



"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 3

I wonder if the expression "When it rains it pours" comes from Job 2. Chapter one leaves us reeling as we meet our friend, Job, and learn about the overwhelming loss this man experienced. But if losing his family, his wealth, and all his servants wasn't enough, chapter two brings about even more devastation. We are amazed at Job's response to his trials and are challenged as we compare it with the way we react to situations in our own life. Not only are we convicted and challenged, chapter one deals with some very deep truths. Job's response in 1:21 is pretty amazing. He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." These words are pretty much the epitome of trust. Derek Thomas notes that Job seems to be saying, "This world is not my ultimate home, God's purpose transcends this life, everything that happens to us is from God, and we must never attribute to God anything that is evil." Thomas also points out the mystery that many struggle with. He says, "God foreordains everything that comes to pass, God is not the author of sin, God does not tempt us to sin, and God does not condone sin." He goes on to say, "How can this be? How can God ordain the occurrence of evil and remain free from the charge of being evil Himself? This has been the problem of pain from the very beginning. Theologians have not always tried to answer it, partly because the answer involves grasping difficult concepts. And most answers are unsatisfying. The **Westminster Divines** of the seventeenth century were content merely to state the issue without any attempt to reconcile: 'God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin ...' Sometimes all we can do is state what is true; logic evades us."

Hold on to your hats, ladies, because we have another chapter of pain ahead. It's a miracle to me that Job could go on after chapter one. May we open our hearts and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us concerning many things, including our response to trials. As we see in Job, our response matters.

First Day

1. Read Job 2:1-13. Observe the text and list all the facts you find. Ask yourself Who? What? Where? When? Why? What new people do we meet?

2. Do you find any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

3. What would you title this chapter?

4. Write a contrast between chapters one and two. How are they alike? How are they different?

5. What does God add to His description of Job 2:3 from 1:8?

6. How does Job's response in 1:21 compare to his response in 2:10?

7. List any questions you have from this chapter.

8. What immediate application do you see for yourself in this chapter?

We'll end here for now. I wish I could be in every one of your groups and participate in your discussions. I bet they're so good! Stay focused on what God's Word says, not on what it doesn't say. Don't get yourself in trouble by inferring things that aren't there. Hold on to what you know is true.

Memory Verse of the Week: "So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great." Job 2:13

Second Day

Begin working on your memory verse. I know it seems like a strange one to choose, but I thought it was good because it shows the "right" thing that Job's friends did ... at first.

1. Read Job 2:1-13, focusing on verses 1-6. What seems different in verse 1 than what happened in Job 1:6?

It appears that God is boasting again about Job in verse 3, giving satan some kind of "second chance" to tempt Job to turn away from God. God was pleased with Job, but satan sure wasn't! Job was "still" holding fast to his integrity. God uses the phrase "without cause" to describe Job's trial. The Hebrew word used is "hinnam" which means "without cause" or "gratuitous." God wasn't saying there was no reason for the trial, or that it was just some random or purposeless thing. He most likely means this as far as our human perception of it. God didn't allow this on a "whim" or because He was bored. As we continue to see in the book of Job, there is always a reason behind everything that happens. God's providence is never arbitrary. (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11). His control is absolute and purposeful. We may not understand the purpose, but that is not to say that it does not exist. I believe that satan would like us to think God acts "without reason."

2. Why would satan like us to think that God doesn't know or care about our pain and suffering?

3. When our suffering or trials seem to have no purpose or explanation, why is it so troubling to us?
4. Are you going through something that seems random or purposeless? How should knowing God's character and His ways help you gain some perspective?
5. Are you still "holding on to your integrity" in the trial you may be facing? What does that practically mean, do you think? How can we accomplish that?
6. Satan comes up with a new plan in verses 4-5. What do you think the proverb "skin for skin" means? Why is Satan so sure that this new scheme will work?
7. Along with His permission, what boundary did God set for Satan in verse 6? What does this tell us about God?
8. It appears that Satan knows that when a person's health is compromised, often his faith becomes compromised as well. Why is that?
9. Why do we Christians, especially in the West, think we should never be sick?

Health is a sensitive issue. It could be said that health is a privilege rather than a right, but that wouldn't be too popular. Sometimes sickness is even seen as "evidence" of lack of faith or immature spirituality. The Bible teaches against that notion, especially as we see people like Timothy, Trophimus, Epaphroditus, and Paul get sick. Sickness is something we should expect. After all, we are all going to die unless the Lord returns for us first! I also like what **Mike Mason** wrote about pain. He said, "When it comes to the topic of physical pain, people who are not actually experiencing such pain can entertain all kinds of noble theories about it. As long as it's happening to someone else, pain is but an abstraction, a theological conundrum, an unfortunate blight on an otherwise fairly tolerable world. But as soon as the devil so much as touches a person's own body, the whole picture changes. Then suffering becomes the very opposite of an abstraction; it becomes an enormity, a concrete reality so overwhelming that it has the power to engulf all other reality, to eclipse all other thought except the thought of itself. Some believers are enabled by God's grace to bear enormous burdens of pain with dignity and even radiant cheerfulness. But a much smaller degree of pain, when applied to other believers who may be just as Godly, can be enough to plunge them into depression or make them lose all control and whimper and scream for mercy. Even the great and good King Hezekiah, in one of the most piteous scenes in the Bible, when stricken with a mortal illness, 'turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly' (2 Kings 20:2-3). He simply could not take it."

He further notes, "It could almost be said that the sufferer's knowledge of pain is of the same order as the believer's knowledge of God and that is why the devil exploits pain as a prime vehicle of temptation. Restlessly he cast about for something that will prove more compelling, more absorbing, more real than God Himself, for he believes that to find that something (and in this he is partly right) would be to dislodge God from His throne. After surveying all the possibilities, his final choice lights on physical pain. It is no accident that the place where the Lord and the devil themselves join ultimate battle—the cross—is a rack of torture."

Wiersbe points out that "Not all physical affliction, though, comes directly from the evil one. Although satan's demons can (among other things) cause blindness (Matthew 12:22), dumbness (9:32-33), physical deformities (Luke 13:11-17), incessant pain (2 Cor. 12:7), and insanity (Matthew 8:28-34). Sometimes physical affliction is the natural result of carelessness on our own part, and we have nobody to blame but ourselves. But even then, satan knows how to use our folly to further his cause."

10. Have you ever experienced severe suffering or pain? How did it affect you spiritually?

I know that was a lot of reading, but hopefully well worth it. Tomorrow we'll be taking a closer look at the disease that Job was afflicted with. I pray that if you live with chronic pain and disease, Job's story would somehow be an encouragement to your soul.

Third Day

Are you working on your verse?

Ladies, as you read through the chapter, remember to look for application points. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." So as you read, you should always be asking yourself questions like, "What difference should this text make in my life? How should it make me want to act or think? How does it encourage, warn, correct, or give me an example? This part of study requires thought, time, and prayer, so make sure you allow yourself time to do this step. It's the goal of all Bible study. Studying isn't just to increase your knowledge; that knowledge should then change your life.

1. Read Job 2:1-13. Reread verses 7-10. Describe what's happening.

The two Hebrew words for "sore boils" describe the festering sores that erupted as one of the Egyptian plagues (Exodus 9:8-11 and Deuteronomy 28:27). No one is exactly sure what disease he had. Some make speculations and have suggested smallpox, elephantiasis, leprosy, psoriasis, or pemphigus foliaceus. When reading the entire book, we see that his symptoms included these sores, as well as persistent itching (2:8); degenerative changes in facial skin (2:7, 12); loss of appetite (3:24); fear and depression (3:24-25); loss of strength (6:11); running

sores with worms in them (7:5); nightmares (7:14); difficulty breathing (9:18); darkness under the eyes (16:16); foul breath (19:17); loss of weight (19:20; 33:21); excruciating, continual pain (30:17); insomnia (30:27); blackened and peeling skin (30:30), and high fever with chills (30:30). We can't even begin to imagine the pain he was feeling. No wonder his friends couldn't recognize him (2:12).

2. Where had he gone to live, according to verse 8?

Wiersbe writes, "So abhorrent was Job's appearance that he fled society (19:13-20) and went outside the city and sat on the ash heap. There the city's garbage was deposited and burned, and there the city's rejects lived, begging alms from whoever passed by. At the ash heap, dogs fought over something to eat, and the city's dung was brought and burned. The city's leading citizen was now living in abject poverty and shame."

3. What questions do you think Job could have been asking God? What questions come to your own mind?

4. Now enters "Mrs. Job." How do you think she felt at this point? How did she respond to the situation? (Try to imagine how you, as a wife, would have felt.)

It's easy to criticize Mrs. Job. Well, I usually have in the past. Augustine called her the "devil's advocate." Calvin called her the "tool of satan." And Aquinas said that "maybe satan had spared her in order to use her against her husband." But I'm looking at her a bit differently today. She had lost all her children. The death of one child is tragic, so how do you bounce back from the death of ten? She also lost all her possessions, her home, her prestige, her place of honor in society. She had even pretty much lost the companionship of her husband who was now sitting in the ashes in the dump. She must have felt alone, abandoned by God, and devastated. I used to think she was angry at God, and maybe that's true. But, could she also have grown weary of watching her husband suffer and bear so much pain,

that she knew maybe if he cursed God he would finally die and find some relief? I hate watching those I love suffer. Could this have been part of it? We really don't know, but I will say this. I can't think that I would have responded any differently if it was me.

5. What are "your" thoughts on the response of Mrs. Job? Your "honest" thoughts?

6. How did Job respond to her? (Did he listen to her like Adam did Eve, or Abraham did Sarah?) In your own words, what was he saying? What truths was he holding on to?

The word "foolish" in verse 10 means "lacking in moral discernment." The word "accept" means "receive, or co-operate," and "adversity" means "evil." It's like Job was asking his wife the rhetorical question ... Doesn't God have the right to do what He thinks is best? Isn't He the Potter and we're the clay? Isn't He the Good Shepherd and we're the sheep?

Whether we are angry or feel sorry for Mrs. Job, the end result is the same. Satan now uses her and alienates her from her husband. Slowly, Job's relationships become strained, causing even greater loneliness. Soon he will feel completely alone, cut off from everyone, even his wife and friends. Mason points out; "Even in this, Job shares in the sufferings of Christ. Job experiences grueling solitary confinement of real loneliness and desertion. Without tasting this experience, no Christian can become fully Christlike. The *via dolorosa*, the path to the cross, must be trod alone. Like the dock before the very judgment seat of God, this is a narrow place, wide enough for only one abreast. There is no marriage in Heaven, taught Jesus (Matthew 22:30). We squeak through the pearly gates one by one."

7. Do you accept only the good from God? Do you curse God when the "bad" strikes and look to blame Him, or others? How do you respond to bad and evil?

From Mrs. Job, we learn how “not” to respond to a loved one who is hurting. Job was determined to hold on to his faith and his integrity, which was the very essence of what she was asking him to let go of. Although he answered graciously and didn't condemn her, her advice was discouraging, nonetheless. Swindoll offers a few tips we learn from her on what “not” to do with those we love who are suffering. **First**, always guard your words when your loved one is going through a hard time. Instead of shaming or blaming, offer a listening ear and kind word. Listening is huge, as well as offering tangible, practical ways to help. (YOU don't have to tell them about YOUR illness right now.) **Never** suggest your loved one should compromise his or her integrity. Even though you may not understand why they are suffering, you're responsible to help your loved one to move *toward* God, not *away* from Him.

Job offered a Godly response to his wife, gently rebuking her and reminding her that God was still in control of the situation. He offered a Godly response to his condition as well. He knew that his situation wasn't outside of God's control. He also knew the importance of remaining faithful by holding on to God for peace and hope in the midst of the trial.

8. Is there someone in your life who needs encouragement right now due to physical suffering? Pray and ask God how you can minister to them right now.

We'll stop here for today! Love you, ladies!

Fourth Day

What's your verse?

1. Read Job 2:1-13, focusing on verses 11-13. Give a short summary of these verses. Who are the friends and where did they come from?

These three guys are often called “Job's comforters” and, sadly, the phrase is used in a derogatory way. It's used to describe people that try to help you, but actually make you feel worse. We'll be looking at their “bad counsel” in the next few chapters but they actually start on the right track. We'll focus on what they did “right” in our lesson today.

The three men come from different countries, so Job's fame as a wise and righteous man must have won him friends far and wide.

2. What "positive" and good things did they do? Did their hearts seem right in the beginning?

His friends expressed their grief according to the custom of the day. They wept loudly, indicating their emotional shock and sorrow. Secondly, they tore their robes to signify their broken-heartedness. Third, they threw dust on their heads to symbolize their deep grief. (1 Samuel 4:12; 2 Samuel 1:2; and Nehemiah 9:1)

3. I think it's pretty incredible that they sat down with Job in the ash heap in the dump for seven days. What kind of sacrifice would this have been for them?

Dr. Roy Zuck said this about their response; "Sitting down in silence with him for a week may have been their way of mourning over his deathlike condition, or it may have been an act of sympathy and comfort, or a reaction of horror. Whatever the reason, in the custom of that day they allowed the grieving person to express himself first."

4. How do you think that willingness to share in his grief ministered to Job? Why would this be so significant for him?
5. "Suffering presence is the powerful ministry of silent compassion." Some say silence is "the best medicine." What do these quotes mean?
6. Has anyone ever offered you the "gift of silence" when you're grieving? Do you offer it to others, or do you try to say all the right things? When is the time to be silent and when is it time to speak?

David Atkinson wrote this, and I just have to repeat it. It's awesome. He wrote, "The compassion of a silent presence is what we see here in Job's friends. Craig Dystra has put it well, 'Presence is a service of vulnerability. To be present to others is to put oneself in the position of being vulnerable to what they are vulnerable to, and of being vulnerable to them. It means being willing to suffer what the other suffers, and to go with the sufferer in his or her own suffering. This is different from trying to become the sufferer. Presence does not involve taking another's place. That would be demeaning. It would suggest, I can take your suffering better than you can, so move aside, I will replace you. Instead, presence involves exposing oneself to what the sufferer is exposed to, and being with the other in that vulnerability."

7. What do you think about the above paragraph? How is silent presence a service of "vulnerability?"

8. As far as ministering to one another, what does Romans 12:15 and 1 Corinthians 12:26 say?

9. What kind of friend are you? Do you weep with those who weep? Do you take the time to grieve with others that are hurting? If not, what hinders you?

Tomorrow we're going to briefly look at some characteristics of a friend and see how we're doing. I pray that we will be the kind of friend that draws others to Christ and is there for them in their time of need.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

After looking at Job's friends and the way they grieved with him, let's take a look at some characteristics of a true friend and see if they describe us. These are given to us by Charles Swindoll. Read each of the five characteristics of a true friend and see which ones you are good at, and which ones you need to improve in. Ponder how well you're doing and write your thoughts.

1. ***A true friend cares enough to respond without being invited to respond.*** No one sent messengers to get them and make them come. Instead, his friends just came. Don't wait for an invitation to show that you care because a deeply hurting person will rarely offer one.

2. ***A true friend responds with sympathy and comfort.*** Friends identify with those who suffer. They comfort others by helping to make their sorrows lighter. They do what needs to be done. Part of the covenant of your friendship is the commitment to be there. Your presence during the fun times will be remembered, but your presence during a crisis will be cherished even more.

3. ***A true friend openly expresses the depth of her feelings.*** When a true friend perceives a loved one suffering, it's not uncommon to see her fighting back tears. When their loved ones suffer, they suffer.

4. ***A true friend isn't turned off by distasteful sights.*** Can you imagine how Job's friends must have felt when they saw him for the first time after the disaster? Unthinkable! They were stunned, yet they stuck by him. They sat down, exposing themselves to the ashes, dogs, waste, and outcasts to show Job they cared.

5. ***A true friend understands and has to say very little.*** Compassion, not judgment, heals hearts. We offer more comfort to hurting souls when we listen than when we try to explain everything. A caring hug, a warm squeeze of the hand, a heartfelt prayer, a visit to the hospital ... these are what friends offer in tough times.

Just one more question. Does compassionate silence mean to deny the person is going through something by saying nothing at all? Please, tell me that you know the answer is ... NO!

See you next week, ladies!