

Bible Studies

Wisdom through Suffering

12 studies

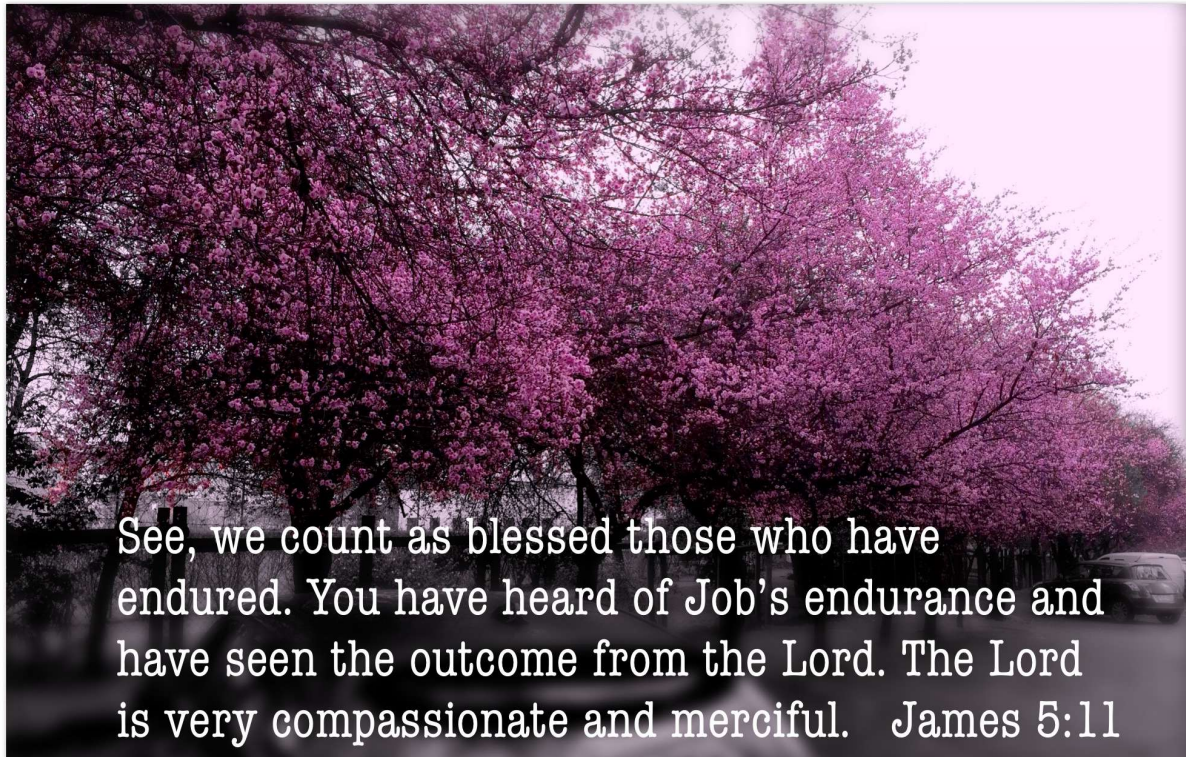
Julie Haddon



Wisdom through suffering

James 1:2-5, 5:7-11; Job 1-2

Study 1



Introduction

Often, this life seems extremely painful and unjust, and this may cause us to have doubts about how God manages the world. When we go through hard times or suffering, we find it difficult to make sense of it and this often causes us to question God's sovereignty and His wisdom. The book of Job was written with exactly these doubts and questions in mind. It is God's answer to our questions when things are tough. But the purpose of the book takes us way beyond our understanding of our own circumstances and reveals to us in an extraordinary way, the character of God and His purposes in His world. May you be richly blessed by your study of this book.

James 1:2-5, 5:7-11

1) Why does James highlight the patience or perseverance/endurance of Job?
(See also: John 16:33, Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 10:32-36)

2) What does the New Testament say about suffering?
(Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 8:31, Luke 24:26-27, 1 Corinthians 12:26, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, Philippians 1:29, 3:7-11, Hebrews 2:9-10, 11:32-40, 1 Peter 4:16,19, Revelation 2:10)

Job 1-2

3) Who is Job and how is he described? (Read also Ezekiel 14:14,20)
Why is it so important that this is established at the beginning of the book?

4) What is the accuser's role? What is he allowed to do? What is he forbidden from doing?

5) What reaction does the accuser assume Job will have when he is tested?

6) Make a list of all the tragedies that occur in Job's life.

7) How does Job respond?

Job 1:20-22

Job 2:10

8) How might his wife's reaction have affected him?

9) How does physical suffering affect us differently from other kinds of suffering?

10) What things in the story of Job point us to Jesus?

Job 3

4) In this chapter we begin to see the use of poetry. Why do you think poetry is the main literary voice in the book of Job?

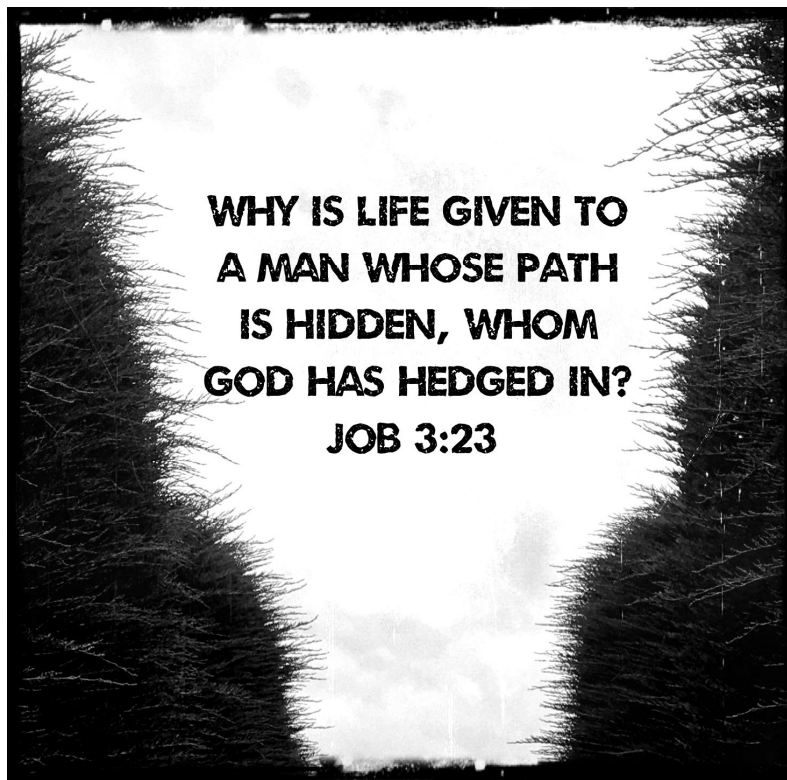
5) As you read chapter 3, what themes or phrases stand out?

6) Compare this chapter with Psalms 22 and 88, what do these passages have in common?

7) Can you find any sparks of hope in this chapter?

8) What can we learn about suffering and depression in the life of believers?

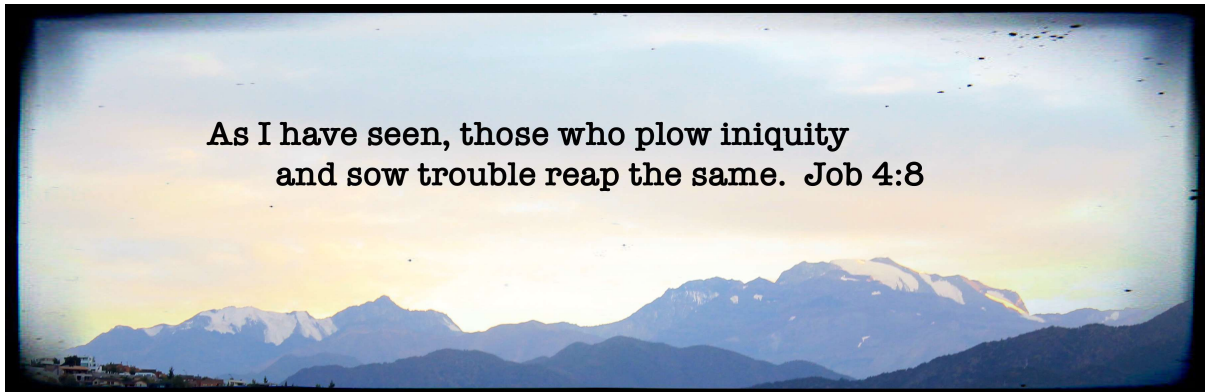
9) What things in this chapter remind us of Jesus?



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Job 4-7

Study 3



The theology of Job and his friends

Before going further in our studies, it is important that we understand the theology of Job's comforters (this is also what Job also believes initially). Theologian and pastor Christopher Ash summarises it in the following way:

- 1) God is absolutely in control
- 2) God is absolutely just and fair
- 3) *Therefore* he always punishes wickedness and blesses righteousness - always
- 4) *Therefore*, if I suffer, I *must* have sinned and am being punished justly for my sin

The three friends believe this unreservedly, Job, however finds himself questioning these beliefs.

Job 6 & 7

6) Carefully read 6:8-13 What is Job's great fear?

7) How does Job respond to Eliphaz? Why is he so disappointed with him?
How does Job describe Eliphaz's comforting words?

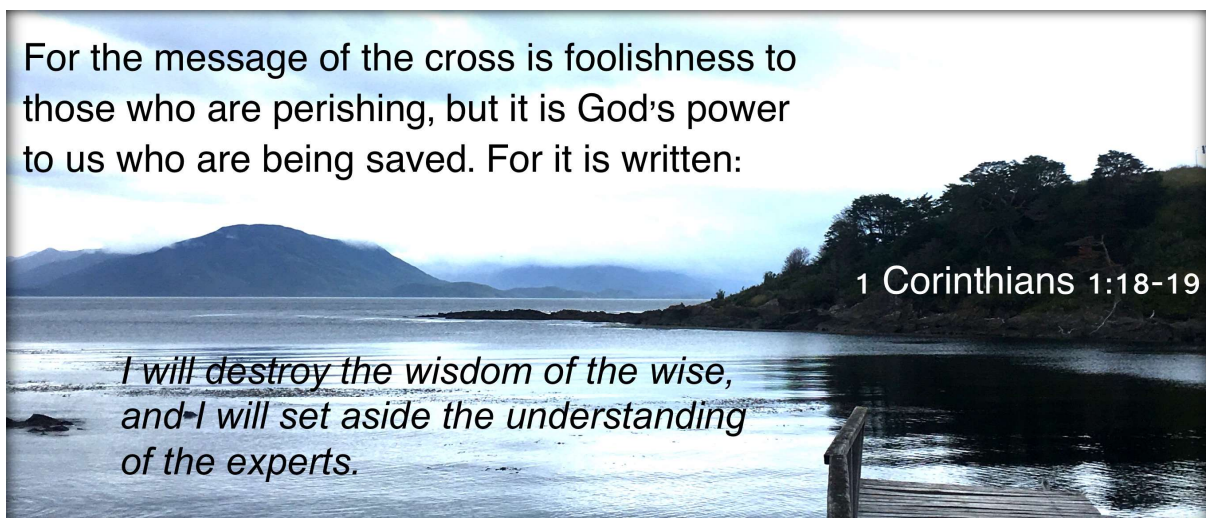
8) How does Job describe his life? (compare again with Psalm 88)

9) How does Job feel about God?

10) Compare Job's words in 7:17 with Psalm 8, how is his attitude similar/different from king David?

11) Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, how is the wisdom expressed here different from what Job's friends are calling wisdom?

12) How can the wisdom that Paul speaks of help us in times of suffering?



4) How does Job describe God?

5) How does Job sum up his own life?

6) What is the problem that Job describes, and what does Job long for to overcome this?

7) Compare Job 9:29-31 with Psalm 51:1-12, what does the Psalmist understand that Job doesn't?

8) Read Hebrews 9:11-15, 1 Timothy 2:5-6 and 1 John 2:1, what do these passages teach us about what Job is longing for in 9:33-34?

Job 11

9) What does Zophar say to comfort Job? Is this actually helpful for Job?

10) On who's behalf does Zophar claim to be speaking? Does he have any authority to speak this way?

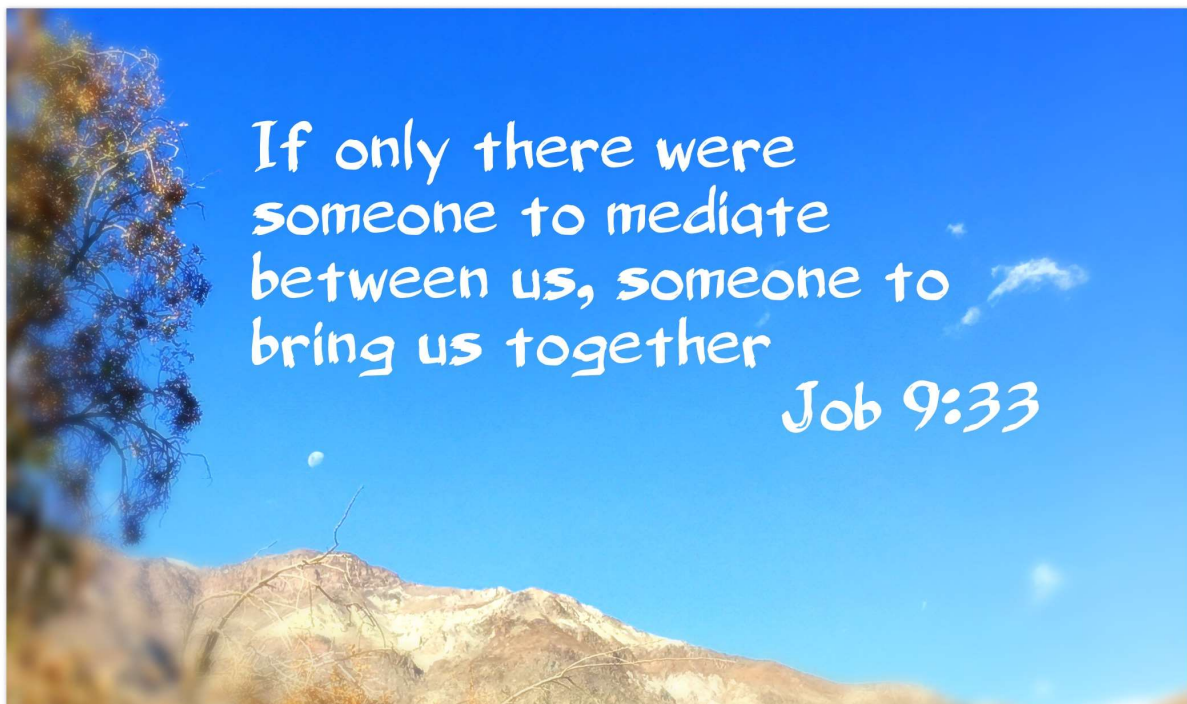
Job 12-13:19

12) How does Job respond to Zophar?

13) How does Job challenge his friends? (12:5, 13:4-12)

14) How does Job describe the justice and judgement of God?

15) What does Job want, and in what does he place his hope?



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Job 13:20-17:16

Study 5

Job 13:20-14:22

1) Job now speaks directly to God, make a list of all of Job's questions:

2) What comparison does Job make in 14:7-12?

3) What does Job long for in 14:13-15?

4) What destroys Job's hope in 14:18-22?

According to what is revealed in the New Testament (John 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, 1 Peter 1:3-5), why can we have a certainty that Job didn't?

Job 15

5) Summarise Eliphaz's argument in this chapter:

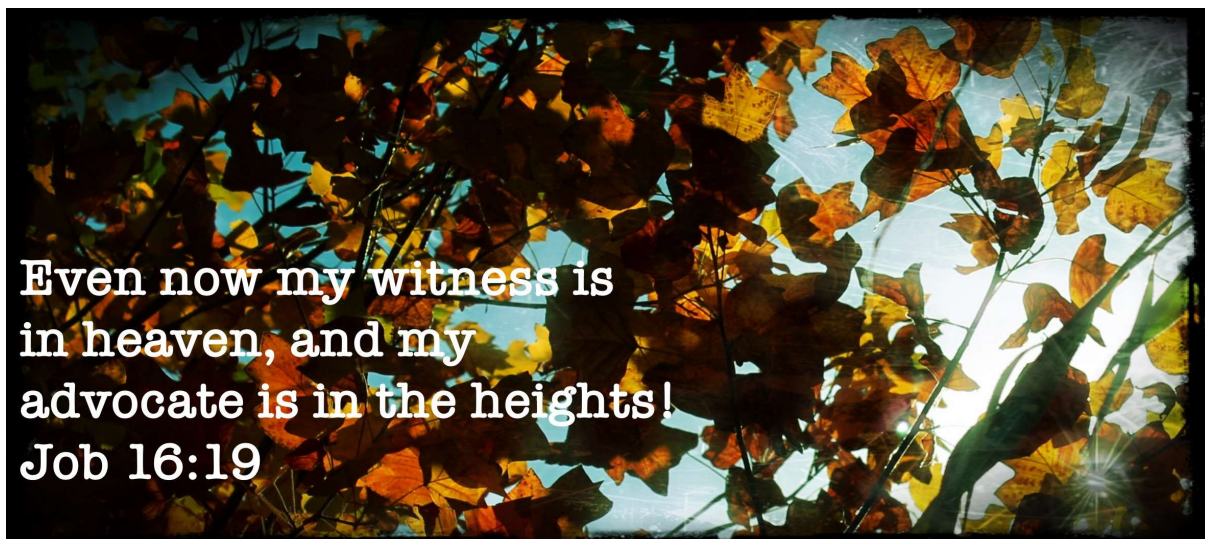
8) What might lead us to the conclusion that Eliphaz is actually accusing Job in this poem?

Job 16-17

7) Summarise Job's feelings in these two chapters:

8) Read 16:18-21, what is this all about? (See Genesis 4:8-10, 9:5-6, Isaiah 26:21)

9) Where can we find hope in chapter 17? (See what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)



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Job 18-21

Study 6

Job 18

1) Make a list of everything Bildad says about the destiny of the wicked:

2) What is the point he is trying to make?

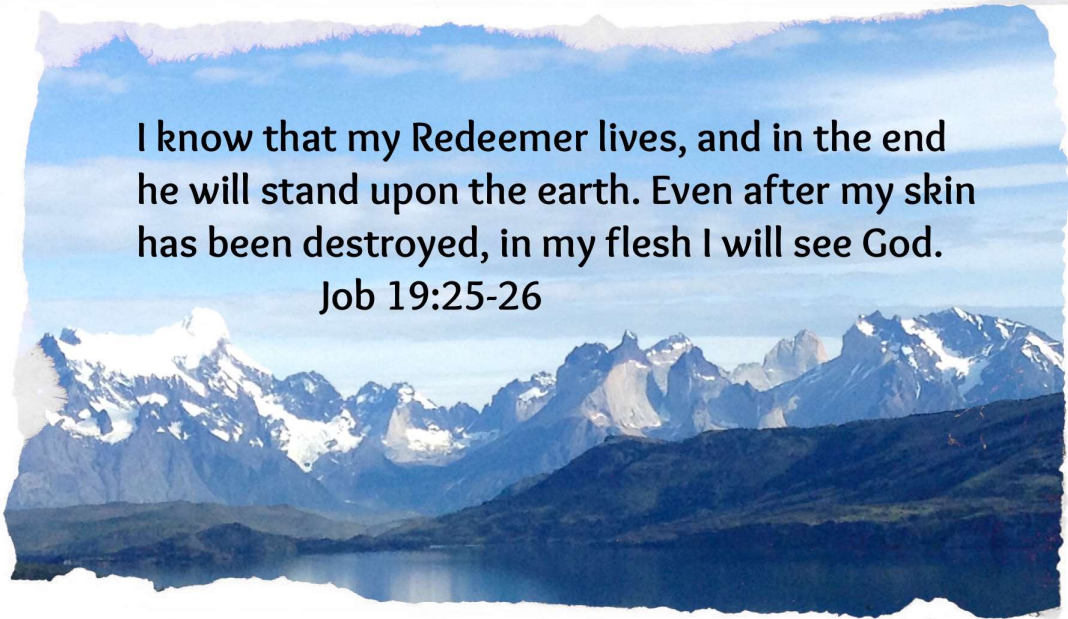
3) Is what Bildad says applicable to Job?

Job 19

4) Why do Bildad's words cause Job such anguish?

5) Describe the development of Job's understanding, as seen throughout his speeches so far, which lead to his declaration in 19:25-27.

6) What is the warning that Job gives his friends? (19:28-29)



I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end
he will stand upon the earth. Even after my skin
has been destroyed, in my flesh I will see God.
Job 19:25-26

Job 20

7) In this his final speech, what does Zophar say about the wicked and about Job?

8) Job's friends say the same thing over and over, why do you think these repetitions might have been included in the book?

9) Read Romans 1:18, what does this passage tell us about what Zophar has said?

10) Read Colossians 2:13-14, what is the hope we can have even though we rightly deserve condemnation because of our sin?

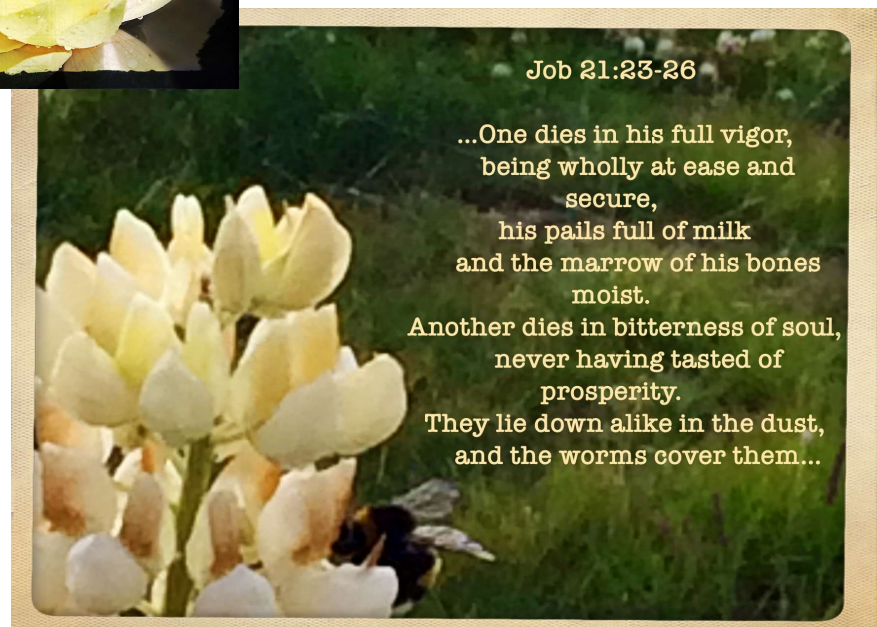
Job 21

11) In 21:4-6, Job shows his comforters the way they ought to respond to his suffering due to the fact that he is innocent, what does this teach us about how we ought to behave when we see someone who is suffering?

12) How does Job respond to Zophar's accusations? How is his point of view different from that of Zophar?

13) Is there any relationship between what we see of people's lives and the spiritual reality?

14) Why is it dangerous to make these types of comparisons?



Job 23

4) What is Job expressing in this chapter? What is the greatest desire of his heart? What is his biggest frustration?

5) How is Job's faith displayed in this chapter?

6) Compare 23:10 with Isaiah 48:10, Zachariah 13:9, Malachi 3:2 y 1 Peter 1:6-7, how have you seen God's refining work in your own life?

7) Compare the words of Eliphaz in 22:23-30 with what Job says in 23:11-12, what does this show us? At the end of the book, what Eliphaz says in v.26-27, is fulfilled in Job's life...42:7-9. How is this a picture of what Christ does for us? (see John 17:9-11 and Hebrews 7:23-27)

Job 24

8) Summarise Job's argument in this chapter:

9) What are Job's questions in this chapter? Have you ever asked similar questions? What is Job really questioning or doubting here, what is he hoping/longing for?

10) How can we see Job's hope reflected in the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:10?

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Job 25-28

Study 8

Job 25

1) Can you describe Bildad's world view according to this, his last speech?

2) What would be the comforters response to the questions in 25:4? What does Job believe about this ? (See also: 4:17, 9:2, 14:4, 15:14-16)

Job 26

3) In verses 1-4, what does Job have to say about all that Bildad and the other friends have said to him?

4) What does Job say about God's sovereignty in this chapter?

5) What is he talking about in verses 11-13?



Job 27

6) What is Job doing and saying in verses 1-6?

7) What is Job saying in verses 7-12?

8) Compare what Job says about the destiny of the wicked with what his friends have been saying. Is there anything that Job says that is different from what his friends have been saying? Is there anything they say that Job agrees with?

Job 28

9) Follow along and summarise the argument in this chapter:

28:1-11

28:12-19

28:20-28

10) What is wisdom, and where can it be found? (See also Romans 11:33-36, 1Corinthians 1:24 and Colossians 2:3)

11) Read James 3:13-17, compare the difference between God's wisdom and the "wisdom" of the comforters.



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Job 29-32:5

Study 9

1) Compare and contrast the life of Job before and after his tragedies:

Job 29

The way things were

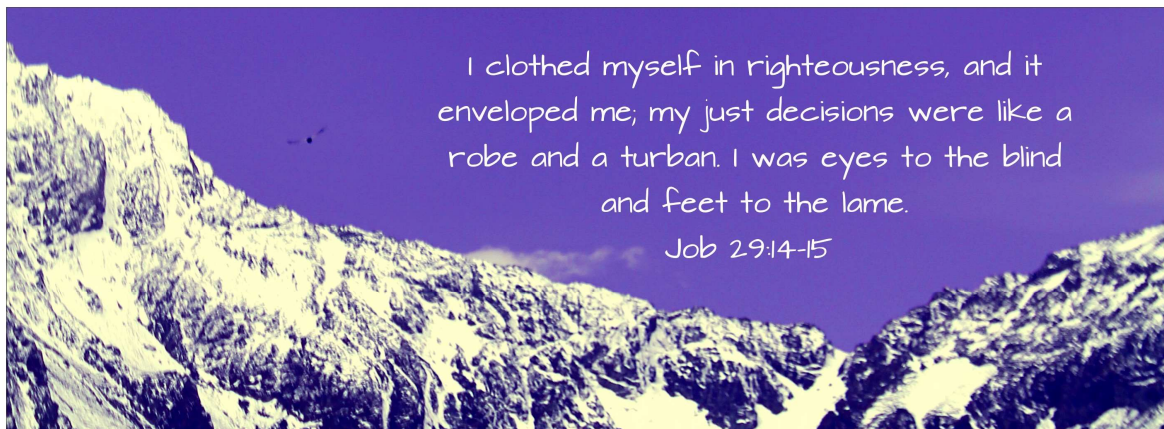
Job 30

The way things are now

2) Compare how Job describes his own life with the way Eliphaz described it in chapter 22, what point is Job trying to make?

3) What do these chapters reveal about the deepest desires of Job's heart?

4) How do both these pictures point to Jesus?



Job 31

5) These are the final words of Job to his comforters, what is his main argument in this chapter?

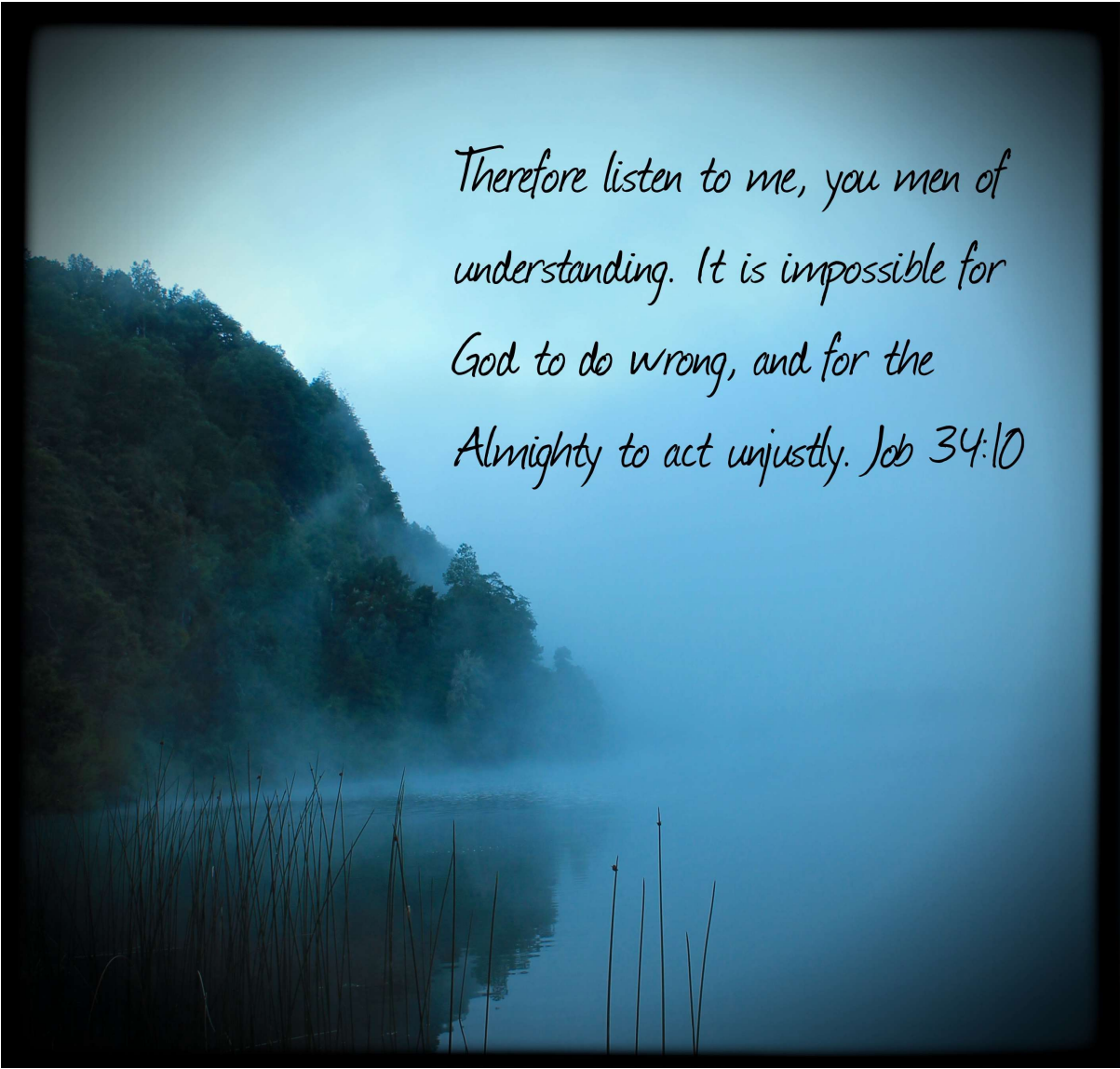
6) How could we describe Job from what he has said from chapters 3-31?

7) How has Job challenged God? Could this be a problem?

Job 32:1-5

8) Who is Elihu?

9) Why is he so angry? Is his anger justified?



*Therefore listen to me, you men of
understanding. It is impossible for
God to do wrong, and for the
Almighty to act unjustly. Job 34:10*

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Job 32-34

Study 10

Job 32:6-33:33

1) What compels Elihu, and with what authority does he claim to speak? (32:8-10, 7-22)

2) How does Elihu's show he has been paying attention to all that has been said by Job and his friends?

3) What does Elihu say to show Job that he is trustworthy? (32:20-33:7)

4) Elihu challenges both Job and his friends that God speaks. How and/or when does Elihu explain that God speaks?

33:14-18

33:19-22

5) According to Elihu what is God's purpose in sending suffering? (33:29-30)

6) In 33:23-28, Elihu says a number of things which are designed to be of encouragement to Job, what are they?

7) Read Hebrews 1:1-2 and John 1:14-18, how does God speak to his people this side of the cross?

Job 34

8) What does Elihu accuse Job of in v. 5-9 and 35-37?

9) Compare Elihu's accusation of Job in v.8 with Eliphaz's accusation in 15:16, how are they similar, and what is different about Elihu's words?

10) How does Elihu describe God in this chapter?

11) What is Elihu's warning to Job? (v.31-47) How is this similar to the warnings Job has given his friends previously? (19:29; 27:11-12)

12) Is it necessary sometimes to warn or challenge someone? How can this be done with grace and love? (Ephesians 4:11-16)

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Job 35-37

Study 11

Job 35

1) If we go through a prolonged time of suffering or discouragement, how could this affect our faith? What do we need to hear in times of doubt?

We have seen that throughout his speeches Job has struggled, sometimes recognising the sovereignty and justice of God (9:4-10; 12:13,22-23; 23:22; 24:23-24; 26:6-14; 27:11; 28:1-28; 31:2,4) and sometimes doubting or questioning (9:22; 12:16-20;19:6; 21:5-7,23-26; 24:1; 27:2; 30:26; 31:4,6).

2) Compare Job's attitude at the beginning (1:21 y 2:10) with his attitude as he finishes speaking in ch. 31, is Elihu justified in his accusations against Job?

(v.2 in the original language is somewhat difficult to interpret, it could be rendered "... righteous before God?" or ... more righteous than God?"

Given that Job has never stated that he is more righteous than God it is probably safe to conclude that the most apt translation is the first.)

3) What is Elihu trying to say in this chapter?

v.4-8

v. 9-15

4) Read Psalm 73 and compare the Psalmists experience and reaction with that of Job. The Psalmists turning point is in v.17, how is it that *we* can enter the “sanctuary” of God? (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Job 36:1-26

5) What is Eliú saying in v.1-4?

6) What does Elihu state about God here?

7) Make a list of all the warnings and advice Elihu gives Job in this chapter:

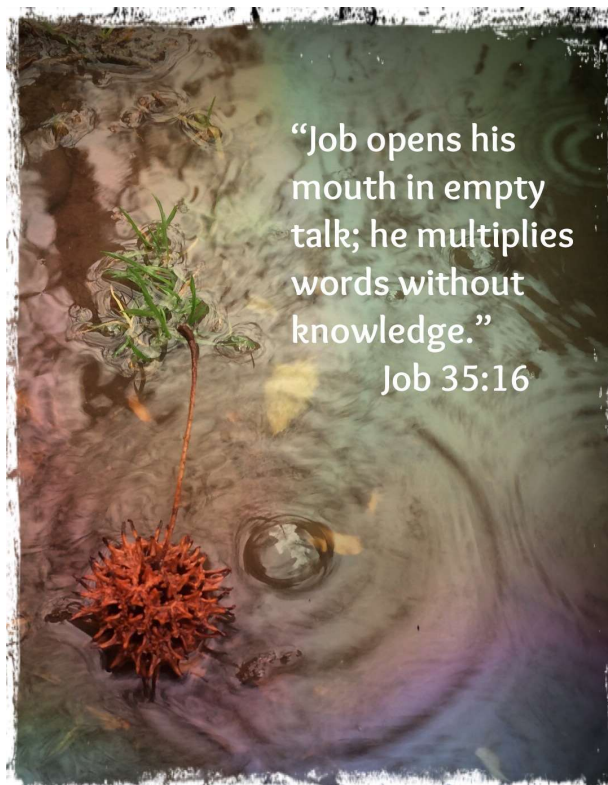
Job 36:27-37:24

8) What example does Elihu give Job to encourage him to lift his eyes towards God?

9) Summarise what Elihu says about God as he finishes his speeches:

10) What has Elihu achieved through his speeches?

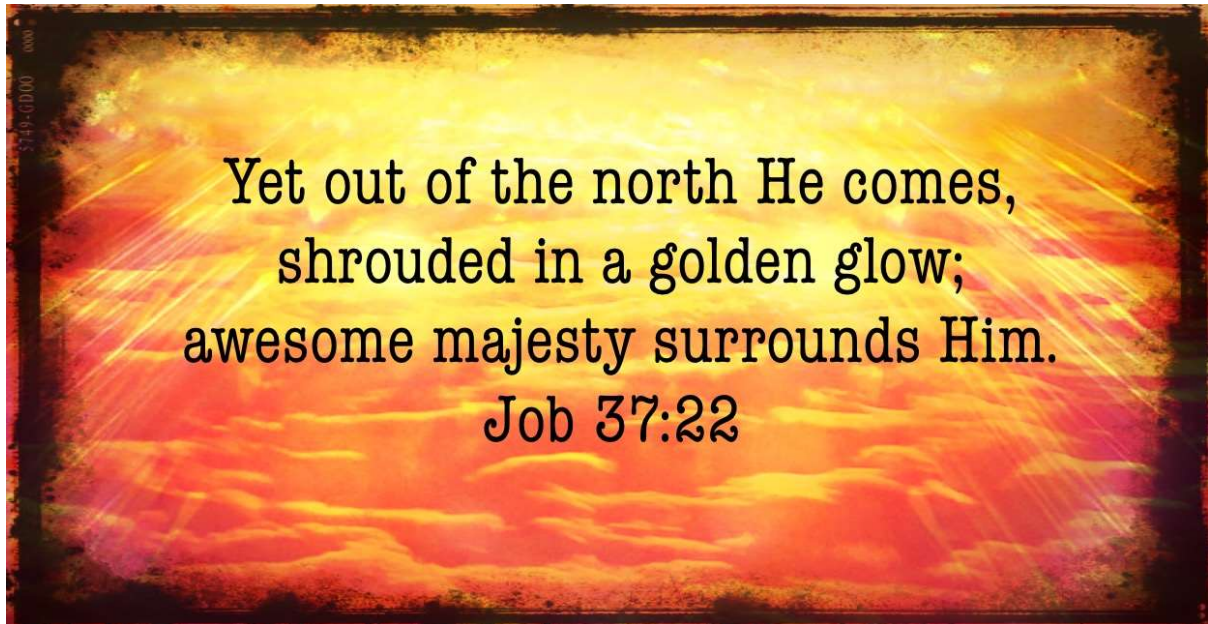
11) How does Job respond to all that Elihu has said?



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Job 38-42

Study 12



Job 38:1-3

1) How does God arrive?

2) Review 9:17, 21:18, 27:20-21, 37:9 How has the whirlwind been spoke of before? Why is it significant that God arrives this way?

3) How does God address Job? (Compare with what Job had said to God in 13:22.)

4) What accusation does God make against Job?

5) Read 34:35, 35:16 y 38:2, what do these words that God speaks tell us about what Elihu has said?

Job 38:4-39:30

6) How does God reveal himself to Job?

7) What is the point of all the questions that God asks Job?

8) Read chapters 38 and 39 carefully, what is God demonstrating? What contrasts can you observe in this poem?

9) What can we learn about God's sovereignty in these chapters?

Job 40:1-5

10) How does Job respond to this first speech from God? Compare this with what he had said previously about what he would say if he ever had the opportunity to talk to God (10:1-4; 13:13,18-19,22-24; 23:4; 31:37).

Job 40:6-41:34

11) How does God now accuse Job in 40:8?

12) What is the challenge God gives to Job in 40:10-14?

13) Describe the two beasts:

Behemoth: (40:15-24)

Leviathan: (41:1-34)

15) Why do you think God has challenged Job to gain dominion over these beasts in particular? (Also read Job 3:8, 9:13 & 26:12-13; Psalm 74:14, 104:26; Isaiah 27:1)

16) What does God want to say/reveal about himself in these chapters? What are the most important things we ought to know and remember in difficult times?

17) In the end, did God explain to Job why he was suffering?

Job 42:1-6

18) How does Job respond to what God has revealed to him? What does he repent of?

Job 42:7-9

19) What does God say about Job and what does he say about Job's friends ?

Job

Friends

20) What do the friends need to do to appease the wrath of God? What is Job's role in this process?

42:10-17

21) What happens before God restores everything? What happens in the end?

22) Compare 42:11 with 19:13-19, what does this show us about the importance of the community of believers and the way they ought to support and comfort those who are suffering?

23) What have you learned from the book of Job?

