



"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 5

Now we begin the great counsel from Job's three friends. After doing the "right" thing for seven days and just sitting with Job and supporting him with their presence, they chime in with their two cents. After Job breaks the silence in chapter three and pours his heart out in anguish, they launch. At first, I wrestled with feelings of disgust towards them. What on earth were they thinking? Couldn't they see that he was devastated and simply needed the love and assurance of his friends? He was heartbroken for goodness sakes, couldn't they hear that in his voice? Why were they being so heartless? No sooner did these questions escape my lips than the Holy Spirit brought to my mind the number of times that my own daughter said, "Mom, can't you just listen? Do you have to try to counsel me right now? Can't you just let me vent?" He reminded me of the times that a friend was hurting and instead of simply listening, I was so concerned with keeping the person from falling into error that I had to make sure they knew what the Scripture said about the situation, which made me appear harsh and uncaring. My intentions are usually good; it's the way they play out that usually seems to fall short. May we learn what "not" to do, as well as "what" to do when people are hurting, through Job's three friends. And may we learn how to respond, and not to respond, to the many trials we will face in our life, through Job's experiences.

This week we'll be studying chapters 4 through 7. What begins as a discussion turns into a debate, followed by a full-blown dispute! The Lord Himself has to step in at the end and settle the matter. There are three rounds of speeches. Here is a basic outline of chapters 3 through 31.

First Round

Job	chapter 3
Eliphaz, first speech	chapters 4-5
Job's answer	chapters 6-7
Bildad, first speech	chapter 8
Job's answer	chapters 9-10

Zophar, first speech chapter 11
 Job's answer chapters 12-14

Second Round

Eliphaz, second speech chapter 15
 Job's answer chapters 16-17
 Bildad, second speech chapter 18
 Job's answer chapter 19
 Zophar, second speech chapter 20
 Job's answer chapter 21

Third Round

Eliphaz, third speech chapter 22
 Job's answer chapters 23-24
 Bildad, third speech chapter 25
 Job's answer chapters 26-31

First Day

1. Let's begin today by reading Job chapters 4 and 5. Who is speaking? What do we know about him?

Many scholars believe that Eliphaz may have been the oldest of the three friends, since he was named first, spoke first, and was specifically addressed by the Lord in 42:7. All three men were older than Job (15:10).

2. Write your general impression of Eliphaz's words. Encouraging? Discouraging? Accusatory? Gentle? How would you describe his tone?
3. List any terms, phrases, or words that you don't understand. Take some time and try to look up their meanings, etc.

4. If you were Job, at this point, how do you think you would respond?

When you're reading through these chapters, remember that they are writing in poetic form. It may help to try to reword the phrases in modern language. Step back from the text and look at the "pictures" he's using to try and describe or explain a truth. Don't get hung up on each particular verse if you're having trouble understanding it. Try to draw out the "general" meaning of the text. Tomorrow we'll take a closer look at the counsel of ol' Eliphaz from Teman.

Memory Verse of the Week: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Proverbs 25:11

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Not only by memorizing it, but by trying to speak some "fitly" words today.

1. Read Job 4 and 5 again. What do you think is the main point of what Eliphaz is trying to say? How would you summarize his lengthy speech? What verse or verses do you think sum up his main point? (4:7-8)

2. According to 4:8, 5:3, 27; and 4:12-21, what does it seem like he's basing his assumptions on?

3. What compliments did Eliphaz give to Job first in 4:1-6?

4. What are some things that Eliphaz accuses Job of in chapters 4 and 5?

5. Who does Eliphaz say is responsible for the trouble in Job's life? Why does he think this?

6. How does Eliphaz describe his night "vision" in 4:12-21? How does he interpret its meaning?

One of the things that Eliphaz accuses Job of is not being able to take his own advice (4:2-8). You can dish it out but you sure can't take it! If he was living a Godly life, then Job had nothing to fear, because God always blesses the righteous and judges the wicked! According to Eliphaz, God was a strict lawgiver (4:7-8), offering no room for grace.

Job's friends came to him with what seemed like the right heart. According to 2:11, they came to "sympathize with him and comfort him." They seemed to lose sight of that and think it's their job to counsel Job and offer him their wisdom and "advice." Eliphaz seems to base his opinions on his own observations and some frightening personal experience he had one night. Eliphaz uses many arguments to make the same point. Calvin said about Job's friends, "They are like a broken record, stuck in a groove, and repeating itself endlessly." Eliphaz basically believes that Job is responsible for all the troubles that have fallen upon him. Job is reaping what he's sown. Throughout their speeches, the men hold the position that the righteous are always rewarded and the unrighteous are always punished. They believe that suffering is always a punishment proportional to the degree of sin. To be experiencing such pain, Job must have willingly committed some serious sin and therefore needed to repent.

Swindoll wrote, "The reasoning of Job's friends followed a syllogism, "a deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and minor premise and a conclusion." They suggested that all suffering is punishment for sin (major premise); Job is suffering (minor premise); therefore, Job must have committed sin (conclusion). But this directly contradicted God's statement that Job was "blameless and upright" (1:1; 2:3)."

7. Was this argument totally without merit? Does he have any basis for this argument?

8. What "holes" do you see in his theology?

We're going to look at this point a bit further tomorrow, but I wanted to get you thinking! ☺ For now, let me ask you a few more questions.

9. What are the dangers of offering counsel or advice based simply on our own "experience or "observations"?

10. Do you think you've ever done that to someone? Be honest. What was the result?

11. What's the best advice you've ever received? What made it so wise?

See you tomorrow, ladies!

Third Day

Work on your verse.

1. Read Job 4 and 5 again.

As you continue to read Job, remember that neither Job nor his friends know anything about what was happening "behind the scenes." Unlike Job, we, the readers, know why God won't explain His reasons for allowing Job to suffer (1:6-12; 2:1-6). What they think they know about God and what Job was experiencing seemed to be incompatible if this wasn't a result of sin. It appeared that God was just being "whimsical" and random, not following His own laws of justice. The LifeChange Series on Job notes, "Of course God has a right to afflict any sinner, but the issue is "Why Job?" From the prologue, we know that God isn't claiming to be fair according to the friends' standards; He is operating by a higher justice to achieve a greater good than the men suspect." These are not easy concepts for us to grasp.

2. What principles do these verses teach about the righteous and the wicked? Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15; Psalm 37:17; Galatians 6:7-8.

3. Read Psalm 73, Ecclesiastes 8:10-14, John 9:1-6; John 16:33; 1 Peter 1:6-9; and James 1:2-4. How do you reconcile these verses with those above?

The basic theology of his friends is not necessarily wrong; one finds it everywhere in the book of Proverbs. (Also in Psalm 1, Psalm 34:12-16, Mark 4:24, etc.). This principle is true. There will be moral judgment. So we should never lose sight of striving to do what is right. Christians will be judged according to our works (1 Cor. 3:10-15). It matters how we live; Godliness indeed brings good

reward. Shepherds Notes says that "It becomes dangerous, however, if one exaggerates it or uses it as a tool for judging others." The theology of Biblical retribution is foundational to Biblical wisdom, but it's much more complex than Job's friends are stating. God will ultimately always bless the righteous and obedient. But those blessings and rewards are not always on this earth, nor in a tangible way that we would expect or desire. Material wealth and good health are a privilege and blessings to enjoy, but they aren't the ultimate sign of God's favor. In the end, all wrongs are made right and nothing will go unnoticed. God is a just God, make no mistake about that. (Although we "reap what we sow," it doesn't always mean that principle works the other way around. It doesn't mean that everything we reap must result from something we've sown.)

4. What is Eliphaz calling Job in 5:1-7? Why would his words in verse 4 be so devastating to Job?

5. Eliphaz even tries to identify with Job and say what "he" would do if he was in this predicament. What would he do if he was Job, according to 5:8?

6. Eliphaz describes God and His ways in verses 8-16. List some of the things he says. Is he accurate? (Do they really prove his point, though?)

In 5:17-27, Eliphaz claims that God is chastening Job, and basically, if Job repents and asks to be forgiven, God would restore everything he lost. Again, faulty theology. If we do this, then God will do that. That's not always the case, is it? We know from the end of the story that this is indeed what God did for Job, but Job didn't know that, nor did he try to hold on to that for security. We don't repent in order to "get" something other than forgiveness and restored fellowship with our God. Although Eliphaz's speech ends with a beautiful exhortation about returning to God and His deliverance for the afflicted, it doesn't prove his point. He builds his counsel on a faulty truth.

I love what Yancey said about Jesus and His response to suffering. He said, "In our incorrigibly ranking world, it is very easy for someone living in poverty or with a physical disability to feel inferior, and for someone in travail to feel that God has abandoned him or her. Jesus went out of His way to elevate such people: the woman with an issue of blood, leprosy victims, a widow who lost her only son, even a Roman centurion whose servant had fallen ill. Jesus gave God a face, and it was streaked with tears, literally, on at least three occasions: when Jesus lost His friend Lazarus, when He faced His own great trial of pain, when He looked out over Jerusalem and, like a grieving parent, realized the fate of those who continued to chose self-destructive behavior. When we experience pain, we don't have to spend any energy wondering whether or not God is punishing us. We can remember the face of Jesus and realize that, yes, where misery is, there is the Messiah offering comfort and hope."

7. Write your thoughts on the above paragraph. How does it minister to you today?

When Jesus' disciples saw a man born blind they focused on the cause, the "Why" question. Jesus consistently turns the emphasis from looking backward to the cause, to looking forward to our response: **Now what?** We Christians believe the answer is that the works of God may be manifest. These works may be manifest in different ways: through supernatural healing, as happened in John 9, through a response to non-healing, such as Joni Eareckson Tada has demonstrated so well, and through the kind of fidelity shown by persecuted Christians and those who live with chronic suffering of various kinds." (Yancey)

8. Are you stuck on the "Why" question regarding some situation or trial in your life? Can you try to change your question to "Now what"? Ask the Holy Spirit for His help in this.
9. When counseling others, how does making assumptions reduce our insight and ability to give good advice?

Eliphaz started preaching instead of responding with compassion. He assumed Job had committed sin and was being punished. Although we do reap consequences of our poor choices and sins we commit, much of our suffering happens as a result of the Fall, when sin entered the world.

10. If our suffering or consequences are a result of our actions, what are we called to do, according to 1 John 1:9? (How will we know if it is?)

The book of Job gives us so much to think about, doesn't it? Whenever I read another chapter or argument it makes my mind start churning. I love that, don't you? Don't let it frustrate you, let it challenge you.

Fourth Day

Work on that great verse.

1. Now let's read Job's response to Eliphaz in chapters 6 and 7. Let's break it down into smaller chunks that are easier to handle. Job's first lament (6:2-13), Job's disappointment with his friends (6:14-30), His second lament (7:1-10), and Job's prayer (7:11-21).
2. How would you summarize his response? How would you describe his feelings at this point?
3. List some of the "word pictures" that Job uses to describe the depth of his emotions. (For example: Like a hired man looking for his wages.)
4. What are some of the things that Job is "asking" God for?

5. In what ways do you think Eliphaz' words made Job feel worse? How can we tell by his response?

6. What approach would have brought Job some comfort?

In Job's first lament (2-13), he says he, like a hungry animal, is bellowing in his pain but that he can't be satisfied with the hollow, traditional theology that his friends are giving him. His pain goes beyond grieving over his losses; he just can't understand why this is happening to him. He can't imagine that he will ever find relief and concludes that he would be better off dead. He then goes on to say that his friends had failed to show him compassion and he is as disappointed in them as thirsty travelers are when they find a brook with no water. He hadn't wanted anything from them except help and compassion. It seems like Job considered himself like an orphan, and compared his friends to someone who would gamble for possession of an orphan (6:27), tossing them aside.

Job seems to be going through various stages of grief, doesn't he? In chapter 2 he seems to display a numbed silence and a stage of shock. He sat in silence unable to even speak and give words to his pain. He sat in silence on the ash heap. In chapter three he gives way to lament and begins to ask questions, looking for some meaning in his pain. He longed for death and cursed the day he was born. Now his friends seemed to have activated the anger stage as he wonders what in the world God has against him.

7. What verses show us that his strength was wearing thin?

8. In 6:24 and 7:20, what is Job's bottom line question?

Job felt like God was shooting arrows at him like a target (6:4) and the poison of them was infecting his spirit. Job wanted his friends to understand the depth of his pain and the hopelessness of his situation (6:8-13). Job was losing hope by the minute.

Wiersbe said that "Hopelessness can lead to a feeling of uselessness and when you feel useless, you don't want to live. This explains why Job wanted God to take his life (3:20-23; 7:15-16; 10:18-19; 14:13).

9. Has hopelessness ever made you feel useless? What did you do to gain new hope and perspective? (Why do you think the two are so closely linked?)

We'll finish up with Job's response tomorrow. I pray that you're learning a lot, not only what "not" to do when you counsel, but how devastating wrong advice can be.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Job 6 and 7 again, focusing on chapter 7. In this lament, what does he say about the brevity of his life?

2. How is he like a slave? (vs 2)

3. Why do you think he compares his days to a weaver's shuttle in verse 6?

4. It has been said that Job had even lost his dignity. What verses would support this?

Job saw his life as a breath or a cloud, here for a short time. He was being treated as a dangerous monster who had to be watched all the time (7:11-12). He was using the *Yam* (the sea) and the *Tammin* (sea monster), which were two mythological creatures, as examples to illustrate his point. He felt like God was

after him and he couldn't escape the "watcher of men." He felt like his condition was worse than a slave, sleeplessness had been added to his suffering, he felt victimized by the pain that was ravaging his body, and his open, dirty sores continually reminded him of the frailty and hopelessness of his life. My heart breaks for poor Job. No wonder he cries out in verse 20, "Why me"?

5. Job ends his prayer with a request for forgiveness. What does he say in verses 20-21?

6. Has anything ever happened in your life that radically reminded you of how short life really is? Can you share? Has it changed how you live? In what way?

7. Job believed that God knew every single detail about his life. Do you think this would be some kind of comfort to Job? Why?

8. Does knowing that God is the "watcher of men" encourage or discourage you?

Job ends with kind of an unusual statement. He basically says, "I shall soon lie down in the dust; You will search for me, but I'll be no more." Job is saying that he's on the way out. If God doesn't hurry up and rescue him, it will be too late. His hopelessness is heart wrenching.

9. These chapters leave us sort of unsettled, I think. What specifically spoke to you in these 4 chapters? How were they relevant to your life, personally?

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Romans 15:13