



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### JOB: LESSON 1

#### First Day

It's a privilege to study the book of Job with you. When first asked, many believe that Job answers several questions, such as "Why does God allow suffering and evil?" or "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Although some think those are the questions the book of Job wrestles with, it really isn't the central theme of the book. Satan accused Job of worshipping and serving God only because God was rewarding him. But at the core of Satan's accusation came the bigger question, "Is the God for whom we suffer worthy of our suffering? Do we suffer for Him because He's worthy, or because He rewards us?" Honestly, this book stretches my faith and raises more questions than it gives answers.

Before we begin, I have a confession to make, although it also may be somewhat of a plea for forgiveness. You see, I have been so afraid of writing this study that I have procrastinated for weeks. The more books I've read on Job, the more afraid I become! I didn't really know exactly what I was afraid of, but after much soul searching, I think I've finally figured it out. Here's a few of the reasons:

1. ***I don't understand it all.*** Job is a difficult book to understand. Although we'll discuss some of the thoughts on who wrote it, the time it was written, etc, no one really knows. But not only that, it's written in almost all Hebrew poetry, which most of us aren't used to reading. It's full of words that are rarely used anywhere else in the Bible, which confuses even the smartest scholar. Because of that, there are often several interpretations of different verses. It has also been classified as part of the "wisdom literature" of the Bible, which means it contains instructions and principles on how to live in this world, to the glory of God. By saying that, though, it also includes an amazing mixture of riddles, hymns, curses, proverbs, and poems. So to reiterate my opening statement, there is a lot of it I don't understand and I'm afraid to try to explain.

**2. *I'm afraid I won't represent "Him" well.*** The "Him" in this statement refers to both Job and God. I desperately want to help you come to a better understanding of all the truths in this book, but I am scared to death I won't do it justice. God reveals Himself and His power in a life-changing way and I want us to get it! His sovereign character is the basis of the whole book, which, if we can grasp it, can change our view of life. God shares His ultimate sovereignty with no one, not even satan. I also want to represent the man "Job" in the way he should be represented. He is my new hero. He was not perfect, but incredible, nonetheless. These tragic things didn't happen to him because he had sinned, although he sinned through the process. But even though he cursed the day he was born, he never cursed God, which is a remarkable thing. And when God spoke, boy, did he listen! God met him in his deepest moments of despair, and Job was quick to repent from his self-righteousness. I pray you see his amazing character throughout the story and learn many practical lessons from him.

**3. *I'm afraid I'll stir up more questions than answers, and be guilty of confusing you.*** There are many deep, deep, questions that the book of Job calls to our attention; questions that most of us have asked over the course of our lives. This book doesn't really answer many of them. It's not a book of "trite" or soft and easy answers. Much to the contrary. It can raise questions we didn't even know we had! Some questions about God are un-answerable, which is why some things are called the "mysteries" of God. His ways are not completely understandable by us, and that needs to be okay.

**4. *I'm afraid that this book won't impact you like it did me, and it will be my fault.*** The book of Job changed my life, simple as that. But I've been parked in Job for many months. I've been reading the book of Job, along with various writings "about" the book of Job, which are all fascinating. They have challenged and strengthened my faith. I look at God differently; I look at suffering and pain differently. I've changed my perspective on pain; my pain as well as others'. Pain narrows vision, forcing us to think of ourselves and nothing else. But the book of Job reminds us that there's a lot more going on "out there" than we can imagine, and God is never more present than during our pain. I look at the injustices in the world differently and am finally beginning to understand that God never said that life would be fair; at least not on this earth. We tend to confuse God with life and assume because God is fair, life will be fair. I was challenged by Phillip Yancey to reread the story of Jesus and specifically see if life was "fair" to Him. And then

this statement stopped me in my tracks; "For me, the Cross demolished for all time the basic assumption that life would be fair. The Cross of Christ may have overcome evil, but it did not overcome unfairness. For that, Easter is required. Someday, God will restore all physical reality to its proper place under His reign. Until then, it's a good thing to remember that we live out our days on Easter Saturday, anxiously awaiting Sunday!" With all of my heart, I want the book of Job to impact you in a life-changing way. I pray you spend as much time as you possibly can reading Job and books about Job.

I could go on and on about what's keeping me from writing, which is actually keeping me from starting, so we'll begin now. ☺ I'm going to end with one more quote from Phillip Yancey, which, by the end of the study, I'll probably be referring to simply as "Phil" because I have made a friend in him through his writings. I'm praying for us as we work through this book together. May we grow in our faith and learn to enjoy and trust Him in all life's circumstances ... during our pain, hardships, and life's "unfairness." When our dreams are shattered or our worst nightmares become realities, may we see His glory and sense His presence even more. Pain is a reality in all of our lives in some way. Derek Thomas says it well, "Pain can teach us something about God; that we do not understand Him as well as we think we do. Admitting such is not a retreat into a pessimism about ever knowing God at all; rather, it is to admit that there are depths to God that are 'past finding out.' To admit this is to approach the essence of true discipleship."

"Phil," from his book, *Disappointment with God*:

"If you had asked me when I began my study what the book of Job was about, I would have been quick to respond. *Job? Everybody knows what Job is about. It's the Bible's most complete treatment of the problem of suffering. It's about terrible grief and bewildering pain.*

... I now believe I misread the book, or, more accurately, didn't take into account the entire book. Despite the fact that all but a few pages of Job deal with the problem of pain, I am coming to the conclusion that Job is not really about the problem of pain. Suffering contributes the ingredients of the story, not the central theme. Just as a cake is not about eggs, flour, milk, and shortening, but uses those ingredients in the process of creating a cake. Job is not "about" suffering; it merely uses such ingredients in its larger story, which concerns even more important questions; cosmic questions. Seen as a whole, Job is primarily about *faith* in its starkest form."

### Introduction:

Our very first sentence in Job 1:1 introduces our main character and the city he was from. We know our story is about a man named Job from the land of Uz, which is east of the Jordan River from Israel, south of Aram, and north of Midian. Some think it may have been northeast of Galilee, or possibly in Edom.

The author of Job is also unknown. Many suggestions have been given, including Job himself, Moses, Elihu, Erza, or Solomon. Most scholars believe that it was written during the patriarchal period for many reasons, some believing that it could have been written even before Genesis. The fact that the book of Job has no reference to the Mosaic Law or any of the events recorded in Exodus, makes it seem that it was written before Exodus. There are also no references to the nation of Israel, to its temple, the law, kings, prophets, covenants, or Scripture itself. Some other reasons many think it was written in the time of the patriarchs is the length of Job's life span (Job 42:16-17), the fact that the measure of his wealth was based on animals, and because there is no mention of the priesthood. (Job acted as the high priest of his family.)

The book of Job is for everyone. He is somehow both Jew and Gentile. Mike Mason wrote, "To the Gentiles, Job is one of them, for there is nothing remotely Jewish about him. But to the Jews he is also one of them, for his knowledge of Yahweh is deeper than their own, and his faith in Yahweh is one that is in no way borrowed or adopted, but that oozes out of his pores." For these reasons, as well as other "uncertainties" of the book, it is strangely free-standing, making it applicable to all. Job seems to be a representative of humanity at large. He doesn't even have a recorded lineage, but his anonymity helps us identify with him even more.

Many have considered this a great philosophical work. Tennyson called this book "the greatest poem, whether ancient or modern literature." Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish philosopher said, "I call this one of the grandest ever written with pen." Martin Luther said that this book was "more magnificent and sublime than any other book of Scripture." Although it is a sweeping drama that involves both Heaven and earth, it is not fiction. Job was not a fairy tale character; he was a real person (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:11.) Paul even quotes Job in 1 Corinthians 3:19.

As you read through the book of Job, you'll find the name of God used many times. When we read it in English though, we would never notice how many different names are used for Him, nor grasp their significance. The LifeChange Series on the book of Job gives us a list of a few of these names. I thought it would be great to share with you.

1. **El, Eloah.** These are both translated "God" in English versions. *El* was the Hebrew word for God or god in general, and *Eloah* is a variant of it. In Canaanite religion, *El* was the father and king of all the gods who seldom bothered with human affairs. *El* and *Eloah* are used often and interchangeably in the dialogues.
2. **Elohim.** This is also translated "God" in English. *Elohim* is plural, and when used with plural verbs, it means "gods." When used with singular verbs, as in Job, it is the "plural of majesty," meaning something like "God of all gods." *Elohim* is the only word for "God" in the prologue (See Job chapters 1 and 2). It is also used occasionally in the speeches, but less than *El* and *Eloah*. In 20:29, Zophar speaks of *Elohim* in the first half of the verse and *El* in the second half.
3. **Shaddai.** This is translated "the Almighty" in English. *Shaddai* probably means "the Mountain One," a reference to God's mountainous power.
4. **YHWH.** Most English versions render this as "the Lord," while a few guess at its pronunciation as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah." *YHWH* is the personal name of Israel's God. It is related to the Hebrew for "I AM" (Exodus 3:14), not just "I exist" but "I am actively present." *YHWH* is actively present with His people in the midst of their needs. He revealed the meaning of this name to Israel when the people were slaves in Egypt and *YHWH* rescued them. Because Hebrew was not written with vowels and because the Jews came to regard God's name as too holy to be spoken, we don't know how it should be pronounced. The Jews say *Adonai* ("my Lord") when reading Scripture or talking about *YHWH*. This is why "the Lord" is a common English rendering. "Jehovah" is a combination of the consonants of *YHWH* with the vowels of *Adonai*. "Yahweh" is the best guess of modern scholars. In Job, *YHWH* occurs often in the narrative sections: the prologue, introduction in God's speeches, and the epilogue. It occurs only once in chapters 3-37, in 12:9. This unique use of that Divine Name suggests to some scholars that 12:9 is a key verse for understanding the book.
5. **Adonai.** In Job, this occurs only in 28:28. Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, and similar passages speak of "the fear of *YHWH*," but Job 28:28 has "the fear of *Adonai*." This word emphasizes His lordship over all creation.
6. **Qadosh.** This is "the Holy One" in 6:10. Isaiah likes to speak of "the Holy One of Israel," but it is rare and probably meant for special impact elsewhere in the Old Testament. Job emphasizes that he has not committed the heinous sin of denying the holy words of the "Holy One."

When reading this book, make sure you pay attention to the context, or the overall meaning, of each verse. What is the whole passage and chapter getting at? What general meaning is the author going for? Don't get stuck on particular words or phrases that seem obscure. I'm not saying to ignore them, but again, remember it is written in poetry form and the literary style seems to be that of an ancient debate. At times it feels like the speakers jump from point to point, repeating themselves over and over, ignoring some questions, and answering specific questions many chapters later. One more thing to remember was that during this time period, it was generally thought that God punishes the wicked and blesses the righteous, which actually becomes the arguments of Job's friends. Many believed that no innocent person would endure suffering, so what was happening to Job was contrary to their "traditional wisdom" of the day.

If you have time, it would obviously be great to read through the whole book before we start, but if you don't have the time, let me review the story in a short paragraph so you can at least get a general concept of the story before we jump into chapter one. Job is a good man who becomes overwhelmed with tragedy. From chapters one and two, the readers get a glimpse of what's happening behind the scenes, but Job has no idea. In the midst of his pain and suffering, Job gets a visit from three of his "friends" which becomes a heated debate over why these things are happening in Job's life. Job insists that his suffering is unfair and begins to confront God on the injustice of his calamities. One more friend appears to argue with Job, and then the Lord Himself steps in. God then questions Job, which brings Job to his knees. His attitude and perspective changes and he repents over his harsh words about and to God. The Lord rebukes Job's friends, then restores to Job double of what he lost. All in all, a very "simple" plot, but laced with deep meaning. Because chapters one and two set the stage for the entire book, and the last chapter brings it all together, we'll be spending the most time on them rather than the arguments and debates between friends.

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." Job 1:1

### Second and Third Day

**Work on your memory verse. It's a cool statement, isn't it?**

1. Let's begin by getting to know a little bit about our main character, the infamous "Job." Read Job 1:1-5 and write all the facts that you find about Job.
  
2. Our text tells us that he was "blameless and upright." What do you think that means?
  
3. What do the following verses tell us about being blameless?
  - a. 1 Corinthians 1:8
  - b. Colossians 1:22
  - c. 2 Peter 3:14

The term "blameless" comes from the Hebrew root meaning "to be complete." This term describes Job's spiritual maturity and the integrity of his inner being. The word "upright" means "straight" or "right" in Hebrew and indicates Job's attitudes and actions were in line with God's will and His ways. (Zondervan Bible Commentary)

4. Does blameless mean "sinless"?

Verse one also tell us that Job was devout toward God (he feared God) and moral toward people (shunned evil). Also notice that this description of Job was given by the author (1:1) and then again by God Himself (1:8). Job was a godly man who had a healthy respect for God. Mike Mason said "Not to fear God is a sickness of the soul. The fear of God is what godliness is all about. It is an apprehension of God in majesty held before our eyes. Job had a great God and he knew it! When we fear God, as a rendition of Psalm 34 by Isaac Watts puts it: 'we will have nothing else to fear.'" Wiersbe wrote, "To fear the Lord means to respect who He is, what He says, and what He does."

5. What does the word "integrity" mean?

6. Are you a woman of God who fears God and shuns evil? (Do your actions and attitudes reflect God's character?) Are there any "areas of evil" that you have allowed to enter your heart that need to be "shunned"?

7. Why do you think the author emphasizes Job's character in the very first verse?

8. Did Job have many possessions? Was he well-known?

It's important for us to remember that in the Hebrew culture, material prosperity was often understood as a sign of God's blessing, often measured in terms of land, animals, and servants. We know that Job attributed his wealth as a blessing from the Lord (Job 1:21) and used it generously (29:12-17; 31:16-32). Deuteronomy 28 shows us that there is a direct connection between the blessings that are received from obeying God, and the cursing and consequences when one doesn't. In principle, we see that good is rewarded and evil is punished. David Atkinson wrote, "God is again and again presented in the Bible as a God who is good, and who rewards those who diligently seek Him, who live obediently in fellowship with Him. Material well-being is sometimes part of the way God shows His blessing. But this, however, is by no means the whole story. For alongside the faith of Psalm 1 we need to also remember, for example, the faith of Psalm 42 in which the psalmist is downcast at his predicament, and of Psalm 73 in which the psalmist is dismayed by his misfortunes and the contrasting prosperity of the wicked. Life in God's world is by no means always marked by material prosperity here and now." It's also dangerous to claim all God's promises in His covenant to Israel as immediately applicable to Christians.

J. Vernon McGee describes Job as being "Howard Hughes, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, and the oil men of Texas all rolled into one." ☺ That's funny ...

9. Why is it dangerous to assume that material blessings are always a sign of God's favor or a reward for being righteous?

10. How can riches provide an illusion of security? Read Proverbs 18:11 and Psalms 49:6-7.

11. Job was wealthy, but depended on God rather than his wealth. How about you? Whether you are rich or not, what do you depend on?

We'll stop here for today. My prayer is that we will be women who "fear God and shun evil" every day of our lives!

### **Fourth and Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Job 1:1-5 again. During the Patriarchal Age, a large family was seen as a blessing (Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 30:1). How many kids does he have?
2. What kind of father did he seem to be? What was his priority?

The whole family would get together often on their "appointed" day, which was their birthday. This shows us that Job and his wife had raised them to value family and enjoy each other.

3. Why did Job offer a sacrifice for each of his kids? Does this mean their celebrations became "sinful"?



- A. Thank God for your child and the opportunities He has given you to teach them God's ways.
- B. Pray that God would strengthen your child to resist temptation.
- C. Pray that your child would love God's Word and grow in wisdom, discernment, maturity, and the fruit of the Spirit.
- D. Pray that your child would have a teachable and tender heart.
- E. Pray that your child would make a commitment to Christ for salvation.
- F. Pray that your child would learn to confess her sins to God and rest in His forgiveness.
- G. Pray that your child would learn at an early age to value his/her character over his/her appearance.
- H. Pray that God would make you a wise parent.
- I. Pray that you would be a good example to your child by living a life worthy of the Lord.
- J. Pray that God would give you wisdom in how you discipline and train your child in His ways.
- K. Pray for your child's spouse or "future" spouse.
- L. Pray that God would develop self-control in both you and your child.

It appears that even though he lived a life of plenty, there was a healthy fear in Job's heart for his kids. He feared they would fall into sin, which is the same fear many (or all) parents have today. Job knew that all he could do about the problem was to place it in God's hands. He is the only One who can change anyone's heart.

- 8. Do you have a child who has turned away from Christ, deciding instead to follow the ways of the world? Can you, like Job, take those concerns and place them in the hands of the Lord?
- 9. Scene One of Job (1:1-5) shows us the character behind our main man. I wanted to point out one more description that God uses for Job so we get an even better picture of who we are dealing with. What does God call Job in 1:8, and then again in 42:8?

In his book, A Man of Heroic Endurance, Charles Swindoll wrote, "In all the Bible, God refers to only eleven people or groups as "My servant." Every time God

calls someone 'My servant,' He illustrates the intimate personal relationship He has with that person. This title also indicates submission and a willingness to be used according to God's purposes."

10. In the following verses, who does God refer to as "My servant"?

1. Genesis 26:24
2. Numbers 12:7-8
3. Numbers 14:24
4. 2 Samuel 3:18
5. Isaiah 20:3
6. Isaiah 22:20
7. Isaiah 41:8
8. Jeremiah 25:9
9. Haggai 2:23
10. Zechariah 3:8
11. Job 1:8; 2:3

11. At this point in your life, do you think God would call you "My servant"?  
If not, what would need to change?

12. From the first five verses of Job, what spoke to your heart the most? What specific application do you see for yourself?

In our lesson next week, we will see Job's life change in a blink of an eye. Scene Two opens with a dramatic scene, sometimes called the "upstairs-downstairs" drama between God and Satan. We get a glimpse behind the curtain and find out what's occurring on the stage of Heaven. If only Job could have known what was really going on! I can't wait to begin our journey through Job's life and watch him cling to God during his rough times. May his courage be an example to each of us.

**"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord; that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." James 5:11**