



Session 1: Job's Two Tests

Introduction

In your small groups, share the worst time of your life (as many details as you feel comfortable), when it was easy to ask, “Why me, Lord?”

Background to the Book of Job

Watch a [video](#) from the Bible Project that gives an overview of the whole book.

Some things to note about the book of Job:

- Job is **wisdom literature**, an Old Testament genre that gives guidelines and advice about living an upright life. It emphasizes observation (as opposed to revelation) and the importance of fearing the Lord as the ultimate wise way to life. It is also found in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and some Psalms, as well as other ancient literature.
- Unlike so much of the rest of the Old Testament, the historical setting is not given, other than taking place in the land of Uz. Uz was probably an area that stretched from Edom (Lam 4:21) to the northern regions of the Arabian desert, in between the Sabeans (probably Sheba, or southern Arabia near modern day Yemen) and the Chaldeans (early Babylonians in southern Mesopotamia, or modern day Iraq). Based on the lifestyle described, it probably occurred in the **patriarchal period**, around when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived.
- The author is **anonymous** and still unknown today. While the events are actual historical events, the speeches are skillful Hebrew poetry. It probably was composed in its final form later (perhaps during Solomon's reign?), based on information and sources from Job's time.
- The theme of the book tries to reconcile the existence of suffering in our world with a just and gracious God. It is essentially a **theodicy**, or a defense of God, and it asks the perennial question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” Or to state it more philosophically, “How can the presence of evil be reconciled with God's justice?”
- The first two chapters reveal an “omniscient narrator,” namely, a literary phenomenon when the author is revealing information to the reader that is kept from the people in the story. This is vital because throughout the whole book, Job never learns about this interaction with Satan and God. Job's basic question, “Why me, Lord?” is **never fully resolved**.

Job's Tests

Job 1:1–2:10

With how the rest of the book develops, it is very significant that Job is repeatedly described as “blameless and upright” (1:1, 1:8, 2:3) Envision if you were one of Job’s neighbors and observed his life day by day. How would you describe what kind of a person he was?

Satan’s Hebrew name means, “the accuser,” which is preeminently revealed in these opening accusations against Job. Extrapolate the implications of his question, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (1:9) by **completing this thought**, “Job serves God so wholeheartedly because ...”

Job experienced profound grief all in one day. An analogous parallel today would be your house burnt down, your children died in a car accident, and you got diagnosed with cancer all on the same day. **Write a short journal entry** to describe your thoughts and emotions on a day like that:

Job’s rhetorical question to his wife, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (2:10) is thematic for the whole book.¹ This is alluded to at the end of the book, “They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him” (42:11). **Evaluate** the following:

1. The Lord allows trouble.
2. The Lord sends trouble.
3. The Lord causes trouble.

Conclusion

One commentator said this about Job’s initial reaction (1:21), “Job’s response to these tragedies is one of the high points of the book. It beautifully illustrates his piety that the first verse mentioned. One could wish that God’s children always responded in such a way to the vicissitudes of life.”² It’s been said that the devil is like a dog on a chain and can only go as far as God allows him. How can you use that truth on the worst days of your life, so that you can say, “The name of the Lord be praised”?

¹ Note on Job 2:10 in *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, Robert Hoerber, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia), 735.

² Robert L. Alden, *Job*, The New American Commentary 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 61.