

# Job

**WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT?** Trusting God in spite of devastating tragedy.

**WHO WROTE IT?** We don't know.

**WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** Perhaps the 1100s B.C. or earlier—we don't know.

**WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** Again, it's hard to say. Some think during the period of the judges; others say much earlier, perhaps during the time of the patriarchs.

**THE BREAKDOWN**

- Chapters 1-2: Satan approaches God, who allows him to test Job
- Chapters 3-14: Job's first conversation with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar
- Chapters 15-21: Second conversation with the trio
- Chapters 22-31: Third conversation
- Chapters 32-37: Elihu speaks up
- Chapters 38-42: God answers Job and restores what he lost

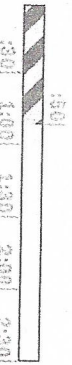
**KEY CONCEPTS**

- Suffering
- Wisdom

**SCORECARD**

**Job:** A wealthy man whose whole life crashes down around him  
**Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu:** Job's "helpful" friends

**READING TIME**



**WORTH MEMORIZING**

- 1:21 "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!"
- 19:25 "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last."

**THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE**

- **TRUST:** When disaster strikes, our desire for answers can overshadow everything else. But in fact, we can't explain everything. We must keep trusting God.

**WHAT'S THE POINT OF Job?**

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When your life explodes, trust is more important than logic.



pologist William Lane Craig observed, "No logical inconsistency has ever been demonstrated between the two statements 'God exists' and 'evil exists.'" In fact, the presence of evil actually demonstrates God's existence because without God there would be no moral foundation for calling anything evil.

He's right. Nevertheless the question of evil still vexes us, and it is difficult to explain the presence of suffering in the world. All of us occasionally ask the question "Why?" The book of Job addresses this issue head-on. As the book opens we learn about *human suffering*, but by its conclusion we also learn a great deal about *God's sovereignty*.

The outline of Job is easy to follow. The first two chapters are Prologue, in which we're introduced to Job and his disasters. Chapters 3 through 27 are Dialogues, in which his friends reasoned with him about his suffering and suggested he had committed secret but serious sins. Chapters 28 through 42 are a set of Monologues, mainly by Job and God. And the final paragraphs of the book comprise an Epilogue, in which Job's problems are resolved and his wisdom deepened.

Righteous people like Job *do* sometimes suffer, and the devil himself is often behind our troubles. But God *can* be trusted, and we must learn to walk by faith rather than sight. If you're facing difficulty today, remember the statements of Job—words of sheer but splendid faith: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him . . . I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 13:15; 19:25).

In a single day, this wealthy rancher's world got blasted.

**ATTACK** **DAMAGE**

- Sabean Raiders: 1,000 oxen and 500 donkeys captured  
All farmhands killed
- Fireball from the Sky: 7,000 sheep and their herders incinerated
- Chaldean Raiders: 3,000 camels stolen  
All handlers killed
- Tornado: All 10 children killed when house collapsed

SPOTLIGHT

JOB'S NET WORTH

	BEFORE (See 1:2-3)	AFTER (See 42:10-17)
Cattle	??	A gift from each sibling and friend
Gold rings	??	One from each sibling and friend
Silver	7,000	14,000
Camels	3,000	6,000
Oxen	500 teams	1,000 teams
Female donkeys	500	1,000
Sons	7	7
Daughters	3	3

**3:20-23** Like most sufferers, Job asked why? Unfortunately, the answer to that question is often reserved for eternity. We must learn to trust God and stay faithful to him even if we never receive an explanation for our suffering. Sometimes we will never know why things happen the way they do. We can be sure, though, that God is with us in the pain.

**BASIC SURVEY**

**JOB**

**AUTHOR:** Not stated.  
**DATE:** Unclear, but many believe Job is one of the oldest stories in the Bible, perhaps from approximately 1700 BC.

**IN TEN WORDS OR LESS**  
God allows human suffering for His own purposes.

**DETAILS, PLEASE**  
Job is a wealthy farmer from Uz. He's "perfect and upright" (1:1 KJV). Satan receives God's permission to attack Job's possessions—and causes the loss of thousands of sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys. . . and worst of all, Job's ten children. Job keeps his faith. Satan then receives God's permission to attack Job's health—but in spite of terrible suffering, Job refuses to "curse God, and die" as his wife suggests (2:9 KJV). Job's suffering is worsened by four "friends" who accuse him of causing his own trouble. In the end, God speaks, implying that Job should simply trust His way. By story's end, God has restored Job's health and possessions and given him ten more children.

**QUOTABLE**  
> "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!" (1:21 NLT).  
> Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble (14:1 KJV).

**UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL**  
The book of Job pictures Satan coming into God's presence (1:6). It also gives a clear Old Testament hint of Jesus' work, when Job says, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth" (19:25 NKJV).

**SO WHAT?**  
Trouble isn't necessarily a sign of sin in a person's life. It may be something God allows to draw us closer to Him.

READ JOB 1-2.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 99. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 94. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 94. →

## HEART OF THE BOOK

## JOB'S SUFFERING

About 1700 BC, a man named Job lived in the land of Uz, southeast of Canaan. Job was not only an extremely wealthy man, but was very righteous and constantly communed with God. As a result, God put a hedge of protection around Job and everything that he owned.

One day the devil challenged God, “Stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” (Job 1:11 NKJV). So God allowed Satan to take away all of Job’s possessions, even to kill his sons and daughters, but still Job worshipped God, even though he was convinced that God Himself had sent this disaster (Job 1:13–21).

Then Satan received permission to strike Job with disgusting, painful boils from head to toe, but still Job refused to curse God. Job suffered for *months* before his friends arrived (Job 7:3–5). Day after day, he thought intensely about his suffering. But it made no sense, for Job had been taught to believe that God always rewards righteousness and judges sin, yet he could think of nothing he had done that warranted such punishment.

However, God blessed Job afterward (see Job 42:10–17). James tells us, “As an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James 5:10–11 NIV).

## READ JOB 3–4.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 99. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 95. →



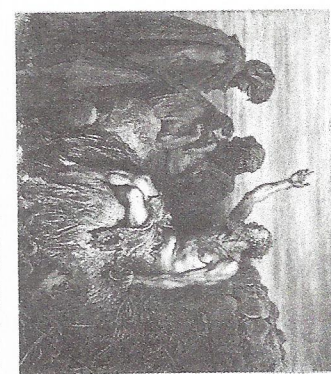
Despite all of Job's suffering, he refused to curse God. His wife, who didn't understand his righteousness, is shown here in Job. Modeled by his wife by Georges de la Tour (1593–1652).

## CLOSER LOOK

## JOB'S FRIENDS ACCUSE HIM

When Job's friends heard about his troubles, they came to comfort him. And at first they did. They saw how great his grief was, so they sat with him for seven days saying nothing (Job 2:11–13). At first they encouraged him that because he was righteous, all he needed to do was persevere, and God would again bless him (Job 4:3–7; 8:6, 21). But after months of intense suffering, Job was no longer convinced that God was obligated to bless him, even if he remained faithful (Job 6:11).

Eventually, however, a friend named Zophar became convinced that since no man was completely righteous, Job *must* actually be guilty of secret sins—in fact, God wasn't even judging him as much as he deserved (Job 11:6). Zophar urged Job to repent.



Job Speaks with His Friends, by Gustave Doré (1832–1883), depicts the friends who came to comfort Job but who ultimately accused him of sinning against God.

From then on, Job continued to protest his innocence, and his three friends ganged up on him and all began insisting that he must be guilty. They argued from every possible angle that God always judges wickedness—and even though they couldn't think of any sin Job had committed, they were convinced that he *must* have sinned. Why? Because he was suffering. Finally, a frustrated Eliphaz let loose a vehement tirade, accusing Job of a whole litany of sins—perhaps hoping that if he hurled enough accusations his way, something would stick (Job 22:5–11). Job told them, “Miserable comforters are you all!” (Job 16:2 NKJV). He added, “If only you could be silent! That's the wisest thing you could do” (Job 13:5 NLT).

## READ JOB 11 AND 15.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 96. →

## CLOSER LOOK

## THE REASON FOR JOB'S SUFFERING

Job's friends continually argued that Job must have sinned for God to bring trouble into his life, but Job knew that he hadn't sinned so seriously that it merited such suffering. Disobedience is a reason for suffering, but it's not the only one. Sometimes the righteous suffer through no fault of their own. Why would God allow this? Often it's because He's working out a plan.

Job recognized that God was the One allowing all his troubles, and stated, "When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10 NKJV). God knows that, painful as our experiences can be, good can come from them. He told the Jews: "I have refined you, but not as silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering" (Isaiah 48:10 NLT). When we pass through the furnace of suffering, it has the potential of purifying us. It can also bring out virtues such as patience and endurance (Romans 5:3).

At the end of the book of Job, God Himself spoke, vindicating Job before his friends and also addressing the overarching issue of human suffering. God didn't explain Job's suffering, but asked a series of questions that showed His vast knowledge—implying that Job should simply trust God's way. And Job did, telling God, "I know that you can do all things" (Job 42:2 NIV).

Yes, people do sin and God does judge sin, but when all was said and done, the entire point of the book of Job was to show that this scenario doesn't always apply.

READ JOB 38 AND 42.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 99.

## 1:1 | blameless

(Heb. *tam*) (Job 1:20; 9:21; Ps. 37:37; Prov. 29:10) H8535: The verbal root of this Hebrew word means "to be complete." Thus this word signifies an individual's integrity—a wholeness and wholesomeness. The word is used as a term of endearment for the Shulamite bride in the Song of Solomon (see "perfect" in Song 5:2; 6:9). In the Old Testament, the blameless are frequently associated with the upright (Job 1:1; 8: 2:3; Ps. 37:37; Prov. 19:10) and contrasted with the wicked (Job 9:22; Ps. 64:2-4). Job's claim to be blameless agrees with God's assessment of him, but it is not a claim to absolute perfection (Job 1:8; 9:21; 14:16, 17). The psalmist writes that the future of the blameless man is peace—as was the case for Job (Job 12:10-12; Ps. 37:37).

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## SATAN NEEDS PERMISSION

The unsaved are outside of God's protection, and the devil works freely in their lives (Ephesians 2:2-3). And although Satan also causes trouble for the saved, he must get permission from God first. When Satan told God that if Job were put to the test, he would curse God, the Lord said, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not put forth your hand on him" (Job 1:12 NASB). So Satan then caused calamity in Job's life. Satan is "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10 NKJV). He accuses God's people of breaking His laws and then demands the right to punish them. This will only cease when Satan is cast down to the earth at the beginning of the Tribulation period.

READ GENESIS 3 AND REVELATION 12.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## JOB'S DISEASE

Job was covered with "painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7-8 NKJV) and constantly scraped the pus-filled scabs with a piece of broken pottery. They were so painful that he couldn't sit on the ground, but sat in a soft heap of ashes. His disease is thought to have been a disgusting form of leprosy, possibly combined with elephantiasis. Small wonder that his friends didn't even recognize him when they first saw him! Job said, "My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering" (Job 7:5 NIV). Apparently flies laid their eggs in his open sores and maggots hatched in them and covered his body at times. (See also Job 30:30.) Yet God completely healed him!

READ JOB 7 AND MARK 1:21-44.



Since Job believed in God, Satan had to seek God's permission before testing him. William Blake (1757-1827) depicted Satan and Job in his painting *Satan Smiling Job with Scab Boils*.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## ELIHU WAS RIGHT



God did not rebuke Elihu because the words he spoke to Job were true. He is shown here speaking with Job in *The Wrath of Elihu* by William Blake (1757–1827).

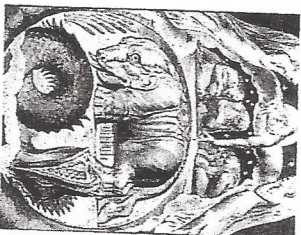
Elihu was the youngest of Job's friends, so he respectfully waited while the older men spoke. But when he saw that they accused Job without any proof, and that Job was more intent on proclaiming his own righteousness than in giving God praise, he finally spoke (Job 32:1–6). Elihu disagreed with Job's statement, "I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me. Yet He finds occasions against me" (Job 33:9–10 NKJV). In saying this, Job had succumbed to the sin of self-righteousness. Elihu then justified God's wisdom and actions, and proclaimed that He never did wickedness and never oppressed the righteous (Job 34:12; 37:23). In the end, although God rebuked Job (Job 38:1–3; 42:1–6) and his three older friends (Job 42:7–9), the Lord never rebuked Elihu, because what he'd said was right.

READ JOB 32 AND 34–35.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN

As proof of His great power and wisdom, God pointed out two of the greatest living creatures that He had created—behemoth and leviathan. Many people believe that behemoth refers to an elephant or a hippopotamus, and that leviathan was an oversized Nile crocodile. But other Christians point out that behemoth "moves his tail like a cedar" (Job 40:17 NKJV). Rather than a mere hippo, God seems to be describing something like an Apatosaurus. This giant dinosaur truly *was* the most impressive beast God created and "ranks first among the works of God" (Job 40:19 NIV). Also, leviathan sounds far more like a gigantic water-dwelling Plesiosaurus—or some as-yet-undiscovered, fire-breathing swamp dragon. Many Christians believe that a few dinosaurs survived the Flood and lived into early patriarchal times.



God used the behemoth and the leviathan—two unknown creatures—as examples of His power and wisdom in His creation. William Blake (1757–1827) painted his own idea of what these creatures might look like in *Behemoth and Leviathan*.

READ JOB 40–41.

## KEY THOUGHT:

Those who turn fully to God in sorrow—even if they argue, plead, and protest in His presence as Job did—will find a pathway to the tender mercies of heaven.

## KEY VERSE:

"For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
and He shall stand at last on the earth."  
Job 19:25

## KEY ACTION:

We must trust God even when it appears  
He is slaying us (see Job 13:15).

## KEY PRAYER:

Lord, whether You give or take away,  
help me say, "Blessed be the name  
of the Lord!"

2:9-10 It is one thing to lose our comforts; it is quite another to lose the support of a spouse. In times of great loss, we desperately need the support of our loved ones. We need our spouses' vote of confidence when no one else is there. The only mention of Job's wife comes at the start of his affliction. She was bitter and unable to share in his pain. As a spouse experiences tough times, we need to be there to offer support.

2:11-13 Three friends saw Job's pain from a distance and were overwhelmed. Then they gave him the best gift they had to offer—they wept and shared in his grief. When others are suffering, we may feel that we have to say something comforting, sympathetic, or advisory. But what they may really need is for us just to be with them and share their pain.

# Personal Gold

from BILL MCCARTNEY

## BLIND SPOTS

While everybody has blind spots, few of us can name our own. That's why we need others around us to identify them and help us compensate for them. We ignore them at our own risk. The results can be similar to neglecting important instructions from our boss or dismissing a phone message from the IRS.

The truth is, some of us just don't *want* to see certain things. They make us uncomfortable, they cause us to squirm, they make us feel guilty—and so we block them out of our sight. What do we end up with? A blind spot. But does the thing we don't want to see go away? No. Can it still hurt us? Yes.

I've developed my own definition of a blind spot: *You don't know what you don't know.* Sometimes we don't see certain things simply because we don't know to look for them. They may, in fact, cause us tremendous problems, but if no one makes us aware of their presence, we'll continue to miss them—and they'll continue to hurt us.

Scripture addresses this idea of blind spots. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (NIV 1984). In other words, so long as we live in these old bodies on this old earth, we'll suffer from faulty vision. The day is indeed coming when God will remove every one of our blind spots—but that day isn't yet.

An Old Testament verse adds an intriguing perspective to this. "For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it," says Job 33:14 (NIV 1984). In order to catch everything that God wants to say to me, I find that I have to keep my head on a swivel. I have to keep my eyes and ears open at all times. I have to be listening and on alert everywhere I go, because God is liable to speak to me anywhere. God can speak through a circumstance, through a newspaper, through a fellow Christian, through his Word. Of course, when he speaks in a way other than through his Word, I always measure it by his Word. If I think the Lord will speak to me in only one or two ways—ways that meet my approval, of course—I'm sure to ruin my spiritual vision. I'll walk around with enough blind spots to guarantee a brutal crash.

19:28-29 If we live by judgment and condemnation, Job reminds us that we will die by the same. It is critical that we recognize grace. It is by grace that we are saved, and it is by grace that we live in this world. We need to remember that we will be judged by the standard with which we judge others (Matthew 7:1-5; James 2:12-13).

# When Loved Ones Turn Away

Job 19:13-27

AS IF IT WEREN'T TERRIBLE ENOUGH that Job lost everything he had, he also had to face rejection by everyone he held dear. This passage is Job's roll call of all the people who have withdrawn physically and emotionally from him, as if his calamities were contagious. He can't find a sympathetic response from a single relative, neighbor, friend, or servant.

Even those who are left in his family despise him: "My breath is repulsive to my wife," Job laments. "I am rejected by my own family" (Job 19:17). He is truly alone in his agony.

One of the benefits of a good marriage is the solidarity of two people against the world. There is comfort in being fully known and fully accepted. But Job's wife turns away.

Amazingly, Job's response to all this rejection is to remain faithful to God. "I know that my Redeemer lives," he says (19:25). God's presence is so penetrating in Job's damaged life that he can still conclude that God lives and redeems his own.

At the end of this passage, Job focuses on seeing God. He moves from feeling deserted to talking about God's faithfulness.

How difficult it is when, in the midst of painful circumstances, those who are closest fail to offer strength and an encouraging perspective. But when no one seems to care or hear our pleas, we can still say of God, "I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" (19:27).

## The Danger of Lust

Job 31:1-12

JOB SPENDS THE FIRST 12 verses of chapter 31 professing his innocence in the area of lust. He first mentions general desires ("if my heart has lusted for what my eyes have seen," verse 7), then specifically talks about the lust of a man for a woman.

The concluding two verses of this passage boldly say, "For lust is a shameful sin, a crime that should be punished. It is a fire that burns all the way to hell. It would wipe out everything I own" (Job 31:11-12).

Some men try to defend their mental playgrounds to God. After all, they reason, who does it hurt if lustful thoughts remain just that? If I take no action, what is the harm in a little sexual fantasy now and again? But sexual lust is deceptive and powerful. It teases with delightful images that reveal none of the damage done to a relationship. When these thoughts are entertained, they draw the thinker deeper and deeper into the seductive realm of sin.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, "Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Harsh words! But lust is not just a matter of the mind wandering in forbidden pastures. It invades the very center of our souls.

Job's cries are an indictment of a sin that is so accepted today it is difficult to diagnose. We need to heed his warning and make sure our thoughts are innocent.

30:20 As his suffering went on, Job began to feel certain that God wasn't listening. Yet Job hadn't given him the chance to answer. Often we, like Job, talk about God and even talk to God, but we don't stop long enough to let him talk to us. God speaks to us through his Word, the Bible, and through our times of prayer and meditation. We need to sit still and wait for God to speak to our hearts.

# The Language of Pain **Job**

SOMETIMES BELIEVERS GET NERVOUS when fellow believers who are suffering start sounding unspiritual. We worry that perhaps our friends are beginning to lose their faith—when, in fact, nothing of the sort is happening. Most often, godly people in pain speak out of their frustration and confusion while never losing sight of the ultimate source of comfort—just like Job.

For thousands of years, Bible readers have associated this name with suffering. Scripture describes him as “blameless—a man of complete integrity” who “feared God and stayed away from evil” (Job 1:1). Yet despite his personal godliness, a terrifying succession of events took Job’s children, his riches, his standing in the community, and finally his health. Even his wife encouraged him to “curse God and die” (2:9).

Yet Job replied, “You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?” And then the Bible adds, “So in all this, Job said nothing wrong” (2:10).

But as the days dragged on with no relief in sight and even Job’s friends started wondering aloud whether he had brought the calamity on himself through some secret sin, Job began to fret and stew and speak like . . . well, like someone in deep pain. He never came close to abandoning his faith in God, although sometimes it may have sounded like it.

## Job oscillates

between

expressions of  
faith and sharp  
outbursts of  
exasperation.

**Exasperation:** “Why doesn’t the Almighty bring the wicked to judgment? Why must the godly wait for him in vain?” (24:1).

**Faith:** “As long as I live, while I have breath from God, my lips will speak no evil, and my tongue will speak no lies” (27:3-4).

**Exasperation:** “I cry to you, O God, but you don’t answer. I stand before you, but you don’t even look. You have become cruel toward me. You use your power to persecute me” (30:20-21).

Several times Job pleaded for answers (13:3, 15; 23:3-7; 31:35-37), and several times he wished for some kind of mediator to plead his case before God (9:33; 31:35; 33:23).

In the end, Job got no answers but did get a renewed vision of God—and that was enough. His faith intact, Job once again experienced the blessing of God and lived to be “an old man who had lived a long, full life” (42:17).

Pain may change the vocabulary of faith, but it can’t eradicate its content.

**THE POINT:** Don’t require believers in pain to speak as though all is well.

# “You Had It Coming” **Job’s Friends**

JOB’S FRIENDS SPOKE their wisest words during the first seven days they spent with him. That’s when they shut their mouths and kept silent.

Once the words began to flow, so did the foolishness. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar got stuck on a single track and couldn’t get off of it. Unfortunately, the four ugly lanes of this same track still wind their way through our thoughts.

**UGLY LANE #1:** *Personal suffering always has a clear reason.*

Eliphaz insisted, “Evil does not spring from the soil, and trouble does not sprout from the earth” (Job 5:6). If somebody’s life is messed up, then there is obviously a cause. After all, trouble doesn’t come out of nowhere.

**UGLY LANE #2:** *Good guys always prosper.*

“Stop and think!” Eliphaz told Job. “Do the innocent die? When have the upright been destroyed?” (4:7). Bildad put it this way: “God will not reject a person of integrity, nor will he lend a hand to the wicked” (8:20). And Zophar got in his two cents as well: “If only you would prepare your heart and lift up your hands to [God] in prayer! . . . You will be protected and will rest in safety” (11:13-18). In other words, the righteous always receive their just rewards in this life.

## Once the words

began to flow,  
so did the  
foolishness.

**UGLY LANE #3:** *Bad guys always roast.*

Job’s three friends just knew that evil men got what they had coming, without exception. “Don’t you realize that from the beginning of time, ever since people were first placed on the earth,” asked Zophar, “the triumph of the wicked has been short lived and the joy of the godless has been only temporary?” (20:4-5). Eliphaz agreed: “The wicked writhe in pain throughout their lives,” he maintained (15:20). “Surely the light of the wicked will be snuffed out.” Bildad concluded (18:5). In other words, evil always gets judged in this life, long before death comes knocking.

**UGLY LANE #4:** *If you suffer, you must have sinned.*

“God is doubtless punishing you far less than you deserve!” Zophar lectured Job (11:6). “There’s no limit to your sins,” shouted Eliphaz (22:5). “Your children must have sinned against [God],” explained Bildad, “so their punishment was well deserved” (8:4).

How long Job had to endure such cruel comments, the book doesn’t say. But we do know how badly these men misrepresented the truth, for God himself told Eliphaz, “I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has” (42:7).

Do you have a friend who’s suffering? If so, be careful what you say to bring comfort or clarity. Make sure you don’t run along the ugly track of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Keep in mind that your best guess as to the reason for your friend’s suffering is likely to be way off.

**THE POINT:** The presence of suffering doesn’t necessarily mean the presence of sin.

# The Argument

Job 2:9-10

THE FIRST VERSE OF JOB describes a man who was "blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil." Then, without knowing the behind-the-scenes reasons, he was hit with a vicious test.

He lost everything—wealth, children, even the ability to have a close relationship with his wife. It is difficult for most of us to even imagine Job's agony. To add to his misery, his wife taunted him: "Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Now there's a word of comfort!

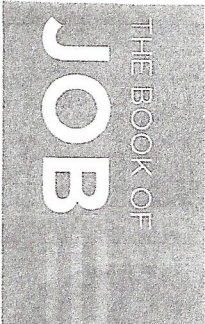
Communication between husband and wife is key to a fruitful marriage, but poor communication can lead to disagreements that grow into arguments, resentment, and anger. Both partners feel justified in sounding off.

In all fairness to Job's wife, her agony was unfathomable, and she undoubtedly spoke out of sheer pain and frustration. After all, she had suffered the same losses as Job. All of her children died in what seemed like a freak accident, and the wealth that Job and his family enjoyed vanished in an instant.

But while we shouldn't be too quick to pass judgment on Job's wife, we should realize that her agony doesn't excuse her harsh words. Job's response to his wife's words was tough but fair: "You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" (2:10).

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of these two verses is the concluding line: "In all this, Job said nothing wrong" (2:10). He had put God first, and he had spoken firmly and truthfully to his wife. He reminded her—and us—of a spiritual truth: Just because we know and love God does not mean we will never experience trouble.

3:1-19 Even though Job had known amazing success and happiness, he couldn't remember what it had been like. An element common to suffering is a loss of perspective. No matter how hard we try to maintain our point of view, it is difficult to see yesterday's celebration in the midst of today's devastation. But we can hold fast to the hope that one day God will give us reason to celebrate once again.



"Though he slay me,  
yet will I hope in him,"  
(13:15)

JOB IS PERHAPS THE EARLIEST book of the Bible. Set in the period of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph), it tells the story of a man who loses everything—his wealth, his family, his health—and wrestles with the question, Why?

The book begins with a heavenly debate between God and Satan, moves through three cycles of earthly debates between Job and his friends, and concludes with a dramatic "divine diagnosis" of Job's problem. In the end, Job acknowledges the sovereignty of God in his life and receives back more than he had before his trials.

*Job* is the Hebrew title for this book, and the name has two possible meanings. If derived from the Hebrew word for "Persecution," it means "Persecuted One." It is more likely that it comes from the Arabic word meaning "To Come Back" or "Repent." If so, it may be defined "Repentant One." Both meanings apply to the book. The Greek title is *Iob*, and the Latin title is *Job*.

### WATCH WORDS

- blameless (having integrity, wholeness or wholesomeness)—1:1 (also 8:20; 9:21)
- hypocrite (profane or impious)—8:13 (also 27:8)
- preserve (care for, look after)—10:12
- Sheol (the place of those who have died)—26:6 (also 7:9; 14:13)
- affliction (misery or poverty, a heavy burden that weighs on a person)—30:16

### BY THE NUMBERS

42 CHAPTERS  
1,070 VERSES  
16,920 WORDS

# JOB

### What's in a Name?

The name for God used in the book of Job is Shaddai, which means "Almighty." The name Satan means "adversary." The name Job can mean "persecuted" or "repentant."

# DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ This book is considered by most to be one of the oldest books of the Bible.
- ▶ Job assumed the role of priest for his family, offering sacrifices and praying for himself and his offspring (1:5).

## INTEGRITY IN ACTION

Although Job lost everything—his wealth, his children, his health and even the support of his wife and friends—he never lost his faith in God but believed God would eventually redeem him.