

Job Study

This document is meant to serve as a basic reference for you as we walk through Job over the next roughly six months. Job is a hard book, know that you will not understand everything. Our goal is to wrestle with the Scriptures together.

Goals of this study:

1. To develop and use a method for studying books of Scripture
2. To grow in our understanding of the book of Job
3. To collaborate in learning how to respond rightly to the truths presented in Job

Schedule: *Note that this may change!*

Week	Date	Content	Homework
1	12/10	Intro to Job and Method	1-2
2	1/14	1-2	3
3	1/28	3	4-14
4	2/11	4-14	15 - 21
5	2/25	15-21	22-27
6	3/10	22-27	28-31
7	3/24	28-31	32-37
8	4/14	32-37	38-40:5
9	4/28	38-40:5	40:6-41
10	5/12	40:6-41	42
11	5/26	42	n/a

Expectations:

1. You all chose the book of Job, and to do it well we need to have homework. I expect you to do your best to do the homework *before* coming to Bible study. (However, this is not school so it will not count against you and you will not be excluded for not doing it, do know that this is a lot more work for me too, so I am asking you to respect that.)
2. I expect you to contribute what you have learned from your homework to our discussions. You all will see things that I won't, and I want to learn from you. The same is true for each other. No one knows everything, everyone has something to contribute.
3. I expect our discussions to be respectful. So, don't interrupt others, listen attentively, and be mindful of how much discussion space you are taking up. (Rabbit trails and some slightly off topic conversation is fine, but should not consume the entire time.)
4. I expect full participation in learning activities that we do, even if they seem dumb at first. They are added for a reason. If you do not like it after you have tried it, tell me, I'd love feedback as I am still learning too.
5. I expect that we all will keep the love of God and neighbor as our ultimate purpose of the study.

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Homework??

The goal behind the homework is for you to have engaged the passage and have a basic general knowledge of it before you come to Bible study. This will allow us to go beyond just pointing out the basic details and face-value meaning of the passage to a more thorough discussion centering on the most pressing challenges and points in Job.

For this study the church has bought you the Job scripture journals, you will use these for your homework.

The basic homework structure will be as follows:

1. Pray for your time studying the passage. (See example prayers on later page)
2. Read the entire passage twice
 - a. The first time, just read it, if helpful read aloud
 - b. The second time note the following by marking them in the scripture journal. (You can color code or come up with your own system to note these things)
 - i. Key words
 - ii. Setting, characters, and events
 - iii. Advice, admonitions, warnings, and promises
 - iv. Reasons for doing things, Results
 - v. Contrasts, comparisons, illustrations
 - vi. Repetition of words, ideas
 - vii. Lists
 - viii. Questions in the passage
 - c. As you make these observations, write 2-3 questions for each page of Scripture in the journal.
3. At the end of each chapter, we are reading write a summary of it in your own words.
4. Write down 1-2 potential responses to the passage.
5. Spend 5 minutes praying about what you have read.
 - a. What can you praise God for?
 - b. What challenged/convicted you?
 - c. What did you not understand?
 - d. What do you want to ask of God?

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Introduction to Job (From the Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version)

AUTHOR

The relationship between the opening narrative of the book (the prologue, chs. 1; 2) and the content of Job's discussions with his friends (the dialogue, chs. 3-27) make it clear that Job was not the author of this book. Had he known what took place in the divine council, there would have been no point to the debate over whether Job had brought on his sufferings by sinful conduct. Rather, God used a skillful poet from the covenant community to write this remarkable book. The language presents many challenges to the translator because of its poetic grammar and its rich vocabulary. We know that the author was an Israelite since he refers to God by the covenant name "Yahweh," while Job and his companions (see 1:1) use such terms as "God" and "the Almighty" (12:9 is the only exception). The probability is that the poet used sources from patriarchal times, including some from Job himself, in composing the book.

DATE AND OCCASION

We do not know exactly when the author of Job lived and wrote, but the classical Hebrew of the prologue places him after 1500 B.C. The final form of the book may not have appeared until the era of Solomon or somewhat later when Hebrew wisdom literature reached its zenith. The discovery of fragments from Job among the Dead Sea scrolls has ruled out attempts to date Job as late as the second century B.C.

Among the wisdom writings of the Old Testament the Book of Job stands with Ecclesiastes as a kind of anti-wisdom. It counters the traditional wisdom as it wrestles with the difficult question of suffering along with the affirmation that God is just and good. The book deals with this subject with a frankness that is often baffling. The book does not suggest that there is an evil deity, or that God's power is limited. Instead it praises the Creator's sovereignty, wisdom, and glory. That the God of Job is neither evil nor limited is seen in two portrayals of Job's relationship with God.

The first is taken from the book's prologue and epilogue. The prologue depicts Job's submission to the divine will in the midst of suffering. There Job appears as a good man trusting the goodness of his God. Finally, in the epilogue (42:7-17), God honors his trust by restoring him.

The second portrait shows Job's indignation over his plight. He thinks that God has become his enemy and is unjustly afflicting him. Job comes to this conclusion because he knows that God is sovereign. Had he believed in a limited deity, he would have had no problem with God's justice or goodness, since then he could not hold God responsible for every event, including his misfortune.

The church has often emphasized only the message of the prologue and epilogue because it is easier to understand. The reference of James 5:11 to the "patience" or "perseverance" of Job is not based on a shallow interpretation that ignores the central section of dialogues. James is not stressing Job's passivity, but his "perseverance" and, with it, God's compassion and mercy in accomplishing His purposes. God's purpose in Job's suffering is the key to understanding the seeming discrepancy between the tranquil Job of the

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prologue (chs. 1; 2) and the raging Job of the central section. God's purpose is complex, involving more than one question of faith.

CHARACTERISTICS AND THEMES

Compositions similar to the Book of Job appear in Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources from Old Testament times. One ("A Dialogue About Human Misery") is about a counselor who criticizes a sufferer for his impiety while the sufferer struggles over the character of the gods. The literary format of Job is not unique among documents from the ancient Near East, consisting of a prose prologue, a poetic dialogue, and finally a prose epilogue. But there is no other work dealing with the problem of human suffering in light of the transcendence and goodness of God that approaches the theological depth, literary sophistication, and practical application of the Book of Job.

The book's exploration of the themes associated with God's purpose in human suffering unfolds in the following manner. In the prologue we view the God-Job relationship from the divine perspective. God chose Job to be one of His suffering servants, an instrument through whom to accomplish a spiritual triumph: "Have you considered my servant Job?" (1:8, 2:3). Satan falsely accuses Job of serving God for the sake of material blessings (1:9-11). Job is given the high calling of remaining true to God even when everything is taken away, and grim suffering becomes his daily lot. Will Job do as the Adversary predicts, and curse God to His face? This is the question that drives the moving drama of the book as Job loses his initial confidence and sinks into despair. If Job remains faithful, God through Job will show that the Adversary is a liar.

While the prologue gives us the divine perspective, the central section of speeches presents the human perspective. As a human being he is ignorant of what took place in the divine council. He struggles with a traditional view, a perversion of Proverbs, that all suffering is an immediate punishment of human sins. Job's counselors, like many others, considered the depth of Job's suffering to be adequate evidence that his sin was great (cf. John 9:2).

As Job confronts the heartless counselors used by Satan to accuse him falsely, he says things for which he must later repent (42:5, 6). He knows the counselors are wrong, but he cannot understand how a pious person like himself should suffer so much when the godless enjoy prosperity and health (12:6).

Like the psalmists, Job often complains to God in the language of legal disputes. Some of what Job says shocks his friends. While they say all the right things about God, they never say anything to Him. Job wrestles with God and tells Him every doubt and fear. His relationship with God is vital while theirs consists of dead aphorisms. It is not so much what they say, as how they apply it to Job, that shows the arrogance of their insisting that they know why Job is suffering. They are insensitive (13:4, 5; 16:2; 19:21), as well as shallow and presumptuous regarding divine things. Job has been falsely accused; he is not suffering for his sins, though he cannot avoid wondering about this. But even though he imagines God is angry with him, in his better moments he still believes God is just and will provide a Redeemer (16:19-21; 19:23-27).

This hope becomes a reality when Job finally has the face-to-face audience with God that he requested (13:15-18; 31:35-37). When God appears in the storm (chs. 38-41), Job is not rebuked as one suffering for his sins, but is

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humbled before the Lord as one whose ill-advised speech had obscured God's purpose (38:2; 42:2, 3). God reveals Himself as Job's friend, bringing him before the astonishing works of creation to show him that the One he has reproached is sovereign in goodness and power. Job recognizes that God is and remains his friend.

When his eyes have seen the Lord and he has repented in dust and ashes, Job has come to understand that God on His throne is sovereign, and rewards those who belong to Him despite times of pressure and pain. The reader learns that Job suffered, not because he was one of the worst of men, but because he was one of the best, and that his ordeal glorified his God.

OUTLINE OF JOB

I. Prologue (1:1-2:13)

- A. *Job Blessed and Blameless* (1:1-5)
- B. *Job Tested* (1:6-2:13)
 - 1. Satan Accuses Job (1:6-12)
 - 2. Job's Commitment Despite Tragedy (1:13-22)
 - 3. Satan Accuses Job Again (2:1-6)
 - 4. Job's Faith Despite Personal Suffering (2:7-10)
 - 5. The Arrival of the Counselors (2:11-13)

II. Dialogue (chs. 3-27)

- A. *Job Laments His Birth* (ch. 3)
- B. *The First Cycle of Speeches* (chs. 4-14)
 - 1. Eliphaz (chs. 4; 5)
 - 2. Job's Reply (chs. 6; 7)
 - 3. Bildad (ch. 8)
 - 4. Job's Reply (chs. 9; 10)
 - 5. Zophar (ch. 11)
 - 6. Job's Reply (chs. 12-14)
- C. *The Second Cycle of Speeches* (chs. 15-21)
 - 1. Eliphaz (ch. 15)
 - 2. Job's Reply (chs. 16; 17)
 - 3. Bildad (ch. 18)
 - 4. Job's Reply (ch. 19)
 - 5. Zophar (ch. 20)
 - 6. Job's Reply (ch. 21)
- D. *The Third Cycle of Speeches* (chs. 22-26)
 - 1. Eliphaz (ch. 22)
 - 2. Job's Reply (chs. 23; 24)

- 3. Bildad (ch. 25)
- 4. Job's Reply (ch. 26)
- E. *Job's Closing Discourse* (ch. 27)

III. Interlude on Wisdom (ch. 28)

IV. Monologues (chs. 29-41)

- A. *Job's Final Oration* (chs. 29-31)
 - 1. Past Blessing, Honor, and Personal Benevolence (ch. 29)
 - 2. Present Dishonor and Suffering and No Benevolence (ch. 30)
 - 3. A Protestation of Innocence Under Sanctions and Oath (ch. 31)
- B. *Elihu's Speeches* (chs. 32-37)
 - 1. Apology for Speaking (32:1-5)
 - 2. The First Speech (32:6-33:33)
 - 3. The Second Speech (ch. 34)
 - 4. The Third Speech (ch. 35)
 - 5. The Fourth Speech (chs. 36; 37)
- C. *God's Responses* (38:1-42:6)
 - 1. God's First Discourse (38:1-40:2)
 - 2. Job Humbled (40:3-5)
 - 3. God's Second Discourse (40:6-41:34)
 - 4. Job Repentant (42:1-6)

V. Epilogue (42:7-17)

- A. *The Counselors Rebuked* (42:7-9)
- B. *Job Restored* (42:10-17)

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Examples of Prayers of Illumination

Almighty God, and most merciful Father, we humbly submit ourselves, and fall down before your Majesty, asking you from the bottom of our hearts, that this seed of your Word now sown among us, may take such deep root, that neither the burning heat of persecution cause it to wither, nor the thorny cares of this life choke it. But that, as seed sown in good ground, it may bring forth thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold, as your heavenly wisdom has appointed. Amen.

Middelburg Liturgy

Blessed Lord, you have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning—grant us that we may in such a way hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. *Book of Common Prayer (1552)*

O, make your Word a swift Word,
passing from the ear to the heart,
from the heart to the lip and conversation;
that, as the rain returns not empty,
so neither may your Word,
but accomplish that for which it is given. Amen. *George Herbert*

Divine Spirit, illumine to me the words of the Lord. Show me the wealth of glory that lies beneath the old familiar stories. Teach me the depths of meaning hidden in the songs of Zion. Raise me to the heights of aspiration that is reached by the wings of the prophet. Lift me to the summit of faith that is trod by the feet of the apostle. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Amen. *George Matheson*

Grant, Almighty God, that as you shine on us by your Word, we may not be blind at midday, nor willfully seek darkness, and thus lull our minds asleep; but may we be roused daily by your words, and may we stir up ourselves more and more to fear your name and thus present ourselves and all our pursuits as a sacrifice to you, that you may peaceably rule, and perpetually dwell in us, until you gather us to your celestial habitation, where there is reserved for us eternal rest and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *John Calvin*