

The Book of Job

Why do the innocent suffer?

Session Three: Job's Response

by Shireen Jeejeebhoy
<http://jeejeebhoy.ca>

*Does your faith depend on God's reward?
That was Job's dilemma.*

Discuss how does suffering affect your prayer life? How do you express your anger with God? Or if you feel it's not okay to be angry with God, why not?

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. And then he lost it all. His speeches give us insight into the second question. He changes perspective as he grows in his suffering and starts to look beyond his own to that of others.

Read 9:4-15 Key verses: 6:14; 7:20; 12:14; 14:14

Job asks **God for mercy** as he feels that though he is innocent, God has made him His target, has torn him down and no one can rebuild him. Yet he waits for his release.

*When a person feels that they are suffering unjustly, how might they react?
What questions might they have?*

Why does Job feel like God has made him a target?

Read 16:7-17; 19:21-29 Key verses: 16:19; 17:1; 19:11

Job comes to see God as his **adversary**. He sees Him sharpening his eyes against him.

Why might someone think of God as an adversary?

Between the speeches of his friends and God's silence, Job feels massed against and looks for a defender. He believes he has a **Redeemer**.

*What kind of Redeemer is Job talking about and who is it?
How can Job see God both as his adversary and his Redeemer?*

Read 21:1-16; 24:21-25 Key verses: 23:11; 23:14-15; 24:22

Job looks at **the wicked** now and wonders why God blesses the wicked and makes the innocent suffer.

Why do good things happen to bad people?

Read Chapter 26

Job waxes lyric on **God's Creation**, yet he says he only describes what are but the outskirts of God's Creation and he finds the thunder of God's power hard to understand.

How has Job progressed in his suffering?

We often point out the scent of a rose or the blue-ness of a summer sky to a person having a hard time. How might an appreciation of Creation comfort a sufferer?

Read 27:1-6

Job affirms his **integrity**, which God had pointed out that he was persistent in. *Persistent integrity*: that which survives peer pressure, calamity, or any host of things.

Read Chapter 28

Within the allegory of Job, Job speaks an allegory of God and His workers and His work. He ends with a definition of **wisdom** and **understanding**.

Read Chapter 31

Job swears out an **Oath of Innocence** and signs it with his mark (traditionally a cross) to the Almighty. Job has been building up to this decisive moment.

He began in despair, wishing he were dead, talking to God. After being assaulted unfairly by his friends, he asserted his innocence to them and to God. He speaks about God's authority and how no one can thwart God's will. And that terrifies him, given what has happened to him. He waffles between seeing God as his adversary and his Redeemer. He complains that God has sent his friends as messengers against him, further heightening the image of God as his adversary, as one who opposes him but not in malice or hatred as an enemy does. He doesn't see God as his enemy, but he does see his friends as his enemies. He knows that there is a witness for him in heaven and he builds on that by saying that his Redeemer will stand with him on the last day. He challenges God on why the wicked prosper while the innocent suffer, and he challenges his friends' pollyanna ideas that the wicked will get theirs. He says that God is the author of the wicked's prosperity while they wish to have nothing to do with Him. He firmly disputes his friends' contention that he's wicked by noting that he follows God's footsteps closely; he affirms his persistent integrity; and then shows us how closely he follows God by repeating what He had said about him in his definition of wisdom and understanding.

And now he completes his case by defining his righteousness, swearing an Oath of Innocence, and signing it to the Almighty.

Job rests. And **he waits**.