



[Leader tip: The Bible Project has put together a great overview video of Job: https://youtu.be/xQwnH8th_fs]

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Any of you into comic strips? You know, we can find out the news almost in real time, right? Articles go live within minutes of a major event; social media blows up and an hour later you’re shocked when someone doesn’t know what’s going on. Last millennium, people had to wait until they got the newspaper before they knew what was happening. It was wild. Something major would happen and you just wouldn’t know about it. Bu I loved the newspaper for a different reason: the comics! And maybe Dear Abby, but that’s a whole different issue. Each day, I couldn’t wait for my parents to finish reading the paper so I could get to the comics page. One of my favorites was Peanuts; Charlie Brown, Linus, Lucy and Snoopy.

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Snoopy was a trip. What a weird little dog. I love that among his many hobbies, ace fighter pilot, cook, friend of birds, he was also a writer. Every once and a while he would be banging away at his typewriter, and all his stories started out the same way: “It was a dark and stormy night.” One of my favorite theologians said this famous Snoopy trope reminded him of the book of Job. Why? He writes, “No one is immune to ‘dark and stormy nights, and reading about Job’s is designed to help us know how to think about our own.”ⁱ And Job’s story is a dark and stormy one.

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Let’s set the stage with some context. We have no idea who wrote the book of Job. That doesn’t mean it doesn’t have authority, it just means we don’t know who God used to get it to us. Consequently, we also don’t really know when it was written. One source I read said that most scholars believe it was written around 3000 years agoⁱⁱ, another said that most scholars believe it was written around the 2300 or 2400 years ago.ⁱⁱⁱ I think they both need to work on their definition of “most scholars.” But let’s get to the piece of context that may catch some of you off guard; it certainly caught me off

guard the first time I read it. Over and over what I found in my study is that the evidence seems to indicate that Job may be a parable.^{iv,v}

Jesus frequently used made up stories, with extreme situations, called parables, to teach object lessons and make points. There may have been an actual Job, and there may have been horrible tragedies that befell him, but the 42 chapters of speeches, the descriptions of God and the Challenger holding court in heaven, these may have happened, but it makes a lot more sense that the story was built up and made more dramatic to teach an important lesson about God. Was someone really writing down these long speeches? Are we supposed to believe God holds court like this with daily reports? In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus described a scene in heaven and hell that we know is not how they operate, yet it served the point of the message He was trying to get across. This seems the same.

This helps resolve one of the biggest points of tension around God in this book. Did He really destroy everything in a good person’s life to settle a bet? Or is this a parable to teach us something else? Let’s jump in and find out.

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¹ There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. ² He had seven sons and three daughters. ³ He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area. (Job 1:1-3 – NLT)

It goes on to describe how Job would even give sacrifices on behalf of his children just in case they had done something offend God. Blameless doesn’t mean he was sinless, but wow, he was a really, really good guy. Like, literally the best guy in the world. Then it gets weird.

[Show slide] ***⁶ One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. ⁷ “Where have you come from?” the Lord asked Satan. Satan answered the Lord, “I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that’s going on.” (Job 1:6-7 – NLT)***

Okay, time out. Let’s talk about this Satan for a moment. Are we supposed to understand that THE devil is hanging out in heaven, giving reports? If you were to look in your Bible, there’s probably a footnote next to Satan. Why?

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Because the ancient Hebrew word here, and all throughout Job, is the word **haśśatan**, which literally means “the challenger.”^{vi} Why is this important? This word is a title, a description. It describes a position, but it is not a name. It has traditionally been translated the way it sounds, which is why it’s Satan on the page and this tends to impact how we read it, but it is not the name of the Satan that is described in the New Testament. It would be more accurate to think of this challenger as one of the members of God’s court doing tasks for God. When you realize that, it becomes easier to see that this Challenger is not necessarily evil or enjoying what happens to Job; the Challenger is trying to understand how God works.

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⁸ Then the Lord asked Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.” ⁹ Satan replied to the Lord, “Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. ¹⁰ You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! (Job 1:8-10 – NLT)

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¹¹ But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!” ¹² “All right, you may test him,” the Lord said to Satan. “Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don’t harm him physically.” So Satan left the Lord’s presence. (Job 1:11-12 – NLT)

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So, what is going on? The fancy term for what this Challenger is questioning God about is known as the **Retribution Principle**.^{vii} Ancient people all believed this; that the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer. Good people get good things, bad people get bad things. In fact, they believed you could see whether someone was a sinner or not based on the



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- God spoke to Job from a whirlwind; what does that mean to you? What do you think it was like for Job?
- Reread Job 38:1-7; what was the purpose of God's speech? What stands out to you from it?
- What do you learn from Job's response in Job 40:1-5? In what ways have you responded like Job to God at times?
- Reread Job 42:1-6; what stands out about Job's response? What do you learn from it?
- What areas of your life do you need to learn God is in control, not you? What will it take to recognize God's control?
- Have you ever learned from suffering? How so?
- Reread James 1:2-5; is there something going on in your life now that is an opportunity to grow? How so?
- How can we help you make the most of your opportunities to grow?
- Have you asked God for wisdom in the past? Did it help? If so, how?



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WEEK THREE | GOD GIVES WISDOM

Job 42:1-6 (NLT)

Then Job replied to the Lord: “I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. You asked, ‘Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?’ It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me. You said, ‘Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.’ I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.”

James 1:2-5 (NLT)

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

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- SUFFERING IS AN _____
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