

JOB

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.

So begins the timeless story of undeserved suffering and the search for an answer from God.

Job truly was a good and faithful believer. When grief, poverty, and physical pain overwhelmed him, he refused to curse God. All his anger, confusion, depression, sorrow, and weariness were expressed toward God. The powerful, passionate words of Job can help us also when we are hurting and only God can give the relief we need.

The book of Job is regarded as one of the world's truly great literary masterpieces. It contains some of the finest, most expressive poetry in the bible.

The first-time reader – or even the umpteenth reader – may find it helpful to remember that the action takes place in the first two chapters and the last chapter. This is where you find Satan (the Hebrew “ha satan” means The Accuser) destroying Job's ten children, many animals, and possessions, and finally afflicting him with a painful disease. Do people only trust God because they get rewarded for it? Job refuses to curse God and is consumed with misery. In Chapter 42, he is blessed with family and wealth again.

However, the real drama is the search for an answer. Why has this happened?

Imagine a stage. On it sits a man in rags, three friends in quality clothing, and a quiet younger friend. They come to comfort and grieve with Job. After seven days of silence, they begin to speak. What was Job's sin that this tragedy has occurred? Nothing, says Job.

The theories of Job's guilt expressed by his friends continue to be common answers to suffering today. Job is correct. He is no victim to be blamed. His suffering is not a punishment. But it is a mystery. When God answers out of a whirlwind, Job is silenced. He never gets an explanation, but he gets God. Job discovers that God is God, and he is not God. Now he repents of his arrogance. Now he is healed.

As you read, watch for the beginning and ending of each speech. Read each speech as a unit whether it is one chapter or more. Note the name of the speaker. Try summarizing the point of each speech in one sentence.

Here is an outline of action and speeches:

- Chapter 1 – Satan takes Job's children and wealth.
- Chapter 2 – Sick and grieving, Job sits in silence.
- Chapter 3 – Job curses the day he was born.
- Chapters 4-31 – Job and his three friends debate his guilt and innocence.
- Chapters 32-37 – Elihu defends God and Job.
- Chapter 38 – the Lord answers Job.
- Chapter 42 – Job is humbled, satisfied and restored.

In the early church, the book of Job was read during Holy Week. Job is the clearest example of a good man who suffered unjustly. In fact, he proclaims “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.*” (19:25) Jesus is the perfect man who suffered even more. In Jesus, we find more than an explanation for human sin and suffering; we find God's solution.

P.S. If you need a short introduction to Job. Read Chapters 1-3 and 38-42.

Are you suffering and seeking an answer from God?

Let the words of Job help you express your pain, weariness, and outrage.

Are you the friend or bystander trying to comfort and encourage?

Job's friends show us what to do and what not to say.