

The Book of Job

Why do the innocent suffer?

Session Four: Elihu

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*Are blessings and curses an absolute truth?
That was Job's dilemma.*

What were you like as a teen? Experts view teenagers today as being more environmentally sensitive, more technologically savvy than adults. How is this assumption false?

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?

Read Deuteronomy 28, particularly verses 1-6 and 15

Elihu seeks to strengthen the friends' arguments as to why Job is suffering.

Read 32:15-22

Compare Zophar: "*Thoughts urge me to answer, because of the agitation within me.*" (20:2)
To Elihu: "*For I am full of words; the spirit within me constrains me.*" (32:18)

How would you feel if you had been sitting there with the friends and thought they were unable to answer Job while you had the answers and had to keep quiet?

Read 37:1-12

The traditional view of Elihu is that he paves the way for God.

*What kinds of comments would pave the way for God?
What would traditionalists be looking to hear from Elihu?*

Read 33:1-12

Elihu speaks a lot of words to say not much. No matter what a reader's perspective is, most agree that Elihu is a windbag, he's wordy, he covers us in verbiage.

*What makes a person a windbag?
How might a windbag deceive their audience?*

Read 36:5-12

Elihu speaks with verve and passion. His poetry and being able to listen a little makes him seem right, even to those who may doubt the veracity of the friends' arguments.

In what way do people convince you of the rightness of their arguments?

Read 35:6-7; 36:17-23; 37:14-15, 20, 23-24

Elihu's poetic words, his youthful passion, his sheer verbiage cannot hide how much on the wrong track he is.

What do you think of people who confidently state that they speak for God, know His mind?

Elihu contends that God does not answer the empty cry, Job's kind of cry.

What kinds of people do we presume God answers?

At this point we do not yet know if God will answer or what He will say when he does, but we can make comparisons between what Elihu has said of God and Job with God's words at the beginning.

Elihu ignores wisdom and speaks in many words a different definition of understanding. One can construe his definition as meaning the same as God's, but it is the human being who decides to depart from evil, not God's breath that makes the decision for him or her:

God: *"Job...fears God and turns away from evil."* (2:3)

Job: *"Truly the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding"* (28:28)

Elihu: *"Truly it is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty that makes for understanding"* (32:8)

Elihu: *"I will teach you [Job] wisdom."* (33:33)

Elihu contradicts God's assessment of Job:

God: *"a blameless and upright man"* (1:8, 2:3)

Job: *"my lips will not speak falsehood...I will not put away my integrity from me...I hold fast my righteousness."* (27:36)

Elihu: *"[Job] goes in company with evildoers...he has said, 'It profits one nothing to take delight in God.'...[Job's] answers are those of the wicked...he adds rebellion to his sin."* (34:8,9, 36:37)

God put Job into Satan's hands because he was God's most faithful servant. Elihu espouses the idea that wickedness begets what Job suffered:

God said to Satan: *"All that he has is in your power", "he is in your power"* (1:12, 2: 6)

Job: *"my heart does not reproach me for any of my days"* (27:6) *"Does he not see my ways and number all my steps?"* (31:4) *"Here is my signature"* (signs oath of innocence) (31:35)

Elihu: *"For according to their deeds he will repay them and according to their ways he will make it befall them."* (34:11)