our family, friends, colleagues, and notice the passing of the rich and famous continuously in the media. James states in James 4:14 "that we are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." *What all of us must remember in this world is that we are pilgrims who have been given a sacred trust by the God of life, and we must be faithful to that God given trust to be righteous, loving, and giving in this world.* We have no guarantees of time to be here and we must be prepared to say good bye to those closest to us if God calls us home to Him. This inevitability of the temporary nature of life should be a sober reminder by a loving God that we must live well in this world. In our devotional text Job is referring to the wicked who work their mayhem, but the outcomes of the wicked and the righteous are the same in that all people sooner or later must depart this life. *The issue is not the inevitable outcome of physical life which is death, but what is our direction and where are we going when we say goodbye to the dearest of those around us?* Just remember that if you are in Christ then you are assured of eternal life as you depart this world (John 3:16), but if you are not in Christ there is nothing but condemnation for you (John 3:18). Please let Job's conclusion of our devotional verse remind us that we must be in Christ. *How do we get into Christ? Read Galatians 3:26-29: "You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

FATHER HELP ME TO REALIZE THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME SO THAT I MIGHT CLING TO YOU AND DO GOOD TO OTHER MEN. GIVE ME THE COURAGE OF FAITH TO BE BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST SO THAT THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WILL CLEANSE ME OF ALL MY SIN. AMEN!

Job 25:4 "How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?" (NIV)

It is always important to avoid extreme positions in discussions and arguments that we may find ourselves in. Solomon states plainly that the man who fears God will avoid all extremes (Ecclesiastes 7:18). In Job 25 we find Bildad at the end of his patience with Job and so frustrated that his third speech is exceedingly short because it seems he has run out of things to say to Job and knows that Job is not paying attention to any of his points anyway. We may also notice that Zophar doesn't say anything following Bildad so Job's friends are spent in their accusations, criticisms, and instructions for poor Job. One might say with friends like these who needs enemies. Unfortunately Bildad in an effort to make a point to Job says that man is only a maggot or a worm. God doesn't see men in this way even if we act like it because God loves us and He created us in His image (Genesis 1:27). Bildad's frustration took him to the wrong place, but Bildad asked two very important questions that get to the heart of who man is and what hope is there for him. The first question was: "How then can a man be righteous before God?" The second question was: "How can one born of woman be pure?" Now the answer to these two questions of our devotional text tell us why man is neither a maggot nor a worm. For me the answer is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made him (Jesus Christ) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" *The answer to how can a man be righteous before God is JESUS CHRIST! The answer to how can one born of woman be pure is JESUS CHRIST (1 John 3:3).* If there was no Jesus Christ then Bildad's conclusion that all men are maggots and worms would be right, but thanks be to God that Jesus Christ lives always to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Is it not remarkable that the Old Testament Book of Job which focuses on a suffering saint finds many of its answers in the person and work of Jesus Christ? Let us all be reminded that no matter how far we may drift, or how deep we may sink, or how hopeless our condition may seem....we are only one decision away from being placed back on the right path. That decision is to choose Jesus Christ and obey Him. *If we want the life that wins and the life that overcomes then we must be wholly connected to Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God for apart from Jesus we can do nothing (John 15:5).* FATHER MAY I FOCUS ON WHO I AM AS YOUR CHILD AND WALK CONFIDENTLY IN THIS WORLD AS I STAY CONNECTED TO JESUS CHRIST AND ALLOW HIS POWER, LOVE, AND GRACE TO FLOW THROUGH ME. AMEN!

Job

Read Job Chapters 26, 27, and 28

Lesson Purpose: The Power and Wisdom of God from the Mind of Job

Job criticizes the words of his friends and challenges them straight up on their lack of wisdom, insight, and authority of their words of counsel to him (Job 26:1-4). Then immediately Job pivots to a discussion on the greatness of God as creator of the universe. Job makes two superb points about the creation. The first is that God hangs the earth on nothing which accurately speaks to the planetary forces that bind the earth in orbit and space (Job 26:7). It is also remarkable that Job discusses a circle on the surface of the waters referring to the horizon which stands at the boundary of light and darkness (Job 26:10). Only if those who worried about Columbus sailing off the edge of the earth would have read Job they would have known better. Job ends his observation of God's greatness as a creator of nature by making the comment that this great work of creation is only the fringes of His ways (Job 26:14). The implication is that God is so great and powerful, and as a result how then can these feeble friends properly know the will of God to instruct him?

This causes Job to revert back to his defense before God of his integrity no matter what! (Job 27:1-6) Job then goes on to talk about the wicked and all the bad things that occur because of their wickedness. This part of Job's speech contrasts with some of what Job had said before when the wicked benefit by their evil actions. *But Job questioned the justice of God (Job 27:2), and in so doing put himself above God. This was a big mistake by Job and demonstrates a shift in his attitude toward God.*

Finally, Job uses chapter 28 to discuss the wisdom of God in one of the most meaningful chapters of the entire people. Job says that man cannot mine for wisdom (Job 28:1-11), nor can man buy wisdom (Job 28:12-19). Then where does wisdom come from? Job answers in Job 12:23 that "God understands its

way, and he knows its place.” Finally after Job establishes only that God is the source of wisdom, he then defines what wisdom is in Job 28:28: “And to man He (God) said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.’” So as Job winds down his discussions we begin to gain some insight into his thinking about God and how God has dealt with him through his friends. In summary Job holds fast his integrity that there has been nothing that should have caused his painful suffering. But Job goes on to praise the greatness of God in His creation, and the wisdom of God which has its origins in the mind of God. Job makes it clear that his friends have failed him as they have attempted to console him. Job is now about to finish his words over the next three chapters (29-31) until God talks to him from the storm in Job 38-42.

The lessons from Job Chapters 26-28 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

20. Job maintained his integrity by never giving up or quitting on God. We must do the same in our lives!
21. Never question the justice of God. Simply trust God!
22. The Bible’s accuracy is attested by the physical truths of nature.
23. God is the source of all wisdom. Wisdom is defined as the “fear of the Lord”, and understanding is defined by “departing from evil”.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. How did Job really feel about the advice he got from his friends? (Job 26:1-4)
2. What does the Lord hang the earth on and why should that be important to us? (Job 26:7)
3. How does Job describe the creation in comparison to who God truly is? (Job 26:14)

4. Was Job pleased with how God had dealt with him? (Job 27:2-4)
5. Job finally admitted that his friends were right and then denied his integrity? TRUE or FALSE (Job 27:5)
6. Is wisdom priceless? (Job 28:12-19)
7. Who knows where wisdom is? (Job 12:23)
8. Who is the source of wisdom? (Job 28:28)
9. What is wisdom? (Job 28:28)
10. What is understanding? (Job 28:28)

Thought Questions

1. If you could respond to friends or people who kicked you while you were down like Job's friends did, what would you tell them?
2. Job stated that God didn't treat him fairly nor was He just toward him. Would you describe Job's response to God as sinful or disrespectful?
3. Job says we cannot mine for wisdom so how are some of the ways we may obtain it?
4. Is it possible to lose wisdom if you have found it? If so how would this happen?

5. Job's friends seemed to believe that their understanding of God represented just about all there was to know about God. What % of the truth about God do you think your understanding of God represents?

Devotionals from Job chapters 26-28

Job 26:14 "And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?" (NIV)

The Bible is the eternal, flawless, and life changing word of God. The Bible has contained in it all that we need to know about God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and His Holy Spirit. *So when we go deep into an Old Testament Book that was likely written even before the Mosaic Age began it is with great awe that we see the validity of scientific principles described that were not confirmed until the modern era.* How could this possibly be without the all-knowing hand of God? As the Apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:21: "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Look at Job 26:7 to see language from the earliest days of literature that describes the proper nature and role of the earth as part of the planetary system: "He (God the Creator) spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing." Yes the earth does hang from nothing as it rotates in perfect time and space around the Sun to preserve life and provide for order so necessary for it. Further examine Job 26:10 where it is mentioned that God marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness. I prefer the New American Standard translation of this verse which says that "He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters..." Even as late as 1492 when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, learned men were concerned that the world was flat and poor Columbus and his crew might sail off the end of the world. Had men studied Job as the inerrant word of God they would not have reached that conclusion. May none of us ever take the word of God lightly, flippantly, or casually! So when Job writes of God's awesome creation this information alone should teach us of the reality and power of God so that we are without excuse in our acknowledgement and worship of Him (Romans 1:20). *In our devotional text Job speaks to God's creation and tells us that this is only the outer fringe of his works, and that we cannot possibly comprehend the fullness of His power.* Job never doubted the power of God throughout his suffering on the ash heap of Uz. Job accepted that God was sovereign over all people at all times in all things. Because of this great power Job is confused as to why God is unfair to him in that he is suffering so and has done nothing to deserve it. Job must find a way to move into the presence of this awesome God so he might tell God how unfair and pitiful his suffering is. My friends never blame God, but always recognize that your reality is shaped through His sovereign will and loving hands. *The issue in Job's life and ours is not that bad things happen to us, but rather how will we respond to them? Will we respond with faith in God to carry us through? Will we quit or grow discouraged and apathetic towards God? The answer we make to this question is central to our happiness, stability, and eternal destiny. Never give up on the awesome creator of the universe as you look to the persevering example of Job (James 5:11).* FATHER

**THANK YOU FOR THE BIBLE WHICH IS YOUR UNERRING, ETERNAL, AND LIFE CHANGING TRUTH.
AMEN!**

Job 27:2-4 “As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit.” (NIV)

Whatever one might think of Job, one must admit that in the most grievous testing of the human spirit Job evidenced tenacity and perseverance that was simply beyond most of us. It is clear that Job had no use for the counsel of his friends. In Job 27:5, Job affirms this when he tells his friends that he will never admit that they are in the right. He goes further on to say until I die I will not deny my integrity. All the back and forth on the ash heap of Uz change no one either Job or his friends one twit. How sad it is when we desperately need the love and touch of friends, and we get neither as we talk past one another. *This ending is a strong reminder that we must be loving in our nature, caring in our speech, and supportive in our thinking or we will get it all wrong just as Job’s friends did.* However, there is one point that is raised in our devotional text that must be discussed. Job raises the name of God in an oath which was a very sober and profound thing to do in that ancient culture as he states that God has denied him justice and forced bitterness of soul upon him. I take issue with Job on this point as God will too later on in the Book of Job (Job 40:8). *God’s justice is unerring, pure, and perfect in this world; God has every right to shape us and mold us as his creatures using whatever God deigns as right and just.* Fortunately for all men God doesn’t give us justice, but grace based on Jesus’s becoming sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). God is a just God, but if we like Job call out for God’s justice we will bring down the wrath of God upon ourselves. It is not justice that we must have but grace which was blood bought by Jesus Christ the Son of God (Ephesians 2:1-10). This is not a question of Job’s sinlessness because Job is a sinner since no one is perfect! But in the matter of question Job is blameless because God said it was so (Job 1:8). *My material point is that God is infinitely just to bring whatever he chooses into our lives.* Because it is bad, difficult, or adverse doesn’t mean that God is unjust in bringing it about for our good and His glory. God always provides a way of escape for our testing (1 Corinthians 10:13), and if we surrender to our Lord in the moment of trial all things will work for our good (Romans 8:28). Nothing we face in this life no matter how great the cost, pain, or loss is beyond the grace of God to grow us, mature us, and enable us to touch others with the comfort of the Lord. Job will soon learn this but we know it because of Jesus Christ who died for us so that we might have eternal life (John 3:16). Job makes an oath and then criticizes the justice of God which was stubborn and wrong-headed as Job will find out when God speaks out of the whirl wind in Job 38-42. As sin soaked human beings we deserve nothing but God’s wrath, but the blood of Jesus has made us one with our God through His blood shed on the cross (Colossians 1:20). *The truth of the matter is that Job was able to persevere not because of how great Job was, but because of the grace of God which was sufficient for Job to withstand all that he faced and maintain his integrity before God.* God’s grace is what we crave for because it is sufficient for any trial, test or temptation we will face in our lives. **THANK YOU FATHER FOR YOUR GRACE WHICH OVERCOMES YOUR JUSTICE AND WRATH FOR OUR SINS IF WE ARE IN JESUS CHRIST. AMEN!**

Job 28:28 "And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'" (NIV)

For me chapter 28 of Job is an oasis in Job's back and forth with his friends because it stands as one of the finest discussions on the wisdom of God in the entire Bible. That Job would arrive at this point through his suffering speaks to his deep struggle to understand God and His purposes in letting Job suffer so. What Job is convinced of is that his friends do not have the wisdom of God. They had plenty of knowledge and Job agreed with them on principal of much of what they had to say, but in Job's case these truths were not applicable to Job's situation. This brings the matter of God's wisdom into focus for Job because he is seeking the "why?" of his pitiful circumstance on the ash heap of Uz. Job makes his first point in chapter 28 that you cannot mine for wisdom as you do for precious metals and minerals. Wisdom is far rarer than silver or gold. The second point that Job makes about wisdom is that it is priceless since nothing of earth's value can buy it. So if you cannot mine it from the earth and you cannot buy it, how might one obtain wisdom? Job answers this question in Job 28:23: "God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells..." God is the source of wisdom and He alone has it to give. (Proverbs 2:6). We are commanded to ask God for wisdom in James 1:5. There is no doubt that the source of wisdom is only God and we are dependent upon him for the gift of His wisdom. But what is wisdom? What does it consist of? Job answers this question in our devotional text when he quotes God "that the fear of the Lord is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding". The reverence and respect for God is a prerequisite for wisdom in this world. What does the fear of the Lord mean? *It doesn't mean paralyzing fear, but rather an energizing desire to know how God works and operates in our lives. The second component of wisdom is to shun evil which is understanding. So wisdom and understanding are not arrived at by accident, but rather by seeking the face of the Lord (Psalm 53:2). In Job's struggles he heard a lot of advice from his friends but all of it was rubbish because they did not seek out the Lord for wisdom and understanding as Job did. All of us must seek God's wisdom diligently if we are to live wise and well in this world. Wisdom is essential for us to know God and follow Him while staying away from the entrapments we are all subjected to in this modern world. We must have wisdom to say no to the voice of friends like Job had so that we might maintain our integrity before God! FATHER HELP ME TO SEEK YOUR WISDOM AND TO USE IT TO SUBMIT TO YOUR WILL AND HATE EVIL IN MY LIFE!*

Job

Read Job Chapters 29, 30, and 31

Lesson Purpose: Job's Final Words on the Ash Heap at Uz

Job 29-31 represents three chapters that are organized to position Job's final pleas to God. In chapter 28 Job looks back fondly on all that God did for him when he was living in a blessed state with his wife and children. Material blessings flowed to him as well as the respect and admiration of all that knew him. As Job put it his "path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out streams of olive oil" for him (Job 29:6). Job puts it quite rightly in those days that he was in his prime (Job 29:5). Job felt at peace and in favor with God because as Job saw it he was doing good and being righteous. There can be no question that Job was a righteous man who had secured the favor of the Lord. Job ends his reminiscences of his earlier life by highlighting that he was a king among his troops (Job 29:25). Chapter 29 is simply another place in Job where he equates his high and happy state to God because Job is a good person doing good things.

In chapter 30 Job contrasts his present pathetic reality with where he was in his earlier life under God's blessings. Younger people mock him (Job 30:1), and spit on his face (Job 30:10). Job lives in a disgusted and humiliated state because God has chosen to afflict him to the point that his soul is poured out and he lives in constant affliction (Job 30:16). Job cannot understand why this has happened to him, and where God has gone. Job cries out to God for help, but he receives no answer (Job 30:20). Job complains to God that He is cruel to Job and that God persecutes him (Job 30:21). Job did good in his life and was expecting good to come, but only evil and darkness entered his life (Job 30:6). Poor Job he cannot relax because of the incessant suffering and pain as he goes about crying out for help in the public assemblies (Job 30:27-28). Job ends chapter 30 with a whimper admitting he is isolated and his body is disfigured and racked with pain (Job 30:29-30). Simply put Job has finally reached his breaking point and now can only look about in deep despair.

In chapter 31 Job has had enough and he lays out his case for God to hear. Job simply cannot understand why all of this has happened to him because surely God sees his ways and numbers his steps (Job 31:4). Next Job goes from one point of excellence in his life to the next and provides oaths as to what should happen to him if these things are not so. Job wants God to hear his case and make a decision immediately! Job has been faithful to his wife in every way (Job 31:8-12). Job has treated his slaves well and addressed their claims promptly (Job 31:13). Job has treated the poor and the orphans with respect and provisions for food and clothing (Job 31:-23). Job has placed his faith in God and depended upon God alone for his security thereby maintaining his loyalty to God (Job 31:24-28). But Job is now at the end of himself for he is tired, humiliated, and in pain from constant suffering and he desperately wants God to correct the terrible reality he now faces. God's dealings with Job have been unfair and unjust according to Job and he desires to ask God for relief from his punishment. Soon and very soon God will respond to Job's request in a surprising and unexpected way (Job 38-42).

The lessons from Job Chapters 29-31 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

24. Life is always better lived out in the circle of the will of God.
25. Never think we earn points from God by what we do as opposed to who we are.
26. Sometimes life is unfair but God is always just, always merciful, and always filled with love toward us.
27. To the very end Job was passionate about his relationship with God which kept his endurance going. Never forget that!

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. Who watched over Job and what did He do for Job? (Job 29:26)

2. Did men respect and honor Job? (Job 29:7-11)

3. Did Job treat the less fortunate right? (Job 29:12-17)
4. How does Job describe his elevated state before God? (Job 29:25)
5. Who does Job hold responsible for his pain and suffering? (Job 30:20-23)
6. How do people treat Job now? (Job 30:10)
7. How would you describe Job's mental, emotional, and physical state in his suffering? (Job 30:26-31)
8. As you read chapter 31 how does Job feel about himself? (Job 31)
9. Job wants to meet God and lay out his case before him. Does Job think God could do this immediately if he wanted to? (Job 31:4)
10. Would you say Job is a good guy and deserves to be treated well by God? (Chapter 31)

Thought Questions

1. Job counted his blessings from the past. How do our past blessings bring us comfort when we are in the midst of a struggle?
2. Job lost everything from family to possessions to his reputation. What are the differences between losing your possessions and losing your reputation in terms of how you come to grips with it?
3. Have you ever like Job wished for God's judgment on yourself?

4. Do you feel sorry for Job and agree that God was unfair to him in the way Job was treated?

5. How does suffering affect our outlook on the future?

Devotionals from Job chapters 29-31

Job 29:2-4 “How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness! Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house,” (NIV)

As Job closes out his words in the ongoing discussion with his friends, he uses chapter 29 to wistfully recall the goodness in his life when God watched over him. Job recalls this time of closeness with his God as when the Almighty was still with him and his children were around him. Job says his path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out streams of olive oil (Job 29:6). That Job’s existence was blessed by God and that God put a protective hedge around Job there can be no doubt. So as Job looks back he sees the good old days and yearns for them contrasted with the horror that he is now living with in the present. I cannot blame Job for this looking back since as we shall see he doesn’t get stuck in the past. Notice what God did for Job as we see the value Job placed on his intimate friendship with God:

- (1) God watched over Job.
- (2) God’s lamp shone on Job’s head and by his light he walked in darkness.
- (3) Job lived in the prime of life in the circle of the will of God when God’s intimate friendship blessed his house.

Life was good for Job and he thought it would go on forever. Job really did believe that if you were a really good person then you deserved to be treated really good by God. Job and all three of his friends believed this concept as bed rock truth. *What I want to challenge us with is to not accept a belief system that assumes that if you do this, help that, or give more money then no problems will come your way and you will be spared discomfort, hard work, or pain.* While friendship with God is essential to walking in the circle of the will of God it comes about by obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ (John 15:14). Obeying the commands of God requires sacrifice, love, and submission on our part for obedience does not come about naturally for mankind. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this truth to us when in Acts 14:22 as he strengthens and encourages the disciples to remain true to the faith he

states: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." What's more is that these hardships are to be endured as discipline from a loving God who is treating us like sons. God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:7-12). *God's goal for each one of us is not our comfort, ease, and pleasure; but that we might grow up and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).* So I know Job misunderstood the nature of his relationship with God since Job attributed God's blessings to his own merit of how good he could be and of how righteous he could live. God blessed Job because Job was his servant and it was the desire of God's heart. *Job is now coming to realize that we love God and cling to him not because of what He gives us, but because of who He is!* It was God's choice to favor and elevate Job in this world and not Job's performance which brought it about. **FATHER I WANT TO HAVE AN INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP WITH YOU THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO YOUR WILL AND SERVICE TO OTHERS!**

Job 30:20 "I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up but you merely look at me."
(NIV)

Job continues his final words on the ash heap at Uz and now in chapter 30 he contrasts his current state of misery and suffering with the sweetness of his life before in intimate friendship with God (chapter 29). *What Job failed to realize was that God was as close to him then in his moment of despair as God was in his times of plenty.* Sometimes life distracts us from the power of God's presence in our lives through mistakes, missteps, and failures that we all experience. But we must never lose track that God is with us in all things for all times at all places. We cannot forget this great truth as we walk day by day by faith and not by sight. The real message for us in times of distress is straight from the heart of God: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). We have this guarantee regardless of the storms of life that may even blow us off course from time to time. Poor Job felt that God had deserted him for he cried out in his misery but could not discern the intervention of God to help him in his condition of suffering and terror. In our devotional text we find Job upset by receiving no answer or action by God to change his current condition. *But as readers we know that this view is not true; and, in fact is quite the opposite since God is over watching these events transpiring on the ash heap at Uz and will intervene soon and very soon to set the record straight, Job straight, and Job's friends straight.* God is a God of engagement and a God of help. Look at Isaiah 64:4 and accept by faith that our great God acts on behalf of those who wait on Him! Does not the Lord want us to call on Him when we are in trouble (James 5:13)? *The truth of the matter was that God was closer to Job in his pain than He ever was in His plenty, and the Lord knew exactly what Job was experiencing and for what purpose he was experiencing it!* God doesn't play around with us, but rather He uses us for our good and His glory to make a difference for Him in this world! Let us never accept for a moment that we are alone in this world regardless of what our circumstances may be telling us. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul who although deserted by everyone saw the Lord stand by his side to give him strength to proclaim the message to the Gentiles (2 Timothy 4:16-18). It wasn't just that one time for Paul since he had a great faith, hope, and confidence that the Lord would rescue him from very evil attack and bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom. *Job got it wrong when he complained that God wasn't there for him.* God was very much aware of Job's suffering and tenacity in holding fast to his faith in God. And in the end God blessed the later part of Job's life more than the

first (Job 42:12). God never lets us go for a second, but we must stand firm in our faith in Him or we will not stand at all (Isaiah 7:9). **FATHER EVEN THOUGH MY HEART GROWS FAINT AS THE DAY GROWS LONG I WILL TRUST IN YOU WITH MY LIFE! AMEN!**

Job 31:24-28 "If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security, if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.'" (NIV)

In a last gasp before he stops speaking, Job defends his ways before the Lord and asks for God's judgment once and for all. Sometimes we should be careful of what we ask God for as Job will soon find out when God speaks to him out of the whirlwind (Job 38-42). But let us not be too harsh on Job since he has suffered much without encouragement from his friends, and he is tired and at the end of himself on the ash heap at Uz. What Job presents to God in chapter 31 is already certainly known by Him since God has called Job blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil (Job 1:8). *Let us always remember that this life is centered on our hidden life with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3), where we are assured that God knows what we need before we even ask (Matthew 6:8).* Job felt that he had to defend himself with many words and in great detail, but the mind of God knew who Job was, what he had done, and the pain of his suffering and loss. God knew Job more than Job knew himself, and he loved Job with a love that would never let him go since His intent was to bless him in the latter part of his life greater than the first (Job 42:12). *Never ever think that God doesn't care, understand, or plan for our lives when we are hurting just as Romans 8:31-39 points out to us.* As part of his defense Job talks about his attitude toward depending on material things for his security in this world. Isn't it odd that at the dawn of history mankind was struggling with what the proper place and role of money and other physical assets are in our lives before God? Today in the modern era this discussion has if anything heated up as men struggle with what's of real value to them. *Job's answer was correct back then and it is true also for today that to substitute money for God as our security in this world is very foolish indeed.* Just ask the man who planned to build bigger barns and lost his life that same night (Luke 12). Our value as a person is wholly tied to the great love of God who gave His only Son that we might have eternal life (John 3:16). *Job understood vaguely what we must understand as Christians explicitly that our security is only in our Lord and nothing else!* Recall what Job says about things that substitute for our loyalty and faith in God to provide for us. If we do so we do it our own risk since we will be unfaithful to God on high. **THANK YOU FATHER FOR JOB'S LIFE AND THANK YOU FOR GIVING US YOUR GREAT INSTRUCTION FOR OUR SOULS AS WE SEE JOB PERSEVERE IN FAITH ON THE ASH HEAP AT UZ BY TRUSTING IN YOU FOR HIS SECURITY IN THIS LIFE. AMEN!**

Job

Read Job Chapters 32 thru 37

Lesson Purpose: Elihu Speaks Out

What should we do with the speech of Elihu which drags on for six chapters of the Book of Job? There are three observations that I would make as we look at chapters 32-37 as one unit:

- (1) Elihu is young and has waited a long time for his opportunity to speak. His anger had built up against Job who would not admit to his sin, and for his friends who were tired and out of words to speak back to Job. Job got the last word on his friends and Elihu didn't think that was acceptable, so he spoke up!
- (2) Elihu believed essentially as Job and his friends did that good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. Given Job's great suffering how could Job possibly deny his sin and evil works in this world? Job must repent and return to God to be restored. Why would Job be so stubborn as to refuse this? So one can see Elihu believed in a retribution theology as much as the other four fellows on the ash heap at Uz.
- (3) What made Elihu's speech different were the grounds upon which he asserted his "truths" and reached his conclusions. Elihu relied on spiritual wisdom to conduct his speaking out, and not simply the authority of the elders or natural observations (Job 32:8, 18; 33:14-22). But Elihu goes even further and claims that he speaks directly for God (Job 36:2), and that he is perfect in knowledge so his words must be listened to (Job 36:4). Clearly Elihu took on too much for himself as he spoke to Job. Maybe that is why Job chose not to respond to Elihu since it would have done no good.

What is definitely a highlight of Elihu's speech is his discussion of God in the storm in chapters 36 and 37 as he challenges Job to explain the power

majesty, and sovereignty of God. Of course this approach will be used by God as he speaks to Job out of the storm beginning in chapter 38. What we must realize is that Elihu departs and not one word is said about him throughout the rest of the Book of Job. Nevertheless we should glean the eternal truths that the word of God contains for us in every chapter, paragraph, and line!

Chapter 32 introduces us to Elihu who apparently was observing all this back and forth on the ash heap and he wanted his say in these things! I wonder how many others watched too? The crowd could have been enormous just to see Job, the greatest man of the east, brought low by God. It is clear that Elihu speaks from his spiritual wisdom and he must speak for he is full of words (Job 32:18).

In chapter 33 we notice that Elihu claims to speak for God (Job 33:4). He provides Job instruction on various ways and means God speaks to men including the bed of affliction by unleashing the purifying power of pain into a life so as to keep him from sinning (Job 3:19-22). Now if Job would only learn from God's punitive action toward him and pray to God then Job can get through this. Elihu cannot understand Job's refusal to admit his wrong to God!

In Chapter 34 Elihu again commends Job to listen to his wise words. His primary point is that God doesn't make mistakes since He does not act wickedly or pervert justice (Job 34:12). Secondly Elihu remarks that God's eyes are on the ways of men and he sees all their steps (Job 34:21). How possibly could God get His judgment wrong of Job? Elihu completes Chapter 34 with a real blast of personal criticism toward the unrepentant Job (Job 34:35-37).

Chapter 35 intensifies Elihu's criticism of Job and slams him for claiming something he never said that his righteousness was more than God's (Job 35:2). Elihu is particularly offended by Job's oft stated desire to present his case before God, and states this is an empty hope for a sinful man who refuses to admit his transgressions (Job 35:12-16).

Chapter 36 finds our young friend Elihu over the top in how he thinks about himself since he claims to speak for God and to have perfect knowledge (Job

36:1-4). Elihu repeats his great mistake of theology which many also believe in the modern era that if you serve the Lord then there are only good things awaiting you like prosperity and pleasure (Job 36:11). By our own experience and observation we know this to be a false teaching! As chapter 36 closes Elihu is transitioning to the God in the storm motif.

In chapter 37 Elihu closes his speech with God in the storm and he asks Job some probing questions very similar to what God will ask him coming out of the storm in the next chapters. Elihu closes with a description of Almighty God that is majestic but not accessible by man. We know that this is not the true nature and desire of God who desires relationship with all men if they obey His will! (Job 37:22-24).

The lessons from Job Chapters 32-37 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

28. Remember James 1:19-20 before speaking.
29. Remember Ephesians 4:29 before speaking.
30. Focusing on self and constant reminders to listen to me (like Elihu) is unhelpful in communicating the message of Christ.
31. Never judge the suffering of another person only lift them up in love, mercy, and comfort to our loving God!

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. Why did Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar stop talking to Job? (Job 32:1)
2. Who was Elihu and why was he angry? (Job 32:2-5)
3. On what basis did Elihu justify his words to Job? (Job 32:6-22)
4. Did Elihu believe that God spoke through affliction? What was the purpose of this point to Job? (Job 33:19-30)

5. Elihu brought criticism very hard against Job to demonstrate that maintaining his blamelessness before God was wrong. What were two points Elihu made in this regard? (Job 34:12, 21)
6. Did Elihu think that God would ever listen to Job's cry? (Job 35:12-16)
7. Did Elihu have a high opinion of himself? (Job 36:1-4)
8. Did Elihu believe that if someone served God days of prosperity would come their way? (Job 36:11)
9. What did Elihu talk about as he closed his speech and why? (Job 37)

Thought Questions

1. How do you reconcile the truths that God is just and sovereign with the truth that this world is full of injustice?
2. How much of what we call suffering is just really consequences brought on by our own choices?
3. Why is a prosperity gospel so appealing to people today and how much truth is there in it?
4. What kind of shortcuts do we take to avoid suffering? Is this a sin when we do?

5. When we endure great suffering, why is there such a temptation to give up hope and return to a life of sin?

Devotionals from Job chapters 32-37

Job 32:2-3 “But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. He was also angry with his three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him.” (NIV)

Elihu was a young man and he was very angry as he stood on the ash heap of Uz to observe the debate between Job and his friends on what possibly could have gone so wrong to see Job in such horrific condition. Surely Job’s pitiful state must result from his great sin and rebellion against God. What else could have caused God’s punitive action on poor Job? Job must be an evil person, and he must repent of that evil before God will relinquish and restore Job to a better life. There was only one difficulty: Job refused to acknowledge he had sin and further claimed that he was blameless before God. Of course this infuriated Job’s friends, and it left Job seeking a meeting with God so that he might understand all that had befallen him. The three friends gave up on Job because Job insisted that he was a righteous man (Job 32:1). But on the sidelines was a young man named Elihu who was very angry at Job for insisting he was righteous in the face of the grief that he had experienced which proved that Job was a sinner. Elihu was also mad at Job’s three friends because they had found no answer and yet condemned Job (Job 32:3). It almost seems as if Elihu comes out of the blue and occupies center stage for six chapters and then goes away without having his name mentioned later in the book. *I think Elihu like many was drawn to this “debate” on the ash heap and overheard all that was being said and really got into it! There must have been several or maybe even many who did what Elihu did in observing what was going on between the greatest man of the East who had been reduced to a pitiful wreck of a person with running sores and no family without wealth and destitute of power. Who would not be attracted to this spectacle of grief?* Back at the ash heap Elihu grabbed center stage and began to speak out of his anger to correct Job, Job’s friends and anyone else that disagreed with him. Elihu may have had good intentions and some of the things he said were quite sensible, but he got his starting point wrong and as a result did nothing to help, encourage, or enlighten the debate on the ash heap. We must answer the question of “why was that so?”; “how should that be?”, if we are to learn from Elihu’s intervention on the ash heap

- (1) *First, never speak motivated by anger but only love!* James 1:20 says it best “for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” We cannot possibly improve any person, group or situation if our conversation is motivated because we are angry.
- (2) *Second, always be in good self-control and in a calm spirit when you are called by God to speak for Him in a dispute.* Elihu was neither since he was full of himself and full of hot words like gas given off by new wine in an old wine skin and ready to burst (Job 32:16-20).

(3) Never make any conversation with anyone focused on you since to be like Jesus it is always about who we are speaking to. Poor Elihu was too self-focused for his task and in the end was a forgotten character in this story (Job 32:6-12).

May we always remember that effectiveness in communication begins and ends with the question: do I love this person that I am about to talk to? If we do not love this person what are we doing trying to talk to them other than to serve our own selfish and prideful ways just like Elihu? FATHER GIVE ME WISDOM, PATIENCE, AND LOVE SO THAT I MIGHT SPEAK MOTIVATED ONLY BY YOUR LOVE FOR WHO I AM SPEAKING WITH. AMEN!

Job 33:14 “For God does speak – now one way, now another – though man may not perceive it.” (NIV)

Does God speak personally to you today? My friend each time you pick up the Bible and open its pages rest assured that the God of the universe has something personal to say to you. Look at Hebrews 4:12 where the word of God is described as living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. The word is an active agent of the Lord when applied to our hearts by reading it! When we take a hard look at the context of Hebrews 4:12, it becomes clearer that allowing God to work on us by reading His word is a necessary and preliminary step to putting ourselves in position that we can draw near to God in His throne room with confidence sufficient in Him that we will receive mercy and grace in our time of need! Does God speak to us today? Yes, He does through His precious and holy word! Elihu goes further and states that God works through dreams, and circumstances such as the pain of sickness (Job 33:15-22) which act to cause men to think about their relationship with God. Elihu is trying to convince Job that God is speaking strongly to him of his displeasure because of Job’s sin. For Elihu this made ultimate sense, unfortunately we know from Job chapters 1 and 2 it was not true since Job was blameless before God. But Elihu’s point is important for those of us seeking the voice of Jesus Christ as we follow Him. All of us must listen for His voice as He speaks so that we might follow Him. The Christian walk follows Jesus Christ who is the Chief Shepherd, and who leads us home to God the Father. The question is not whether God speaks to us or not since He most assuredly does. The real question is will we listen to His voice and follow Him? A few verses earlier Elihu had said that God keeps close watch on all our paths (Job 33:11). David states in Psalm 142:3: “When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me.” The real message of our devotional verse is that God speaks to us and we must seek Him to understand what He is saying so that we might follow Him (Psalms 53:2). When I attended the Infantry Officer Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Georgia our school motto was: “Expect the Unexpected”. Every life has its up and downs and its twists and turns many of which come at accelerating speeds. We cannot possibly negotiate these challenges on the road of life if we are not guided by the Master who is our Lord Jesus Christ as we listen for His voice to lead, guide, and protect us from the dangers of life’s road that lie ahead. THANK YOU FATHER THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN US YOUR WORD, THE BIBLE, TO GUIDE OUR WAY, AND YOUR HOLY SPIRIT TO ENABLE US TO FOLLOW YOUR WAY. AMEN!

Job 34:3 “For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food.” (NIV)

One of the great physical gifts we have is our tongue which controls so much of our speech and taste. The tongue protects us from spoiled food combined with our nose and its sense of smell. We use the tongue as a sentry as to what gets into our bodies because there are those things we like, but more importantly those things we must not eat if we are to remain well. The tongue is a filter for our bodies that protects us from ourselves IF we pay attention to the signals it gives us on our food before we eat it. Elihu in our devotional text urges Job to use his ears likewise to hear Elihu’s words so that he might accept them and act on them to reconcile himself with God. Elihu is convinced that to the discerning ear he speaks the truth of God. But we know that Elihu does not speak the truth since we were there in the beginning at Chapters 1 and 2 and Elihu was not. Elihu has constructed an elaborate frame work that sounds reasonable and appears to be consistent with the word of God. But we were witnesses of Job in Chapters 1 and 2, and we know that Elihu’s viewpoint is untrue and cannot be trusted. *Elihu has made a great mistake on the ash heap to decide to judge by appearances since Job’s condition confirms the case writ large: “Job is a wreck because bad things have happened to him. God only makes bad things happen to bad people so Job must be a bad person and therefore must repent”*. I’m sure this was all clear in Elihu’s mind but not in Job’s mind since he admits to nothing of the kind as he maintains his integrity of righteousness before God. Jesus tells the Pharisees in John 7:24 “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” Jesus’s instructions on judging by mere appearances apply to Elihu in this instance as well. *So how is it that we should understand that the ear tests words? How is that done as God wants it done in our lives? The truth is that we must train ourselves in the school of Christ to listen to His voice and His voice alone. Our ears must be synchronized with our mind to know the word of God, to understand the word of God, and to put the word of God into practice daily in our lives.* Then and only then can we discern with our ear the voice of the Master as he knocks at the door (Revelation 3:20). You open the door at your own peril unless your ears have been trained by study and practice to test words to ensure they are Jesus Christ’s words of life. Then and only then may we open the door of our hearts and let Jesus come in and eat with us. Elihu had the right idea but no understanding of what it truly meant. *For our ears to test the words we hear we must know Jesus Christ and we must be willing to follow Him!* I AM A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST AND A LOVER OF THE WORD OF GOD. MY EAR TESTS EVERY WORD AND I WILL ONLY OBEY THAT WHICH IS TRUTH CONSISTENT WITH JESUS CHRIST’S WORDS!

Job 36:11 “If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment. (NIV)

Elihu if anything had a very high opinion of himself as we read in Job 36:4. As a young man he makes statements with absolute conviction of their truth in this world as he explains his theology in an effort to convince Job to admit that he is wrong and to repent of his sins against God. The more Elihu

pushes, the more Job digs in. We are headed to the same outcome between Elihu and Job as happened with Job's three friends. Sometimes I wonder if Job is even listening to Elihu. But Elihu makes a statement in our devotional text that many believe which is that if you serve God then prosperity and pleasure will surely follow. This "prosperity" gospel is taught all across our planet in tough economic times to secure funding for television ministries and the work of many who simply seek money from the unsuspecting. Even Elihu believes that the secret to good times and pleasurable places is to serve God. But God's purpose in this life is not for our comfort, ease, and pleasure; but rather, our spiritual development and growth to the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). *If we obey God we will receive a blessing but that is not the same thing as prosperity.* Many Christians live in this world under fear of oppressive governments and find maintaining their basic needs very difficult indeed. Look at the Apostle Paul and what he endured for the sake of the gospel in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. The issue is never earthly pleasure, but rather spiritual maturity that requires trials, tribulations, and tests that we must persevere through with the help of our Lord to grow strong. Even Job himself is commended to us in James as one who endured because of the Lord's compassion and mercy (James 5:11). *If we are to serve and obey, we must do so for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ regardless of the consequences, and not to ensure some form of worldly financial prosperity.* Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ didn't even have a home to sleep in (Matthew 8:20). The Apostle Paul learned to be content in both times of need and plenty because he trusted Christ to strengthen him in all things (Philippians 4:13). Paul died in a Roman prison and tradition records Peter dying on a Roman cross upside down. *No, Elihu got it wrong that we should obey and serve God simply to get the goodies of the present world.* Talk to Moses who got it quite right on this point when the writer of the Hebrew Letter states "He (Moses) regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:26) God will bless us and He will provide for our needs if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). I go back so often to the words of the martyred Jim Elliot on this particular subject: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." *This is the deal for the Christian: that I love Christ enough for who He is and what He has done for me though it cost me everything! FATHER I SERVE YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND I AM WILLING TO GIVE MY LIFE ON BEHALF OF MY BROTHERS AS YOU GAVE YOUR LIFE FOR ME (1 JOHN 3:16). AMEN!*

Job 37:23-24 "The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress. Therefore, men revere him, for does he not have regard for all the wise in heart?" (NIV)

Elihu ends his speech with the words of our devotional text. *Elihu's closure while truthful and accurate was delivered to criticize Job and accuse him of not revering God because Job did not fear Him or he would admit his sin and repent before God.* When we examine what Elihu had to say we begin to notice some points of emphasis about God that are not fully understood or expressed. *First, although God is beyond our reach and exalted in power, God sent His son Jesus Christ that we might know Him, understand Him, believe Him, and obey Him.* Jesus says on the last night of His life: "Anyone who as seen me has seen the Father. How can you say show us the Father?" (John 14:9) Jesus is clear that He and God the Father are one and we now know the very nature and character of God for men have

observed it in the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. *Second, it is true that if we are wise in heart or have wisdom we will possess the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).* Job further put a point on this matter by stating in Job 28:28 that the fear of the Lord is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding. Elihu got it all wrong with Job because he spoke with ignorance on what the truth really was that is documented in Job chapters 1 and 2 when God affirmed that Job was a blameless man. As a young man Elihu was frustrated and waited a long time as his anger grew. Elihu was even so presumptuous as to speak for God (Job 36:2) asserting things that we know by revelation and experience are simply not true (Job 36:11). Elihu was a young man but he should have heeded the advice of James 1:19-20 to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry for it would have served him well on the ash heap at Uz. Please remember what Elihu says is true that God does have regard for all the wise in heart. If we are to be wise in heart then we must seek God to gain understanding (Psalm 53:2). Jesus makes this point crystal clear in the New Testament Age in Matthew 7:7-8: "Ask and it will be given to you ; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." God desires that we have access to Him in every possible way but only on the basis of obedient faith which requires that we be seekers of Almighty God. He doesn't hide from us, but we must seek Him while He may be found in our lives (Isaiah 55:6). *Elihu in chapters 36 and 37 of Job anticipates the words of the Lord when he discusses God in the storms. For there are questions no man can answer concerning the power, authority, and majesty of God.* But one thing I do know is that God wants us to be reconciled to Him through His son Jesus who gave Himself up on the cross that we might have eternal life (Colossians 1:19-20). *May we always remember the majesty and greatness of God but ever cling to Him as our Savior and friend.* God has provided the grandest of opportunities for those that are His in that we can approach His throne of grace with confidence, to receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Even on the ash heap of Uz we have a God who wants to make a way for us and who did that very thing through Jesus Christ. FATHER, I THANK YOU FOR THE WORDS OF ELIHU THAT POINT TO YOUR GREAT POWER IN THE STORM, BUT I ALSO THANK YOU THAT BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST I MIGHT APPROACH YOUR THRONE OF GRACE TO FIND HELP IN MY TIME OF NEED. AMEN!

Job

Read Job Chapters 38, 39, 40, & 41

Lesson Purpose: Job Meets God in the Storm

Job had talked much about seeing God so that he might present his "case" to Him demonstrating how unfair and unjust he has been treated by God because he did nothing to deserve this great suffering. In Chapters 38-41, Job gets his opportunity to confront God, but it doesn't work out quite the way Job expected. God came to Job in a storm to begin with which demonstrates God's displeasure with Job and his conduct on the ash heap at Uz. What does the Almighty tell Job about all his words? God tells Job your words darken counsel and are spoken without knowledge (Job 38:2). Think about it, all that Job thought and said about his unjust treatment by God has been characterized by God as nonsense, confusing and untrue! These words spoken by God out of a storm would give the maximum sense of God's authority and power, and Job now recognizes that he doesn't fully understand his present predicament. God tells Job to brace himself like a man because God is going to give Job a "pop quiz". What follows are 77 questions that God asks Job for which Job has no answers for. Job has no answers because he doesn't know or understand the depth, power, or meaning of the mind of God. God's questions can be grouped by association and include:

- (1) Questions on the creation Job 38:4-38
- (2) Questions on taking care of the earth's creatures Job 38:39-30

Then in chapter 40:2 God asks Job: "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it." Job has been finding fault with God's treatment of him throughout the entire book and begging for an opportunity to go face to face with God, and now God gives him the opportunity. And how does Job respond? He tells God that he is insignificant and will be unable to reply to Him and simply refuses to speak to God (Job 40:3-5). How strange that Job who was so bold in his criticism of the Lord on

the ash heap cannot even speak after spending some time with God from the storm being peppered with questions that he has no idea of how to answer or explain. That would shut me up too just as it shut Job up. God is an awesome God and we in the modern era don't understand nor appreciate that fact very much. But there is a day coming soon and very soon when all men for all time in all places will understand the awesome power of God with clarity and with finality (Philippians 2:9-11). Then God makes the point to Job which is at the crux of this great book on suffering when he asks the question: "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (Job 40:8) Recall that Job had accused God of denying him justice (Job 27:2). *Now we come to grips with the real truth about Job in that he was more concerned with his own reputation for righteousness than he was with God's reputation for justice.* Obviously God was not pleased with Job's response to Him because he tells Job to brace himself like a man as He speaks out of the storm to Job! God first challenges Job to correct all the wickedness in this world since he has complained about it so much. It's almost as if God is telling Job if you think you know so much then fix it! We already know that poor Job didn't know where to start and neither do we for that matter. This is why humility before God is to be desired. God then addresses two creatures that control the land and the sea, and He demonstrates His power over the chaos of the world by His ability to control Behemoth and Leviathan. I believe that these are mythological creatures while others believe they are creatures around at that time such as the water buffalo and crocodile. The real point is that God is in control and Job is not in overseeing the creatures of the earth.

We come to the end of Chapter 41 now fully aware that God was displeased with Job for his protestations of unjust suffering. This is very hard for us to understand since Job didn't precipitate this suffering from the hands of God, but Job's increasing complaints against God while interacting with his so called "friends" on the ash heap is not the response God desired from Job nor is looking for from us in our suffering! I don't know about you, but when the God of the universe tells me to "brace yourself like a man" then we know God expects "real men" from His creation to serve Him!

The lessons from Job Chapters 38-41 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

32. God is an awesome God!
33. It takes a real man to serve God and serve Him well!
34. When we suffer we honor God by suffering in silence and trusting Him to deliver us.
35. Man must reverence, respect, and submit to this awesome God. Often times I fear we are too casual in His presence.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. God answered Job out of a storm or whirlwind. Was God pleased with Job? (Job 38:1-3)
2. God gave Job a pop quiz? TRUE OR FALSE
3. Was Job able to answer any of God's questions?
4. What did God call Job? (Job 40:2)
5. Job wanted a chance to speak to God and he finally got his opportunity. What did Job do? (Job 40:3-5)
6. What did God mean when he told Job to "Brace himself like a man"? (Job 40:7)
7. God's accusation against Job in Job 40:8 is a serious one. What was Job guilty of that most men often are?
8. God spoke of two creatures that only He could control. What were their names? (Job 40:15, Job 41:1) What were they?
9. Can anyone stand up to God? (Job 41:9-11)

Thought Questions

1. What do you imagine went through Job's mind when he faced his opportunity to respond to God?
2. Why did God accuse Job of being a faultfinder in Job 40:2?
3. Was it fair for God to give a pop quiz to Job...what possible purpose could it have served?
4. How do you respond to this statement? "Whatever God does is right and man must accept it by faith".
5. Given the awesome presence of God before Job do you think Christian's take God too casually in an attempt to deny His holiness and power so that we can better control God?

Devotionals from Job chapters 38-41

*Devotionals will be provided when Lesson 11 is taught.

Job

Read Job Chapter 42

Lesson Purpose: The Restoration of Job

We finally made it to our last lesson in the Book of Job! What a journey Job has been on and one that started off with a simple question by the Satan to God: "Does Job fear God for nothing?"(Job 1:9) Job lost everything including his children, respect of his wife, his position, his influence, his wealth, and even his health, but never cursed God as Satan claimed he would. Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were highly critical of Job on the ash heap at Uz and were of no comfort or friendship to Job. It was apparent that many were hanging around the ash heap hearing the back and forth between Job and his friends which caused a young Elihu to stand up to criticize a Job who hung on to his integrity that he was blameless. Simply put Job had been beaten down but never defeated on the ash heap. *Job did begin to drift ever so slightly in his attitude toward God because he thought God was unfair in afflicting pain and suffering into his life. This attitude hardened over the course of the conversations on the ash heap as Job sought to speak to God to straighten out this misunderstanding.* It had to be a misunderstanding in Job's mind because everyone knew that only good things happened to good people and bad things happened to bad people. So as Job suffered on the ash heap he wanted an umpire who could "officiate" this dispute between Job and God (Job 9:33). Job also envisioned the need for an advocate (Job 16:19), and redeemer (Job 19:25) as he struggled with ways to reach God. But unfortunately, the more Job tried to justify that his suffering was unjust and unfair in an effort to get his good name back, he also began to question the justice of Almighty God even claiming that God had denied him justice (Job 27:2). Job has crossed the line and God must bring him back so he speaks to Job out of the storm to demonstrate to Job that he is the creature and that he is not God. So the opportunity that Job had longed for finally arrived in chapter 42 and Job answered the Lord by retracting all that he had said, and

he repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). Once Job repented then God directed his attention to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and charged them with speaking words about Him that were not right. He directed that they take sacrifices for Job to offer up a burnt offering for their sins and to pray for them. Job did just this and the Lord accepted Job (Job 42:9). It was at this time that the Lord restored the fortunes of Job by twofold beyond what he had before. Job was restored to his friends and regains his reputation among the people as God blessed the latter days of Job more than the beginning (Job 42:12). Job died an old man and full of days because God blessed him (Job 42:17). What a story! What does this story teach you about God, suffering, prayer, friendship, and perseverance? There is much to learn from the life and times of Job!

The lessons from Job Chapters 42 that we must all learn are shown in the box below:

36. Repentance is essential before restoration with God can occur.
37. Job did what God told him without any thought to the blessing that would follow. We obey God not for what He can give us but for who He is!
38. Job's fortunes were restored only after Job's obedience to pray for his friends. Obedience always precedes blessing!
39. As impressive as Job's response to all that occurred to him was, it failed to honor and please God.

Enjoy your lesson study and may God richly bless you as a result.

Review of the Reading

1. What did Job do when he finally answered the Lord? (Job 42:1-6)
2. What did God think about Job's three friends? (Job 42:7)
3. What did God require them to do? (Job 42:8-9)
4. When Job did this what did the Lord do for Job? (Job 42:9)

5. When did the Lord restore the fortunes of Job? (Job 42:10)
6. Was Job reconciled to his own family? (Job 42:11)
7. How were the latter days blessed more than the first? (Job 42:12-15)
8. How did Job die? (Job 42:17)

Thought Questions

1. What is the role of repentance in accepting God's will and trusting Him through suffering?
2. In what ways should we mirror Job in our lives when we go through a difficult time?
3. If Satan's opening argument was that Job only obeyed God because of His blessings, what did Job's journey through suffering prove in the courtroom of heaven?
4. What is the most important thing you have learned about persevering through suffering as you view Job's experience?
5. If you could face God and ask two questions what would they be?

Devotionals from Job chapters 42

*Devotionals will be provided when Lesson 12 is taught.

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A pop quiz of 25 questions will be given to the class on 30 June on the subject of "persevering through tough times". The pop quiz will be based on lessons learned from the Book of Job. The importance of perseverance or endurance in difficult times and circumstances is essential to receive the blessings of God. James 5:11 reads "We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful."

A People of the Book

8-Year Curriculum

	January - March	April - June	July - September	October - December
2007	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Genesis</i>	<i>Galatians & Ephesians</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
2008	<i>Exodus</i>	<i>I & II Timothy, Titus</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>Minor Prophets I (Hosea-Obadiah)</i>
2009	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</i>	<i>Romans</i>	<i>Jeremiah & Lamentations</i>
2010	<i>I & II Thessalonians</i>	<i>Joshua, Judges, Ruth</i>	<i>James, I & II Peter</i>	<i>Minor Prophets II (Jonah-Habakkuk)</i>
2011	<i>Luke</i>	<i>I & II Samuel</i>	<i>I Corinthians</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
2012	<i>Acts</i>	<i>Special Study: The Foundations (Psalm 11:3)</i>	<i>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther</i>	<i>Minor Prophets III (Zephaniah-Malachi)</i>
2013	<i>Gospel of John, I, II, & III John</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon</i>	<i>Psalms</i>
2014	<i>Philippians, Colossians, Philemon & Jude</i>	<i>Kings & Chronicles</i>	<i>Revelation</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>
2015	<i>II Corinthians</i>			

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