



"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 4

We left off in chapter 2 with Job sitting in the ash heap with his three friends who have apparently come to console him. They sat with him in silence for seven days and nights, sharing in his grief. No one said a word. Complete silence. Now, in chapter 3, Job "opens his mouth" and we get a glimpse of a "soul in distress" as he shares his innermost feelings of anguish and pain. Mike Mason calls this chapter "The bleakest chapter in all of Scripture." Job isn't the only one in Scripture who shares such honest feelings. Jeremiah (20:14-18) and some of the psalmists (Psalm 57 and 88) paint similar "gloomy" and depressing emotions. Derek Thomas writes, "The human soul is capable of a variety of moods and responses, including the dark and somber tones of this chapter. Denial of this will lead to a distorted view of humanity; but, more importantly, it will lead to a distorted view of the Gospel which ministers to such responses." Most likely, we will all feel these same emotions at some time in our life, and it's important that we don't condemn ourselves or others for their feelings. Even Jesus was described as "greatly distressed and troubled" in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33-34, Matthew 26:37-38). Isaiah 53:3 refers to Jesus as "A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." It's important to remember that although our reaction to these emotions can be sinful, the emotions aren't sinful in themselves. You can experience these feelings and wish for things to be different, yet do so without committing sin. This is important to remember as we read through this book. Chapter three is unique in that we finally get to hear the voice of the sufferer. Job understood suffering, which is probably why this book has ministered to so many over the years. Those with wounded hearts can empathize and feel Job's deep pain through his heart-wrenching writings. His words are recorded in the poetic form of Hebrew language, allowing him the liberty of expressing his deep emotions in metaphoric language. I pray that as you study this chapter, this man "Job" becomes even more real to you.

7. Do you think that Job's response to his suffering goes beyond asking the typical "why" questions? In what ways?

8. Write your thoughts on this chapter, as random as they may be. 😊

I personally have so many thoughts. I feel sick over his pain; I am shocked by his candidness; I'm surprised at his statements; I can relate to some of his pain. I'm soooooo glad that God understands all of our emotions and we can be completely honest and transparent with Him. See you tomorrow, ladies!

Memory Verse of the Week: "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Matthew 26:39

Second Day

Work on memorizing your verse. You may wonder why this one was chosen. We can learn so much from Jesus' response to His agonizing trial. He acknowledged His deepest feelings and desires, yet submitted to the Father's will in complete obedience. He expressed His emotion, yet didn't allow those feelings to lead Him into sin. May we learn to do the same.

After seven silent days and seven silent nights, Job finally breaks the silence himself, almost with a shriek! Time to take a look into Job's heart.

1. Read Job 3:1-26. Remember that satan predicted that Job would curse God in 2:5. What did Job curse in verse 1? Is this different than cursing God?

2. In your own words, summarize the point of this chapter again. (In poetry, it sometimes helps to reiterate the passage to help make sure you understand the point.)

3. One of the key words in this section is "darkness." How many times is it used? What's his point?

4. What "images" does Job use in verses 1-10 to reveal the depth of his emotion?

David Atkinson wrote, "Here is humanity's protest against the ways of God. Here Job is trying desperately to get his experience and his faith together. He is attempting to allow his faith to interpret his shocking experience. He can't understand what has happened; what God has allowed to happen. What God is doing hurts desperately. But Job holds on in despairing faith that God is none the less a God of integrity, justice, and truth."

"Job cursed the night of his conception, and the night of his birth. Job even thought it would have been better if he was born dead. He not only was physically suffering, he felt alone, isolated from God. He hadn't heard from Him at all! He felt so alone that he regretted even drawing his first breath, and felt it would be better if he could just erase the day of his birth. If he had been stillborn, he could have slept in peace in his grave along with past kings, princes, and counselors of the earth. May there be no remaining sense of joy and celebration at his birth; let the day rather be cursed (vs 7-8)." F. F. Bruce wrote, "Death is for him now sweeter than life, and he pictures the pleasures of the afterlife compared to his present lot" (Job 3:13, 17).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers us a "window into the ancient world" when it writes, "In the ancient Near East, family and friends customarily shouted with joy and congratulations when a son was born, since he would be an asset to his family and an heir to his parents' estate. In contrast, Job said in Job 3:7, 'Let that night be barren; Let no joyful shout enter it.' He would have preferred

silence to the shouts of joy on the day of his birth. In verse 8, Job referred to an ancient myth suggesting that certain enchanters could make a day unfortunate (curse it) by raising Leviathan (Job 41:1; Psalm 74:14; 104:26; Isaiah 27:1). The term 'leviathan' represented a seven-headed sea monster of ancient Near Eastern mythology. It was believed that, when awakened, this sea beast could cause an eclipse by swallowing the sun or moon. Job suggests in poetic terms that if Leviathan had swallowed the sun or the moon on that day, then his birthday would, in a sense, not exist at all."

5. I was posed with an interesting question that I'd like to pose to you: Have you ever wished you had never been born or that you could die soon? If so, why? What would have helped, or did help, you let go of this desire?

6. Does Job ever speak of ending his own life? (Why is this so important to understand?)

Wiersbe writes, "Job's 'birthday lament' is not a defense of suicide or so-called 'mercy killing.' It is the declaration of a man whose suffering was so intense that he wished he had never been born." Job should not be used as a proof-text for suicide.

7. In your own words, list all the "why" questions Job asks.

8. Have you ever asked any of these questions yourself? Did you get answers? Were they the answers you were looking for?

9. Are there some areas in your life right now you'd like to ask God "why"? (Don't be afraid to cry out and wrestle with God to come to terms with the situation. Job certainly did.) Take a minute and give voice to your prayers. Don't worry, you don't have to read this out loud.

We'll end here. I pray that you are encouraged by Job's honesty and take his example to heart in your times of despair and sorrow. But remember that we can always ask God why, but He doesn't "owe" us an answer.

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

In our chapter this week, we find that Job has many "why" questions for God. I think it's really easy to relate to Job because we ask God "why" all the time. I like what Wiersbe writes about this. He says, "Even our Lord asked, "Why hast thou forsaken Me?" in Matthew 27:46. But if the Lord did tell us why things happen as they do, would that ease our pain or heal our broken hearts? Does reading the X-ray take away the pain of a broken leg? We live on promises, not explanations, so we shouldn't spend too much time asking God why."

1. Read Job 3:1-26 again. Also read Psalm 88. How are they similar?

Sometimes we reach the end of our prayer without receiving any answer; without so much as a crumb of comfort. In fact, Psalm 88 just ends by basically saying that "darkness is my closest friend." Mike Mason wrote, "For this very reason, there can be a strange comfort in the reading of this text, as well as Psalm 88, in times of deep trouble. It is good to be reminded that such a black outpouring really is Scriptural, that prayer need not be upbeat and optimistic. The true believer does not always rise from his knees full of encouragement and fresh

hope. There are times when one may remain down in the dumps and yet still have prayed well. For what God wants from us is not the observance of religious protocol, but just that we be real with Him. What He wants is our heart."

2. What are your thoughts on the above paragraph?

3. It seems that Job has been overtaken by depression and "spiritual" trauma, so to speak. How does Proverbs 18:14 relate to this?

4. In Job 3:20, he says his life tastes bitter and has become a "misery." From verses 20-26, how else does he describe his life?

Mason writes, "In verses 21-22, Job depicts his desire for death with the same anticipation that a grave robber might have had. Grave robbery was a lucrative business, particularly in ancient Egypt when the dead were buried with many valuable possessions. They 'rejoice when they come to the grave,' he says."

5. In verse 23, what is Job basically saying?

6. What word does Job use in verse 23 that satan used in 1:10? What was Job saying? How was the word being used differently?

In verse 23, Job can't seem to understand why having God's gift of life should result in those having it wanting to be rid of it. He feels "hedged" in. Atkinson wrote, "This is not the sort of 'hedged' of which satan spoke in 1:10. There Job was depicted as hedged into a place of safety and security, protected from evil and suffering. His goodness was a false security, said satan, because he

had life too easy. But the hedge that Job now feels is the imprisonment of despair. Depression is beginning to take over. He is in God's trap, and there is no way out." Job uses this word to describe his feeling of separation from God, of being shielded not from evil but from good. There is a lot of irony in the repetition of this imagery, because where Satan sees it as unfair protection, Job sees it as unfair obstruction.

7. So, in other words, when it looks like we are in the middle of danger or at the height of a storm, if we are in His will, we are in the safest place in the world. Have you found this to be true in your own life? Can you give any examples?

"To be surrounded by God's hedge, therefore, does not always mean to be protected from evil and from all the shocks of life. The hedge may be a hedge of thorns, and often enough the loving protection of the Lord involves being thrust into the very midst of evil, and being asked to carry this burden up the hill to Calvary. Whatever our circumstances are, the safest place to be is always in the Lord's will. The safest place to be is in the hollow of His hand, even (and especially), when that hollow takes the form of a bleeding nail print." (Mason)

8. Write your thoughts on the above paragraph.

The challenge to Job, as well as to each of us, is will we trust God through the circumstances, even when we don't understand the "why's?" Please read the following paragraph by Phil Yancey on this topic and then we'll apply it to our own lives.

"Very often, disappointment with God begins in Job-like circumstances. The death of a child, a tragic accident, or a loss of job may bring on the same questions Job asked. Why me? What does God have against me? Why does He seem so distant? As readers of Job's story, we can see behind the curtain to a contest being waged in the invisible world. But in our own trials, we will not have such insight. When tragedy strikes, we will live in shadows, unaware of what is transpiring in the unseen world. The drama that Job lived through will then

replicate itself in our individual lives. Once again, God will let His reputation ride on the response of unpredictable human beings."

"For Job, the battleground of faith involved lost possessions, lost family members, lost health. We may face a different struggle: a career failure, a floundering marriage, sexual orientation, a body shape that turns people off, not on. At such times the outer circumstances -- the illness, the bank account, the run of bad luck -- will seem the real struggle. We may beg God to change those circumstances. If only I were beautiful or handsome, then everything would work out. If only I had more money, or at least a job, then I could easily believe God. But the more important battle, as shown in Job, takes place inside of us. Will we trust God? Job teaches that at the moment when faith is hardest and least likely, then faith is most needed. His struggle presents a glimpse of what the Bible elsewhere spells out in detail: the remarkable truth that our choices matter, not just to us and our own destiny but, amazingly, to God Himself and the universe He rules."

9. What "battles of faith" are you currently fighting? Are you trusting God in the midst of the battles? How can Job encourage you in the battle?

See you tomorrow, ladies. I'm praying for you as you "fight your battles" of faith. May Job remind us that there is always something happening "behind the scenes" of our lives.

Fourth Day

Are you working on your verse? Not only to memorize it, but to apply it?

1. Read Job 3:1-26 again. Job says that sighing and groaning has become his food and drink (24). It appears that his biggest fear of being abandoned by God had come upon him (25). In verse 26, what 4 things does he complain of?
2. Does Job complain in this chapter about the loss of any of his family or possessions?

Job seems to be mourning over the loss of his peace with God, the loss of the sense of God's friendship and approval, and the loss of broken fellowship with his Creator. Basically, he's lost his "spiritual peace" and although I'm sure he's grieving over the other losses, his "distance" from God is what seems to have grieved him the most.

3. What sort of things do you complain about? Are they physical losses or "spiritual" losses? What "brings" you or "robs" you of peace? How does Matthew 6:21 relate to this?

4. What do the following verses say about peace? How do we make our "peace with God"? How do we receive the "peace of God"? (You may also use other verses.) Ephesians 2:11-18, Romans 5:1-2, John 16:33, and Philippians 4:6-7

God seems to be very patient with Job. He will deal with his questions later, but for now, He allows Job to vent and vocalize his frustrations and despair. I love that. God surely knows how weak and frail we are, yet He loves us and is patient with us through the process. I also love that Christ was a Man of Sorrows, making Him able to relate to everything I think and feel. What a comfort that brings to my soul.

5. How do you respond to God when you don't like the answer He gives you? How about when He doesn't give you one? Are you able to remain "peaceful"?

In her book Secret Strength, Joni Eareckson Tada wrote, "...make no mistake, Job's questions to God weren't of the polite Sunday School variety. They were pointed, sharp, and seemed at times on the border of blasphemy ... Tough, searching questions. Job's friends were horrified ... And that, to me, is the comfort of the book of Job. What means the most to me in my suffering was that

God was even ready to take on the hard questions. Ah, but the answers? They weren't quite the ones Job was expecting."

6. Are you comfortable with asking God the "hard" questions? Are you afraid of the answers, or feel disrespectful if you ask? Search your heart on this one.

7. After reading chapter 3 of Job, do you find yourself critical or sympathetic to his outburst? Why? (Be honest)

8. If Job was your friend and he uttered these words to you, how do you think you would respond? (Be honest.) What would you say?

It's so easy to judge Job and his responses, isn't it? We know the "right" thing to say when talking to someone else, but it sure is different when the tables are turned and we're the ones who are in pain. Then it's not so black and white. We'll talk about ministering to others tomorrow, as well as in the lessons to come!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Do you have a friend who is going through some type of loss or personal tragedy? How can you minister "hope" and "love" to them without belittling their pain? (Give some practical suggestions.)

It's great to be reminded to listen to people's feelings, as well as their words. People "say" all kinds of things when they are in pain. It's important to hear

their "pain" louder than their words. Sometimes, it's too "dark" for the sufferer to see the light, and they simply need time. There will be good days and bad days, but God will be there for all of them. It also takes time for those hurting to find the hope in the midst of the trial. We need to be patient and not judge their "spirituality" if they don't "get it" right away. They will gain perspective in time. It's common for them to go through depression during the grieving process as well. This is also normal. If these symptoms become extreme, however, consider advising them to seek help from a counselor. They may need someone to help them through their grief process.

2. Consider what Jesus went through in the Garden of Gethsemane. Try to imagine the emotions He was feeling at the time. What can we learn from Him and the way He handled His grief?

3. How was this chapter relevant to your life?

4. What did you learn about God? About yourself? (Any changes you want to make as a result?)

Christians have been accused of not actually believing in God Himself, but only in their "beliefs" about Him. Great suffering puts an end to belief in "beliefs." When you experience suffering, do you believe only in "beliefs", or does your trust in God Himself stand the pressure of the suffering? Hopefully, your suffering drives you to God Himself. If it doesn't, you've missed the main point of this book.

Corrie ten Boom once said, "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away your ticket and get off.

You sit still and trust the engineer."

Ladies, let's trust the Engineer, shall we?