

JOB

Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers Job 1–3; 12–14; 19; 21–24; 38–40; 42.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

LDS study material will focus on:

It’s natural to wonder why bad things happen to good people—or for that matter, why good things happen to bad people. Why would God, who is just, allow that? Questions like these are explored through the experience of Job, one of those good people to whom bad things happened. Because of Job’s trials, his friends wondered if he was really good after all. Job asserted his own righteousness and wondered if God is really just after all. But despite his suffering and wondering, Job maintained his integrity and faith in Jesus Christ. In the book of Job, faith is questioned and tested but never completely abandoned. That doesn’t mean that all of the questions are answered. But the book of Job teaches that until they are answered, questions and faith can coexist, and regardless of what happens in the meantime, we can say of our Lord, “Yet will I trust in Him” ([Job 13:15](#)).

Biblical Focus

Job, along with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, is part of the *wisdom* series in the Old Testament. A study of Proverbs leads the reader to conclude that God is wise and just. The righteous are rewarded, and the wicked are punished. Ecclesiastes observes that life is complex, unpredictable, and hard to understand, prompting the question, *is* God wise and just? The Book of Job answers this question through the interactions between God and Job.

The book of Job centers its theme around the vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil. How can the suffering of the righteous be reconciled with the existence of a loving and almighty God? This is a *theodicy*. Job’s three friends offer their answer that suffering is the result of sin. Elihu expands the thought to include the explanation that God sends suffering to those he loves for their betterment. **But the Lord gives his answer by clarifying his majesty and wisdom in contrast to human littleness and limitations.**

The setting for Job is somewhat ambiguous. We do not know much about when and where his story took place, nor does Job appear to be an Israelite. The lack of information focuses the reader on the philosophical puzzles presented in the book.

JOB

A Peek Behind the Curtain (Job 1–2)

The book opens by pulling back the curtain that covers the spiritual realm. God is considering his servant Job, who was righteous because of his faith, *not* because he was sinless or anywhere close to it. Satan, whose name means “one who is opposed” or “adversary,” challenges God. He accuses Job of loving God only because God is good to him. God permits Satan to inflict Job with great suffering, prompting Job and us to ask, “*Why?*”

Conversation Starters:

- **Are we tempted to love God only when life is trouble-free?**
- **What events have prompted you to ask the question, “Why?” Did you find a satisfying answer?**

Sharing Personally

Job’s experience of suffering is extreme but by no means unique. In his pain, his only recourse is prayer that trusts in the mercy of God and in the power of God to relieve and to rescue. The glory and the power of the gospel are evident in the basic fact that Job prays at all; he continues to trust in God’s mercy and his promises to hear and help in the face of such terrible suffering.

Even with the expectation that the only rescue will be death, Job does not abandon his trust. The devil causes and uses misery to drive us away from God; God uses it to drive us to our knees and then, with the gospel, to raise us up again in hope and trust that triumphs even if the suffering stays.

(excerpt taken from a presentation by Professor Daniel Deutschlander)

Job’s Friends ([Job 3–36](#))

Job’s three friends might have had good intentions, but their short-sightedness heaped confusion and doubt in God’s character upon Job’s suffering. Each of their long dialogues attempted to answer the “why” question. They assumed that God only and always operated under the laws of justice. Good gets good, and bad gets bad. Therefore, Job must have done something terribly evil to deserve his suffering. But we know from the beginning of the book that Job was blameless before God, and his suffering was not a punishment.

LDS resources use Job to discuss opposition to the plan of eternal progress. They believe that the purpose of mortality is to use human agency to make good choices in the face of temptations and trials so as to make progress on the road to perfection. They imply that Job suffered so that he could progress.

As you can imagine, this can make trials all the more difficult and painful. Questions will circulate through their minds, such as: “*Is this trial my fault because I’m not progressing enough? Maybe I made a good choice, but did I make the best choice? When I finally learn my lesson, will this trial end?*” Likely, those questions would be too embarrassing to verbalize out loud. But what if you can confess your struggles with understanding the purpose of suffering? What difference does that make?

Conversation Starters:

- **What is Karma? How do the beliefs of Job's friends compare to Karma?**
- **Is Karma biblical? Consider how one gains blessings and eternal life with God.**

Job's Response ([Job 1:20–22](#), [13:3](#), [19:23–27](#), [40:8](#))

Unsurprisingly, Job is full of a variety of emotional responses. Initially, the man of faith praised God. He also proclaimed belief in God's goodness and the resurrection to come ([Job 19:23–27](#)). But Job, knowing he was not to blame for his suffering, also accused God of being unjust and boldly demanded an explanation.

Christians, what has your faith gone through during your worst struggles? What did your relationship with God look like? For many, it can be unnerving to admit that we have questioned God or have been angry with him. Yet, upon reading Job and Psalms, you will see that these are not uncommon responses for a believer.

Conversation Starters:

- **How do we see Job as both a sinner and a saint at the same time?**
- **Did Job have a right to an explanation? Do we?**

Sharing Personally:

We have a God who loves us, no matter what happens. Job passed through dark times to realize this. Job said things we likely have never spoken about because we have not suffered as he did. Out of his misery, he cried, and in his mercy, the Lord answered him. We have a God who gives comfort beyond measure. We have a Savior who has taken all the suffering we deserved upon himself and redeemed us with his blood. We have a God we should place full confidence in no matter how great suffering becomes.

Who can understand the depth of such suffering? Who can comprehend except Jesus? Jesus came to a day for which he had been born. As that day's grief, sorrow, and torture came upon him, he told his disciples, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34). He did not curse the day of his birth. However, he came to the point of sorrow that we cannot fully understand. He prayed that the day of his most tremendous suffering, the day of his death like a cup of bitterness, might be taken away from him.

Would we question Jesus because he expressed his sorrow in this way? Would we tell Job, as his friends did, that he should accept his suffering as a just punishment from God for his sin? Instead, we should marvel that we have a God who can relieve such suffering.

God's Response ([Job 38–41](#))

God arrived in a storm and responded in both a terrifying and loving way. Verse by verse, God showed Job the vastness of the cosmos he preserves daily, humbling Job for wondering why God acts as he does. Who was Job to question the Creator, Controller, and Preserver of all things? How could such a small mind have a wide enough perspective to understand God's infinite wisdom?

In the end, God did not answer Job's question. Instead, he taught him to trust in his vast wisdom and loving character.

So too, we will not always find a purpose in our sufferings. Pursuing such understanding can become a type of law that enslaves our hearts and minds. Part of resting in God's grace is being set free from needing to know the why. For now, we live in a sin-filled broken world. By faith, we trust that God will make all things right again.

Conversation Starters:

- **How would you comfort a suffering believer? Can you think of any Bible passages to share?**
- **Considering what we have witnessed Job learn from God, how would you answer the question, "Why did God allow COVID-19 to affect our world?"**

Sharing Personally:

After all he had faced, Job exclaimed, "I know that my redeemer lives." We have a real connection with Job, a man none of us has ever met. We have not met him physically. We have met him spiritually. Our spiritual connection comes through the same Redeemer. Job looked ahead to his coming. We look back.

When Job spoke these words, he had reached a point of great exhaustion. He did not know that Satan had afflicted him. He did not know that Satan sought to bring him to curse God and die.

Job thought that God had directly brought all this trouble into his life. He didn't know why. His friends felt the same—they believed God had sent these afflictions. However, they knew why. So, they pierced Job with many griefs by accusing him of committing a grievous sin for which God now punished him.

In God's mysterious way, he caused Job to long for his Redeemer even more. Job found no comfort in his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He called them "miserable comforters." He asked, "How long will you torment me?" He had lost his children. His brothers and acquaintances had abandoned him. His wife wanted him to curse God and die. His breath became loathsome to his wife. Little boys taunted him. And he believed God had forsaken him. He had no one to turn to—no one that is except his Redeemer.

Job knew his Redeemer lived and that one day, he too would rise and see God with his very own eyes, and that that made all the difference in the world.

The Suffering of Christ

Meditate on the sufferings of Christ. In his infinite wisdom, Jesus, the Creator of the universe, chose to suffer greatly on the earth. In this instance, *we should ask why.*

Conversation Starters:

- **Why did Jesus suffer?**
- **What does Jesus' suffering mean for Job and us?**
- **Other than salvation, how else does the suffering of Jesus comfort us? ([Hebrews 4:15–16](#))**

Sharing Personally:

*The fact that Christ lives and lives in us—the fact that he rules all things for our good—is no guarantee that we will never face fear and disaster. Quite the contrary, he promised us that we will have an abundance of troubles in this life. Job demonstrates to us one particular aspect or fruit of faith: **We trust in him when all the outward evidence argues against trust in him.***

In the storms of life we are tempted to take God to court, to call him to account. On the contrary, in the storms of life, it is God who is calling us to account: Will we trust in his Word and promise or our own reason, will, emotions, and the outward evidence that all is lost? Or will faith remain a dead abstraction, cut off from the promises of God in the life we live in the veil of tears. Have you heard people say, “Since God permitted this and that to happen, I don’t believe in him anymore”?

How foolish and perverse. As though God owed us an explanation for anything that he sees fit to do or permit! Such explanation as there is is found in his Word, which bids us to trust in him in weal and woe. His Word he will always keep true. In due course, he will make his purposes clear, often in this life, but perfectly in heaven.

(excerpt taken from a presentation by Professor Daniel Deutschlander)