

The Book of Job

Why do the innocent suffer?

Session One: God and Satan, Job's Lament

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What do you do when life hits you hard for no good reason?

That was Job's dilemma.

Discuss or reflect on a time of personal suffering: How did you cope? What was the most helpful thing your friends did?

The Book of Job poses two questions:

1. Why do the innocent suffer?
2. Does your faith depend on reward from God, the carrot and stick approach?

Job had it made. His children got along; his sons looked after his daughters. He made sacrifices for them, not just for himself. Job was faithful to God.

Read Chapter One.

God holds court, and the heavenly beings present themselves to Him, including Satan. God begins a conversation with Satan, pointing out His servant Job to him.

God says, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a **blameless** and **upright** man who **fears God** and **turns away from evil.**" (1:8)

Satan says, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (1:9)

Read Chapter Two.

Twice Satan challenges God in this way, and twice God accepts his challenge, putting his trust in Job to win.

Why would God accept a bet from Satan?

More puzzling, why would he draw Satan's attention to his servant Job, knowing full well what will happen to Job as a result?

Satan takes away, in order:

- Job's wealth
- Job's children
- Job's health

Yet God notices that Job “still **persists in his integrity**, although you [Satan] incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.” (2:3)

What do you look for in your relationship with God?

Reflect on a few things/experiences. Examples: peace, purpose, strength, help, provision.

How would you react if all those things were taken away?

How do you feel about a God who causes his servant to suffer for no reason? Have you felt an experience like that or know someone of whom you'd say the same: she suffered for no reason?

Job responds in a remarkable way.

When he loses his wealth and children first, he cries out, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (1:21)

When he loses his health, he asserts, “Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” (2:10)

At this point, when Job begins his lament, the poetry begins. The prose had told the story, revealed the character of Job and the origins of his suffering. Now the poetry puts us into the story, puts us into Job’s experience, making us angry, making us despair.

Read Chapter Three

The author is careful in his choice of words. Job laments, but he also foreshadows what God says later.

Job wishes:

- the night to perish in which “a **man-child** is conceived” (3:3)
- “those who curse that night be the ones skilled enough to rouse **Leviathan**” (3:8)

Job equates darkness to:

- rest
- the wicked being still
- prisoners free from oppression
- slaves being free

Job equates light to a useless gift for one

- in misery
- who longs for death
- who cannot see the way
- who has been fenced in by God from using the light.

When you were suffering, how did you see the dark? The light?

It’s not our job to get God off the hook!