



"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 7

Job opens the second round of debate in chapter 12 with his response to Zophar. We haven't found any words of comfort from his friends at all. Instead we've found accusations, blame, insults, self righteousness, and condemnation. It's like Job's been a punching bag for his friends, barely having time to catch his breath before each jab. I'm sure Job wishes they would just keep their mouths shut! In fact, in 13:5 he says, "O, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom." His friends continued to lash out with their assumptions, vague generalizations, and unfair accusations. Thomas a Kempis once said, "How rarely we weigh our neighbors in the same balance in which we weigh ourselves." Ouch.

Mike Mason wrote, "Much of the dialogue in Job illustrates the exasperating paradox that when life is good we tend to have no questions, but when life is bad we have no answers." We always seem to see misfortune or trials as a result of the person's hidden sins. We are quick to assess blame and make judgments. Job's purpose in chapter 12 is to expose the godlessness of that thinking, pointing out that doing this is a human trait, not a Godly one. Job knew he was powerless to fix or change his situation. But the "admission of personal powerlessness is absolutely fundamental to faith, and herein lies the great difference between Job and his friends." (Mason) Let's get started!

First Day

1. Begin by reading Job's response in chapters 12 through 14. List some main points of his argument.

2. Write some of your initial thoughts of this section. What impressed you? Confused you? Challenged you?

3. Who is he addressing in these chapters?
4. Does he seem to respect his friends as "wise men"? What does he say about their wisdom?
5. List some of the great "truths" he shares about God and His character.
6. What are some of the questions he has for God?
7. Paul Stevens said, "Job experienced the loss of everything, even the comfort of his best friends. Yet Job refuses to give in, to accept his friends' explanations, or to accept the absence of God as God's final answer. There is "reverence" in Job's "irreverence." What does that mean, and do you agree?"
8. Someone once said that Job began the debate with one of the finest insults in literature (12:2). What was Job really saying?

We'll end here for today. Have a great time studying His Word. Let's make sure we use our words carefully this week, shall we?

Memory Verse of the Week: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Job 13:15a

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. In Job 11, Zophar basically accused Job of three things. In the next three chapters, Job responds to his accusations. **Read chapters 12-14** and in your own words, explain Job's response to the accusations.

A. Accusation: Job has no knowledge of God (Job 11:5-12)

Answer: (Job 12)

B. Accusation: Job is a guilty sinner (11:1-4)

Answer: (Job 13)

C. Accusation: If Job confessed his sinfulness, there was still hope (11:13-20)

Answer: (Job 14)

Throughout chapter 12, Job reminds us of God's power and sovereignty over everything. He knows God has the wisdom to know what to do (13) as well as the power to do it! (16) Although Job doesn't see the reason or goal behind what's happening, and although he questions what appears to be God's lack of "order" in everything, he doesn't doubt who He is or place his trust in anyone or anything else.

2. In chapter 12, what does Job say about:

A. Animals: (12:7-11) What can they testify of?

B. Nature: (12:14-15) How is He sovereign over it?

C. People: (12:16-25) How is He sovereign over them?

D. Nations: (12:23-25) How is He sovereign over them?

Good is not always rewarded in this world, nor evil punished. But this isn't because God's sovereignty and power has been curtailed. Although Job can't grasp it completely, he knows God allows everything to happen regarding good and evil. God rules over all, through all, and in all. Thomas said, "God's sovereignty is an established fact. Whatever the explanation for the way things have turned out, it cannot be at the expense of God's control of the universe. Chaos is not an option that Job is willing to contemplate. What, then, has Job left? What conclusions has he arrived at regarding the nature of the universe? If God is sovereign and goodness goes unrewarded, the only conclusion Job comes to requires him to question God's justice; a conclusion, so far at least, Job is unwilling to consider. Instead, he resorts to the hope that after his death, God can raise him up in a different state from the one he now finds himself in (14:14)."

3. Sovereignty means "Having complete power and authority." Do you believe that God is sovereign? How should that affect your perspective on "life" and the circumstances you face?

4. How can knowing that God is sovereign help you trust Him through a situation you may presently be in?

5. What role do our choices and decisions play in God's sovereignty over our life?

These questions leave us with a lot to ponder, don't they? May your vision and view of God enlarge as you study through this book. We can't even begin to fathom the depth and riches of the mysteries of God and His ways.

Third Day

Work on your memory verse. But don't only memorize it; meditate on the truth of it.

1. Read Job 13:1-12. What does he call his friends in verse 4? What does he mean? What else does he accuse them of in verse 7? Why is this so serious?
2. What are some examples of "distorting the truth" or "lying for God" to defend a theological truth? Have you ever done this?
3. Job desperately desired to argue in "court" with God, but had no one to represent him. What "legal" words or metaphors does he use in this chapter?

Concerning verses 13-17, Wiersbe wrote, "This is one of the greatest declarations of faith found anywhere in Scripture, but it must be understood in context. Job is saying, "I will take my case directly to God and prove my integrity. I know I am taking my life in my hands in approaching God, because He is able to slay me. But if He doesn't slay me, it is proof that I am not the hypocrite you say I am." Later, Job will take an oath and challenge God to pass judgment (Job 27). To approach God personally was a great act of faith (Exodus 33:20; Judges 13:22-23), but Job was so sure of his integrity that he would take his chances. After all, if he did nothing, he would die; and if he was rejected by God, he would die; but there was always the possibility that God would prove him right." When Job says, "Listen carefully to my word," (vs 17), he is seriously declaring that his next words are undoubtedly true ... he knows he will be vindicated, because he is innocent.

4. What does this show about Job's view of God's justice?

Job was "determined" to talk to God face to face. The fact that it seemed like God wasn't listening didn't deter Job from calling out to Him. This reminds us of the prophet Habakkuk. In Habakkuk 1:2, he cried out to the Lord, begging God to answer him. Then in 2:1, Habakkuk says, "I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am reproved." What faith these men have, knowing and trusting that God will answer them. They won't take no for an answer. They will wait until He meets them face to face. (Moses said that too!) Mason writes, "The Word of the Lord comes without fail to those whose faith takes a peculiar form; the form of despair honestly and passionately expressed, combined with stubborn persistence in holding out for consolation."

5. Are you "waiting on the rampart," waiting to hear from God? How passionately do you pray? Do you believe that God is listening and will, indeed, answer your prayers, no matter how long it takes? Are you willing to wait and keep knocking?

6. What two things does Job ask from God in verses 20-27?

7. What choice does Job give God in verse 22? (That's kind of funny!)
8. Read Job 13:28-14:1-22. How did God make humans, according to Job? How does he describe the hopelessness of man's condition in this world?
9. Why does Job feel there is more hope for a tree than man, in verses 7-12?

We need to remember that Job didn't have a revelation of future life as we now have it in Christ (2 Timothy 1:10). "Passages in the Old Testament hint at a future resurrection (Psalm 16:9-11; 17:15; Isa. 26:19; Daniel 12:2), but Job did not have any of these books to read and ponder. In 14:14 he asks, 'If man dies, shall he live again?' Job asks this important question but did not answer it. Later on, Job will make a great statement about future resurrection (19:25-26); but at this point he's vacillating between despair and hope." (Wiersbe) Job knew nothing of the "shoot" that would arise from the "stump of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1), or the dead tree on Calvary that would spring up into eternal life! But his pondering and probing becomes more intense as the book continues until he makes the great declaration in 19:25-26, "I know that My Redeemer lives ... and after my skin has become destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God."

10. What does Job say about "hope" in verses 18-22? Does Job seem to be losing hope? What kept him hanging on?
11. Why does intense pain and grief cause people to lose hope? Why is "hope" so important, in any situation? How do we hold on to it when we face hard times?
12. Charles L. Allen wrote, "When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God." What does this mean?

13. Read 1 Peter 1:3. What kind of hope do believers have? What does that mean?

See you tomorrow ladies!

Fourth Day

Work on your verse.

1. Read Job 15. What is Eliphaz's tone as he responds to Job's words?
2. How would you summarize Eliphaz's response to Job?
3. Briefly read Job 4 and 5, Eliphaz's first speech to Job. Does he offer any new insights or accusations?

Eliphaz held to his original assumption that *God* always punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. *God* punishes sin; therefore, Job must be in sin. He accuses him of having a wicked heart (5-6), lacking experience (7-10), and refusing *God's* help (15:11-16). Then, beginning with verse 17, Eliphaz proceeds to explain how *God* judges the wicked, and he seems to use Job as the case example.

4. What does Eliphaz say will happen to the wicked in 19-35? How is he shaping this into a picture of Job, a wicked man getting what he deserves?

In Shepherd's Notes, it says, "When he says the wicked are like vines that are stripped of unripe grapes (vs 33), he is asserting that their children die young, a point that is especially cruel when directed at Job. This is, of course, grossly unfair to Job, but Eliphaz only treated Job's protests as more proof of his guilt."

5. Why, do you think, Eliphaz is so angry and being so cruel to Job?

6. Read the following verses and note how they either support or disprove Eliphaz's theology.
 - A. Matthew 5:45
 - B. 1 Peter 1:6-8
 - C. Jeremiah 12:1-4
 - D. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

7. I've asked this question before, but it warrants asking again. Ultimately, what is Job asking for? Is he asking God to "fix" the situation? Is his focus on escaping the situation?

8. What is your focus on when you pray about your "situation" or circumstance? Are you constantly looking for a way out of your problem?

9. Swindoll points out that Eliphaz's words bring to light five characteristics of those who lack grace: pride, a tendency to hurl insults, the use of guilt-inducing tactics, a condemning attitude, and words of sarcasm. Reflect on the way you "confront" or counsel others. Do your words tend to have any of these characteristics?

10. Take some time and pray about your "situation" or circumstance. Perhaps even ask the Lord to change your focus as you come to Him. Reflect on this quote before you pray: "It is not why I suffer that I wish to know, but only whether I suffer for Your sake." *Levi Yitzhak of Berditcher*

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Job 16 and 17. Job's emotions seem to be all over the board, poor man. In your own words, explain how he's feeling after Eliphaz's condemning speech.

Using this outline may help you to understand his changing thoughts easier, since he seems to jump between frustration, confusion, and anger. I have never heard of this before, but I read that he has given his speech a carefully constructed structure known as *chiasmus*. A *chiasmus* is a way of arranging a text so that the second half parallels the first half, but does it in reverse order. All that to say, what seems like rambling is really structured in a way to show us it is more than an emotional outburst. We also see that a confession of faith stands at the very center of the whole (16:18-21). In a *chiasmus*, the central element is often the most important part of all. Here's the structure of the text:

- A. Complaint against the friends and lament (16:1-5).
 - B. Prayer and complaint to God (16:6-14).
 - C. Lament (16:15-17).
 - D. Confessions of faith (16:18-21).**
 - C. Lament (16:22-17:2).
 - B. Prayer and complaint to God (17:3-9).
 - A. Complaint against the friends and lament (17:10-16).
2. How does Job describe how God was treating him in verses 6-14? What violent metaphors does he use?
 3. How does he describe his current condition in verses 15-17?

4. What does he mean when he says, "his prayer is pure" in verse 17?

Verses 19-21 are difficult in Hebrew, but I read one translation that helped it to make more sense. "Even now my witness is in Heaven. My advocate is on high. My friends should be my intercessors while my eyes weep toward God, and he will arbitrate for a man with God just as though it were between one mortal to another. Job is saying that although all his friends have turned against him, he is sure the Heavenly Advocate will intercede for him." It's not clear exactly who Job believes this advocate to be, but it makes us wonder if he was getting a glimpse of the work of Christ on the cross and the amazing work of salvation. (Romans 8:34)

5. Even when everything seemed hopeless, somehow Job was able to hold on to a small thread of hope. What is he certain of as he prays through his tears?

Job falls back into his lamentation in 16:22-17:2, seeing himself as ready to die. He begins to complain about his friends, to God, asking for His help.

6. What does Job say about his friends in 17:3-9?

In 17:3, Job asked God to "put down a pledge for me with Yourself, who is He who will shake hands with me?" In other words, Job is asking God for a pledge of security (surety), or collateral. (Proverbs 6:1, 17:18, Psalm 119:122) That's sort of like being a co-signer on a loan; you're making a "guarantee."

7. I read this question in a lesson and thought it was quite thought provoking. Job looks to God for a pledge of security. How is it possible that Job could appeal for help from God when it is God who is apparently attacking him?

Job was seeing the grave as being closer than ever (17:3-16). Life, as he once knew it, was over. His former happiness was replaced with sadness and despair. He needed comfort from his friends, who were too busy trying to explain away his pain instead of treating him with grace.

8. How does looking at others "through the eyes of grace" change how we treat them? (How do we want others to treat us when we are struggling?)

Grace changes everything, doesn't it? Charles Swindoll has such great application in his writings. He shares these *nuggets of wisdom*, and I will add some challenges to the end of his nuggets! 😊

"Those who feel depressed or distressed need two things. First, they need *grace for the moment*. They need to know that God is there, that He's listening, that He loves them, and that in His Word He promises them abundant life. They may need you to provide them with a safe place to share their feelings. And the Lord may call you to make sacrifices to help a loved one through a crisis or a period of grief or suffering."

9. Have you ever needed *grace for the moment*? Has a friend ever provided you with a safe place to express your feelings? How did it help you through your pain?

"Second, they need *hope for the future*. Job teaches us much about the importance of faith and the value of hope in helping us deal with difficult trials."

10. Discuss the value of hope. How can you bring hope into someone's life today? Hope in what? Hope for what?

Thank goodness for God's grace!