



## Mid-Week Bible Study: Hard Questions about Pain & Suffering

**Week 4: What is God's Answer to Suffering**

**Text: Job 40:1-8; 42:1-6**

### INTRODUCTION

TV Show: Board Game & Movie Clue

We like having the answers, but sometimes we just do not know enough. Television and the Internet are jam-packed with programs and sites devoted to unsolved mysteries and offering their own answers. But in the end, sometimes we must admit that we just do not know.

Our walk with God is no different. We want answers, but many times the ways of God are just beyond our understanding. In those moments, we can decide to doubt God or trust Him. Job's encounter with God shows us why trust is always best.

**Setting:** Ancient wisdom literature sometimes tried to solve *theodicies*—questions about God's role in suffering. The Book of Job represents a biblical response to this theological issue. The session passages from last week introduced the accusations of Job's friends and Job's defense. This week's passages define suffering from God's view. The Lord spoke to Job and his friends from a storm and challenged their assumptions about sin, suffering, and self-righteousness.

**Point:** God's actions are often beyond our understanding, but we can trust Him

**RECAP FROM LAST WEEK:** Most of the Book of Job (chapters 3–37) centers on the opinions and advice of Job's three friends, his defense, and a final speech by a young man named Elihu. When we come to Job 38, however, it's God's turn to speak. *"Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words?"* (Job 38:1-2). For two full chapters, God questioned Job, and in the process, showed the distressed man just how little he knew.

### JOB 40:1-5

**Verse 1:** While this verse seems somewhat insignificant. It's quite powerful. Again, most of this book, Job has defended himself to his friends who have judged that he was responsible for his own suffering. Yet here, this verse highlights that Job has turned his attention from his friends to the one who sticks closer than a brother.

- The Hebrew phrase used in verse 1 includes the covenant name of God, YAHWEH
  - The same name that God told Moses & the Israelites to call him, suggests that God was completely plugged into to Job's suffering and judgment by others.
  - Due to God's covenant with mankind it ensures that we are a priority for God.

**Verse 2:** God was calling Job to get out of his feelings and stop arguing with the almighty God.

- Job had accused God of mistreating him and being unjust. So, God wants job to realize the gravity of his words.
  - When we accuse God of being unfair, we must understand that being unfair/unjust in adjective not in God's character.
    - **Read Acts 10:34, Hebrew 6:10, Psalm 89:14.**
- The verse says that he was arguing with the Almighty.
  - The Hebrew word for almighty is Shaddai; the God of absolute power.
  - God reminded Job in this verse that God was still in control.
- By reminding Job of who God was, God, was stating that your claims are baseless.

This does not mean that we are not able to question God. We all at time wonder where God is or what God is doing?

- God is big and secure enough to handle our frustrations about him and our questions.

**Q: What's do you think is at the heart of our questioning of God when we're suffering?"**

- Even in our questions and issues with God, God still calls us to trust even when it doesn't make sense. **Read 1 Corinthians 13:12.**

**Verse 3 – 4:** here Job responds to God's question with humility.

- Job states that he was insignificant/little. This statement is the total oppose of stating that you are worthy.
  - Job didn't mean that his life was not purposeful. But rather it was a statement of worship because Job understand that in comparison to God, he was nothing.

Verse 4b: Job also stated that he has his hand over his mouth. He used this same phrasing in Job 29:7-9, to state that he was a respect member of society. Thus, he is correcting his previous behavior by showing God that same respect.

**Verse 5:** Job continued to corrective language by expressing his need to be quiet because he had already spoken too much on matters that he now realized were beyond his comprehension.

- We may think we know God's mind and heart, only to discover we no very little
  - Often the cause of suffering eludes us, yet that does not stop most people from misinterpreting.
  - **Read Isaiah 55:8-9**

### **JOB 40:6-8**

**Verse 6:** Job had just humbly responded to God. Yet God was not done questioning with Job.

**Verse 7:** God response to Job here sounds more like an interrogation than an easy dialogue. (Brace yourself.....)

- Getting ready included the idea of ***preparing for a battle***. It was as if God was challenging Job to put on his armor and collect whatever weapons were at his disposal.
  - As we discussed last week Job was defensive of his friend's accusations. God here is doing the same to Job.

**Verse 7b:** God strongly challenged Job to inform God of how the world really worked.

- This is like when parents need to put children in their place. By stating since you know so much....

**Verse 8:** Once again, God offers Job questions for him to answer. Earlier in chapters 8-29 the questions related to aspects of creation to remind Job that God was all powerful and in control of every aspect of nature and life.

**Q: *What are some of the barriers that keep us from understanding God's justice?***

- Likewise, here these questions focused on setting Job straight about God's moral character.

**Question 1: *God asked Job if he was really prepared to ***challenge my justice******

- Job had essentially done that by ranting against his suffering and God's apparent silence. While he had never come out and said God was guilty of doing something wrong, it is not a stretch to interpret some of his comments that way.

**Question 2:** God wanted to know if Job was ready to declare me guilty to justify yourself.

- As Job's friends attacked him, in his attempt to defend of his own integrity he called God's integrity and morality into question.
  - **Read Lamentations 3:31-33 and Ps. 119:68**
- We are not qualified to determine God's ways. Yet we are commanded to trust that everything God does will work out for our good. (Romans 8:28)

### **JOB 42:1-6**

This second round of questioning from the whirlwind did not go any better than the first. It only reinforced the recognition of his humanity and his foolishness. Here Job is replying to God's questions.

**Verse 1-2:** Job began his final speech with an admission of God's strength and authority. (I know you can do all things)

**Verse 2b:** No one is strong enough or smart enough to outwit God. Humans may think they can circumvent God's agenda, but His plans are perfect and cannot be defeated.

**Verse 3:** God designed this interrogation to shake up Job's world, and He succeeded.

- In truth, Job's summation was a confession of his own arrogance.
- Yet this only happens when we genuinely seek God out.
  - **Read Deuteronomy 4:29**

**Verse 4:** As part of his confession, Job repeated God's challenge.

- He wanted God to know he had heard Him speak, and he had taken the Lord's words to heart.
  - Read John 8:47

**Verse 5:** Prior to this season of suffering and interrogation, he thought he knew God. And perhaps he did from his previous vantage point. But now he now was able to declare that I have both heard and seen God.

- Job said I have now seen God, the Hebrew word "seen" implies more than the physical sight of a whirlwind. Instead, it describes an intellectual understanding that wasn't there before.
  - Spiritual maturity evolves over time. Knowledge and experience are not always the same thing. Often God lets us go through so we can wrestle with who God is and what that means for our lives.

Verse 6: Job concludes by apologizing for his actions and thoughts. He used of the phrase dust and ashes emphasized both his physical weakness and his spiritual repentance.

- ***Read Genesis 3:19.***

**CONCLUSION:** The book closes with two blessings for Job.

- *God upheld Job's integrity by chastising his friends (Job 42:7-9)*
- *God increased Job's blessings. Job ended up with twice as much material wealth as he had lost, and God graciously gave him ten more children.*

***Job never found out why he was called to suffer. But through his circumstances, he had learned more about God and His ability to make broken things new***