

Job: In The Mess!

Small Group Study Notes

“In The Mess!”

Job

Session 1: There Must Be More Than This!

Some questions for discussion:

1. The book of Job is a challenging book, but one in which we probably find our own story somewhere. How do you think the book of Job can speak to us today?
2. In what particular ways can you identify with Job?
3. Read: Job 1 v 1 and 8. From these verses it seems God thinks the world of Job. How do they challenge the view that somehow suffering is always a punishment from God? How do you regard times of suffering in your own life? How does looking back on experiences sometime change our view of them?
4. The sermon suggested that the main challenge of the book is the question: “Is God worth loving even if you get nothing back?” How do you respond to that question?
5. The sermon suggested the answer to that question has something to do with love and the character of God. Read: Job 38 v 13-18. How these verses (and those around it) speak of the character of God?
6. God loves even when he gets nothing in return because it is his nature to love and to give. How does that encourage you, and how would it be an encouragement when times get tough?
 - Pray for those in the land of Uz right now!

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Session 2: “Testing Times!” Job 1 v 1 - 22

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read: Job 1 v 1 – 5. How would you describe Job as a man and his situation in life? How accurate is it to say he was a man of integrity? Why?
 2. Read: Job 1 v 6 – 22. Describe what happened to Job. How would you express his loss? What kinds of things matter enough in your life that you would be tempted to question God at their loss?
 3. What was Job’s response to the tragedy that unfolded before him (v 20)? Why do you think he was able to respond in this way?
 4. Reflect for a moment on Job’s response in the context of your own life. How has your faith kept you from being completely overwhelmed when tragedy or trials have come? Share what you learnt through these times.
 5. What does Job’s response, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away,” (v 21) tell us of his attitude towards possessions? How does it challenge your attitude towards the thing you possess?
 6. How do you feel about the truth that Satan is not only free to roam the earth, but also has access to God’s throne? (v 6-7) What key thing do we learn about the extent of Satan’s power and authority? (v 8-12) How does this help us in our faith?
- Pray for one another, that in the testing times our faith may be like Job’s.

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Session 3: “Presence in Pain?” Job 2 v 1 - 13

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read: Job 2 v 1 – 10. Job had suffered one huge loss, that of his family and all he owned. Now he experiences chronic illness. What are some of the challenges of chronic illness?
 2. What are the differences and similarities between loss and illness in terms of the temptation to doubt God’s goodness?
 3. How does Job’s response to his illness in v. 10 challenge the view that if we follow God closely, life will turn out how we would like? How have you responded to this challenge when things have gone wrong, or when tragedy struck?
 4. We often think the hardest part of suffering is not knowing why it is happening. What would Job’s response to this view be? Why? What does it teach us?
 5. Read: Job 2 v 11-13
 6. Although we know Job’s friends were not helpful later, what do you think they got right at this point?
 7. How have you been helped by friends when going through a trial? What did you learn about presence in pain? Share your experiences with one another so that you are better equipped to help those going through a difficult time.
- Pray for one another and those who are struggling.

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Session 4: “Why Go On?” Job chs. 3-7

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read: Job 3 v 1 – 26 Describe how Job is feeling and why? What situations or circumstances might cause even a strong and faithful believer to despair?
2. Read the following passages: Psalm 146 v 3-6; Lam. 3 v 1-14; 2 Cor. 1 v 8-11. Describe the situation felt by the writer in each one. In each case, on what are they able to focus to change the way they think?
3. In Job chs. 4 – 7 Eliphaz and Bildad answer Job. The basic premise of their responses is: “Do what is right and things will go well for you. Do what is wrong and God will send judgement!” In the light of what happens to Job, how far do you agree that obedience brings blessing?
4. If someone was going to confront you with a difficult truth, how would you want them to do it?
5. How could Job’s friends have been of real comfort to Job? What comfort can we offer to someone who is experiencing something we never have?
6. Job was convinced that God knew every detail of his life. How was this a comfort to him? How might it be for you?
 - Pray for one another and for wisdom to help others.

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Session 5: “Don’t be Fooled!” Job chs. 8-12

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read: Job 8 v 1- 22. Bildad’s general point is: “Something bad is happening to you, so you must have done something bad!” What is wrong with this argument?
2. Read: Matthew 5 v 44-45. If God sends the same circumstances on the evil and the good, what insights does it give us about suffering?
3. Bildad appeals to a logical argument and to wisdom from the past to make his case against Job. How do these help or hinder when we are trying to help someone who is suffering?
4. In chs. 9 and 10 Job wants to take God to court to make his case to prove his integrity. What questions about suffering would you ask God if you had that opportunity? How does suffering look different to God than it does to us?
5. In ch. 11 Zophar makes three accusations against Job: v 1-4; v 5-12; and v 13-20. What are they?
6. What does he promise Job at the end of the chapter? How wise is it to make promises to those who are suffering? What would you have said to Job if you had been in Zophar’s place? Why?
7. What does Job affirm in ch. 12 and how does it help him hold onto hope in his suffering? How might it help you?
 - Pray for one another that you would hold onto hope even in the darkest times.

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Session 6: “Having Your Say!” Job chs. 12-14

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read: Job 12 v 1 – 12. How does Job respond to the counsel of his friends?
2. Read: Job 12 v 13 – 25. What does Job say about God in these verses? Why does Job choose to include this in his argument against his friends?
3. How far do you agree that suffering sometimes is God at work in our lives? How can we know when suffering is actually chastisement from God?
4. Think of a time when you received advice from friends that proved inaccurate or inadequate. How did you respond? How would respond today if faced with a similar situation?
5. How would you help a friend who has been given advice they didn't want and that is not helpful or inaccurate?
6. Read: Job 13 v 1-3; 13-22. What is it that Job wants from God?
7. How much can you identify with Job in wanting to argue your case with God? Why? How can we be honest before God about how we are feeling? What practical things can we do when we find ourselves in the same position as Job?
8. How is Job able not to give in to total despair?
9. What does it take for us to hold on to hope even in the face of hardship and suffering?
- Pray for one another that you be people who give sound advice to others.

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Session 7: “Divine Help!” Job chs. 15-19

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read: Job 15 v 1- 35
2. As Job keeps protesting his innocence his friends seem to become more adamant about his guilt. Why would they fear the truth that Job could be innocent and yet suffering?
3. If we cannot assume that someone is suffering because they are being punished, what can we assume about someone who is suffering?
4. Why does God not always give immediate punishment for evil?
5. Read: Job 16 v 1-17
6. Job wants to be vindicated before God and his friends. What is it like to be misunderstood by those close to you? How might you help someone in that situation?
7. How can we worship God even in our deepest suffering?
8. Read: Job 17 v 18-21 and 19 v 25. In the light of these verses, how do Christians see suffering and death differently from people without faith?
9. How does the hope of resurrection help someone in the midst of prolonged suffering? How does it help you?
10. Read: 1 Cor. 15 v 54-58. What encouragement do these verses bring to us today?
 - Pray for one another, for hope in difficult times.

