



"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 14

I can't believe it. Today is our final week of study together. I feel like we've grown so much as we've studied the book of Job. It's been hard, challenging, convicting, enlightening, sad, depressing, uplifting, happy, and horrible ... all at the same time! Who knew one book could evoke such emotions! I don't know about you, but I feel better prepared to face life's challenges and hardships, pain and suffering, and continuously unanswered questions. I don't fear the "what ifs" anymore or ask the "why me's" as often. I read once that by taking it on Himself, Jesus dignified pain. I agree with that, and I think the saying may apply to Job as well. He certainly wasn't perfect and without fault in how he handled it, but he never doubted his God nor rejected his faith. Leo Tolstoy once said, "It is by those who have suffered that the world has been advanced." I think Job is also an example of Leo's keen observation. In all of Job's struggles, he never said much about removing his pain, but rather finding the purpose in it, or wondering why God was treating him unfairly. I think he was desperately trying to find meaning in his pain. Friedrich Nietzsche said, "It is not so much the suffering as the senselessness of it that is unbearable." That, I believe, could have been a quote from Job himself. Let's read our last chapter and see if our "Once upon a time" story has a "happily ever after" ending.

First Day

1. Read Job 42:1-17. Observe the text and write your observations. How would you summarize it? Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

2. What would you say is the key verse in the chapter?

3. How many times does Job say "You" while addressing God?

God could have answered all of Job's questions a different way, but He didn't. This may be a bit long, but it's really good. Phillip Yancey wrote, "I can think of several helpful things God could have said: 'Job, I'm truly sorry about what's happened. You've endured many unfair trials on My behalf, and I'm proud of you. You don't know what this means to Me and even to the universe.' A few compliments, a dose of compassion, or at the least a brief explanation of what transpired 'behind the curtain' in the unseen world -- any of these would have given Job some solace. God says nothing of the kind. His 'reply,' in fact, consists of more questions than answers. Sidestepping thirty-five chapters worth of debates on the problem of pain, He plunges instead into a magnificent verbal tour of the natural world. In his book Wishful Thinking, Frederick Buechner sums up God's speech. 'God doesn't explain. He explodes. He asks Job who he thinks he is anyway. He says that to try to explain the kinds of things Job wants explained would be like trying to explain Einstein to a little-neck clam. God doesn't reveal His grand design. He reveals Himself.' The message behind the splendid poetry boils down to this: Until you know a little more about running the physical universe, Job, don't tell Me how to run the moral universe. 'Why are you treating me so unfairly, God?' Job has whined throughout the book. 'Put yourself in my place.'" 'No!!!!!!' God thunders in reply. 'You must put yourself in MY place!' Until you can offer lessons on how to make the sun come up each day, or where to scatter lightning bolts, or how to design a hippopotamus, don't judge how I run the world. Just shut up and listen."

4. Did God's reply surprise you? How did Job respond to God's reply?

5. How do you think Job's friends expected God to respond? Did God validate Job's arguments or that of his friends?

6. Was Job's repentance what his friends imagined it would be?

7. I read once that "repentance is the experience of coming home." What are your thoughts on that? Do you think Job would agree? Why?

Let's end here for today. I LOVE this chapter. I love happy endings, but I also love the fact that God's presence was enough for Job. God "showing up" was all Job really wanted.

Memory Verse of the Week: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You." Job 42:5

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. It is a very significant one, not only for Job, but for us as well.

1. Read Job 42:1-17 again, focusing on verses 1-6. Summarize Job's repentance in your own words. What are some of the main, important points? What did he repent of? Did he seem truly sorry?

2. What great truths about God does he finally realize?

Job's repentance was complete. He didn't hide from God, fight with Him, or disagree. When God chastised him, Job received it. He didn't defend himself, justify himself, or rationalize his sin. His words reminded me of David's when he said, "Against You and You alone have I sinned," in Psalm 51.

3. What character trait is needed to be able to receive such a rebuke? (If you aren't sure, here's a hint. It starts with an H ...)

4. When the Lord chastises, disciplines, or even corrects you, how well do you receive it? Do you still try to justify or rationalize why you did whatever you did? How "complete" is your repentance? Is this something you struggle with?

5. How can pride keep us from seeing our sin and coming clean before God and others?

6. Is there something that God is calling you to repent from? Are you listening? Are you ready to receive and "come home"?

7. In verse 5, what do you think Job means? (Job 26:14)

8. How can our pain or "hardship" allow us to move from hearing to "seeing" God? What is our part in that process?

9. Have you come to view God differently through some hardships in your life? Can you explain or give an example?

10. When Job says he "abhors" himself, what does he mean? Is this healthy or unhealthy?

11. Please share any other thoughts or comments regarding this section.

See you tomorrow, my friends. Spend some time allowing the Holy Spirit to search your heart and see if there is any "wicked way" lurking in there that you need to repent of. God wants us to come home. Let's make sure our hearts are clean, shall we? (Psalm 139:23-24)

Third Day

Work on your verse.

1. Read Job 42:1-17, focusing on verses 7-17. Who exactly did God speak to next? Was Elihu included in God's rebuke?
2. Why was God angry with Job's friends? What did he mean by "spoken right of Me"? How do you think they felt at that point?
3. No one really knows why Elihu isn't ever mentioned again. What do you think about this? Why didn't God include him?
4. What does God tell the friends to do? Do you think this required humility? What would it require on Job's part?

"Job's repentance is not what his friends imagined. He does not confess to having committed any sin that merited severe punishment, for he had committed none. Rather, he repents from his conclusion that God's severe treatment of him meant that God was not administering justice properly, and he humbles himself before a God who is truly great. And instead, God is angry with his friends. As a result they must make an enormous and expensive sacrifice and suffer humiliation of asking the man whom they had accused of being a reprobate to pray for them." (Shepherd's Notes)

5. Was Job willing to pray for them? Do you think you would have been able to do that?

6. When he obeyed God and prayed for his friends, what did the Lord do for Job? Note all the words that describe what God did in verses 10-13.

7. How did his friends and family respond? (Wow, where were they when he needed them?) What "tangible" support did they also bring him? Why?

8. Did God have to restore everything? Would He have still been "just" if He didn't?

Many think that Job was willing to repent to God and forgive his friends because God restored his life. But it's important to notice that Job did both those things BEFORE God blessed him with anything. Job was willing to do it, not because he was receiving a blessing, but because he loved his God. Satan's accusation against Job was put to silence once and for all. God is worthy to be worshipped because of who He is, not only because of what He "does."

9. You may not think you can identify with Job because of his "happy ending." Did Job know his life would end this way? What did he know, according to Job 23:10?

10. Why do you think the names of Job's daughters are mentioned and not the sons? Do you think it's customary for the daughters to receive an inheritance like their brothers?

It's interesting to see that everything that Job had taken away was given back doubled. Except his kids. One commentary said that it was because "your kids can never be replaced," showing that God wasn't trying to replace them with new ones. Others said it was because Job's kids were living in eternity, so they didn't need to be replaced. He had a "heavenly deposit" waiting for him when he died. I like that interpretation, don't you? When believers die, they continue to live forever! So Job really had 20 children!

John Harley wrote, "The daughters' names are *Jemimah*, 'turtle-dove,' a name used for graceful birds, plants, or precious stones; *Keziah*, the name of the aromatic plant cassia, a prized variety of cinnamon; and *Keren-Happuch*, a horn of eye paint, i.e., black rouge used to highlight the eyes."

Mike Mason wrote this about Job's kids: "With all that might have been said about the glory of Job's latter days, why was this information about his daughters singled out for special attention? The very oddity of the passage may be a clue to its importance, for at the time it was written (and for long afterwards) it must have struck its readers as being not just odd but outrageous. That the names of Job's daughters should be specifically mentioned while those of the sons are omitted, and furthermore that the daughters should be given equal inheritance with the sons -- this was not conventional Old Testament protocol. Indeed to most of the societies of the ancient world such treatment of women would have seemed not merely eccentric, but politely subversive. To give women a landed inheritance is to give them equal status; it is to take them out of the kitchen and make them managers, owners, merchants, voters, and finally lawmakers and rulers. How far ahead of his time Job was!"

11. How much longer did Job live after this? According to verse 17, what was one more blessing Job received from God?

Because God doubled everything for Job, many scholars believe that Job must have been 70 years old when this story began. To die old and "full of years" was the goal of every person. It means not only a long life, but one that is rich and ends well. It means to live a vibrant, God-honoring life.

12. Are you living a vibrant, God-fearing life? Are you finishing well? Are you seeking, and serving, and growing, and loving, and honoring our wonderful Lord? Are there any changes you need to make as you pursue living a life "full of days"?

I want to leave you today with this funny prayer that was written by Dale Evans Rogers that deals with the realities of life. Maybe I only think it's good because I'm "over the hill," but maybe you'll appreciate it too!

"Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself, that I am growing older, and will someday be old. Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from the craving to try and straighten out everybody's affairs. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of other's pains. Help me endure them with patience. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains. They are increasing, and my love for rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it; but Thou knowest, Lord, I want a few friends at the end. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people. And give me, Lord, the grace to tell them so."

13. Does this resonate with you at all? 😊 Which part?

Fourth Day

Keep working on that verse, and keep "looking" for God!

The next two days we're going to look at the book of Job as a whole, and what we learned from it. We learned things about ourselves, about pain, about God, and about others. Job said, "Life is but a breath" (Job 7:7) and because that is true, it's important how we live it. Job learned to totally depend on God for everything; he learned that God is always in control. By his statement in 23:10, we know that Job believed in God's sovereignty; he believed that God knew about his situation, that God was testing him, and that he would be a better man because of it. He knew he would come forth as gold.

In Swindoll's book, he gives seven important principles from Job's experience that we can apply to our own lives. These help us answer the question, "What did Job teach us about ourselves?"

1. *We never know ahead of time the plans God has for us.* What should we do when a trial hits?

2. *A vertical perspective will help keep us from horizontal panic.* What does this mean? How can situations hinder us from having a vertical focus?

3. *Great discernment is needed to detect wrong advice from a well-meaning friend.* How do we know if we are getting good counsel?

4. *When things turn from bad to worse, sound theology helps us remain strong and stable.* How does knowledge of Scripture help us when we're suffering?

5. *Sensitive and caring friends know when to show up, when to stay quiet, and what to say when the time is right.* How can doing this "right" make all the difference in the world to a person who is suffering? Have you been doing this "right"?

6. *It's easy to be "armchair quarterbacks" when we encounter and respond to another's suffering.* How often do you tend to rush in and fix people's lives?

7. *The cultivation of obedient endurance is a mark of maturity.* In what ways is this true? What does obedience do to our faith?

8. What are some specific things you learned about yourself in the Book of Job?

9. Are there any "theological viewpoints" that you held tightly that you are looking at differently?

10. Do you look at pain any differently? Can you explain?

Okay, now don't be upset with me. There is something else I want you to read and think about. It's from Yancey's book, Where is God When it Hurts, which, by the way, is a must read. It's an interesting take on "pain." He says, "One of the most important things we can do for a suffering person is to restore a sense of meaning or significance to the experience. Actually, the problem is that we already convey meaning, though on a relative scale. When I give seminars on pain, I sometimes illustrate this by calling for audience participation. I ask for the Roman "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" signal; thumbs up if the pain I mention is acceptable, an affliction that attracts sympathy, and thumbs down if the pain is unacceptable and gets little sympathy. Typically, I get these responses:

Broken leg from skiing. Thumbs up all the way. What started out as a stumble on the rope tow ends up, after many retellings, as a double somersault free-fall off a cliff. Friends sign the cast with funny remarks, and the sufferer becomes a virtual hero. The attention is almost worth the pain.

Leprosy. Thumbs down. In my work with Dr. Paul Brand, I have gotten to know leprosy patients. They lobby strongly for the name "Hansen's disease" for one simple reason: the way people respond to the image of leprosy. Although the disease differs in virtually every respect from its stereotype, a person with leprosy still gets judgment and not sympathy. Loneliness is one of the disease's worst aspects.

Influenza. Mixed response. Some people hold thumbs down because no one really likes fevers, vomiting, and body aches. On the other hand, the flu, being universal, attracts much sympathy. We all know how it feels. "Take it easy" we say. "Stay at home a few extra days. Get your strength back."

Mumps. Response depends on the age you're talking about. Children with mumps get plenty of sympathy. They're fawned over and indulged, perhaps granted extra television viewing time and ice cream. I still remember my childhood mumps

experience with nostalgia. But an adult with mumps is something of a joke -- even though to an adult mumps represents a far worse danger.

The list goes on. *Hemorrhoids*: a very painful condition, but socially a laughing matter. *AIDS*: what kind of response does an *AIDS* victim get? I know a few persons with *AIDS*, and they hear a very clear message from the church: 'You get no sympathy from me. You deserve your suffering as God's punishment. Keep away.' I cannot think of a more terrifying disease than *AIDS*, or one that provokes a less compassionate response. *Migraines, whiplash, cancer*-- each of these has a different 'image,' and in subtle and sometimes blatant ways we communicate to the sufferer an assessment of meaning that can make coping easier or harder. I have come to believe that the chief contribution Christians can make is to keep people from suffering for the wrong reasons. We can 'honor' pain. The first step in helping a suffering person (or in accepting our own pain) is to acknowledge that pain is valid, and worthy of a sympathetic response. IN this way, we can begin to ascribe meaning to pain."

11. Got any thoughts on the paragraph above?

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. List some things that the Book of Job has taught you about God. We can tell Job learned many things just from his response in chapter 42.

2. How have these truths changed your perspective on life?

3. How do you think Job's perspective on "things" and "people" may have changed during and after his trial?

4. Are you truly thankful for the blessings that you have received in your life?
How does thankfulness affect your perspective on almost everything?

"The resurrection and its victory over death bring us a new, decisive word for pain and suffering ... temporary. Jesus Christ holds out the startling promise of an afterlife without pain. Whatever anguish we feel now will not last. The Christian's final hope, then, is a hope in a painless future, with God. This is a groaning planet, and Christians expectantly await a world where every tear will be wiped away." (Yancey) "The prosperity of Job anticipates the final victory of God and the eternal joy of His people." (Shepherd's Notes)

5. How does the word "temporary" help you in what you're facing today?
6. Read James 5:7-11. Do you have a better understanding by the phrase "perseverance of Job" than you did before you studied the book? How?
7. How has this book impacted your life? How will you be different because of what you've learned?

I hate to finish ... there is so much more to say. I don't want to say good-bye to Job. I want to go back to chapter one and start all over again. I'm dead serious. Maybe I will on my own, but for now, we must wrap it up. I pray that you not only learned many things, but that you found many "Reasons to Rejoice" along the way. May we constantly strive to remember the word "temporary" when we face difficult things. May we remember that God will NEVER abandon us or forsake us. There is nothing that God can't do and His intentions can never be thwarted. He is God. Period.