



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

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J O B



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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Job addresses human suffering and the age-old questions “Where is God?” and “Why is He letting this happen to me?” Job focuses on tenacious faith, especially in the midst of severe suffering and false accusations. Job is a strong believer, put to a severe test when he loses his wealth and children in one day. The next day he loses his health and begins a long, arduous journey in which he simply wishes to die. His three friends come to comfort him but end up trying to solve the riddle of God’s place in human suffering.

AUTHORSHIP

Job was probably written by Job himself or someone who lived at the same time and was familiar with him. Based on the currency Job describes, the nationalities of the raiding parties who steal his livestock, his great age described at the end of the book, and the sacrifices described, Job likely lived at the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

PURPOSE

Job teaches us the foolishness of trying to judge our relationship with God based on the circumstances of our lives. Just because we are healthy and prosperous does not mean we are right with God; and just because we are suffering one difficulty after another doesn’t mean God has turned against us arbitrarily, is punishing us for our sins, or is just out to get us. Job learns patience and endurance as he clings to his Redeemer.

OUTLINE

Job can be divided into a prose prologue (Job 1–2); a dialogue of poetic speeches (3:1–42:6) between Job, his three friends, a young man named Elihu, and God Himself; and a prose epilogue (42:7–17).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PROLOGUE IN NARRATIVE PROSE

Read Job 1:1–5.

Job is called “blameless and upright,” one who “feared God and turned away from evil” (v. 1). This doesn’t mean he claimed to be perfect and sinless. In fact, in 6:24; 7:21; and 42:6, he confesses his sin.

Q 1: What awareness did Job show about human nature when he made sacrifices for his children in 1:5?

- Job recognized the corrupt nature of sin tempting his family and sought God’s forgiveness in case they had “sinned, and cursed God in their hearts” (v. 5). This also showed the kind of man Job was—concerned about his children’s spiritual well-being.

Read Job 1:6–22.

Job’s troubles begin because of a false accusation against him which Satan brings before God. The devil claims that the only reason men fear and serve God is fear of punishment and hope for reward. He argues that men and women like Job don’t really care about God at all, just about themselves.

Q 2: How did Job’s response (1:20–21) to the terrible grief and awful catastrophes disprove Satan’s accusation against all believers?

- If Job had only worshiped God for the benefits he received, his loss and calamities would have shown this is not a God to be worshiped but to be cursed. But Job recognized that everything he had—yes, all that he had just lost—were undeserved gifts from God in the first place. 1:22 makes it clear that “Job did not sin or charge God with wrong” because of these calamities.

Q 3: How did Job show us the best way to deal with our losses?

- Job did not lay blame on God as we are tempted to do; he blessed God as the source of all good. The Scriptures make it clear that the source of our suffering is Satan, other sinners, our own sin, and the curse creation bears from our fall.

Read Job 2:1–10.

Satan's first attempt to prove his accusation against Job had failed. Next, he claims Job's allegiance had only been because God had not permitted Satan to harm Job personally (as though the death of all of his children meant nothing to Job). Satan argues that the reason Job praised God was because he was relieved that he himself didn't die—how cold and cruel!

Q 4: Why do you think God permitted Satan to add personal suffering to the loss and grief Job already felt?

- God permitted Satan to afflict Job with illness to prove to Satan (and to remind believers) that faith given by the Holy Spirit is stronger than the calamities Satan uses to destroy it or snatch it away. Once again, Job passed the test. As he told his grieving wife (remember, she lost her children as well), "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (v. 10).

Read Job 2:11–13.

We are introduced to Job's three friends who come to comfort him.

Q 5: Do you believe the grief Job's friends demonstrated was genuine? Why or why not?

- Answers may vary, but everything they did and the way it is described in the text indicates that they truly loved Job, and they were shocked by his disease and all that he suffered (how he had fallen from wealth, prosperity, and influence to sickness and poverty). They shared in his sorrow by traditional ways of grieving—tearing their clothes, casting dirt on their heads, and sitting in silence with him for seven days.

JOB'S OPENING LAMENT

Finally after a whole week, Job breaks the silence.

Read Job 3.

Job's whole first lament focuses on the day of his birth. If this loss of children, possessions, and health was his destiny, he wishes he had never been born.

Q 6: Imagine you are sitting with a friend who has suffered devastating loss and can see nothing but darkness. What things might you say to comfort him or her? What things should you avoid?

- First, and always, be quicker to listen than to speak. Pray for God's guidance, and listen to things your friend says that you can use to share the Good News. Here are some examples of things people might say and how you could respond:
 1. *I feel like God has forsaken me.* That's what Jesus experienced on the cross when He prayed, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). God the Father refused to deliver Jesus from His suffering and agony out of love for you and me and all people. Jesus was suffering what we deserve for our sins.
 2. *Why is God doing this to me?* Horrible things like suffering and death don't come from God; they come from living in a world ruined by our sins or from evil people who reject God's love and kindness (your answer here will depend on the nature of your friend's suffering—if they were wronged by someone or if they are suffering from illness, injury, etc.). The good news is that God didn't leave us alone to suffer and hurt; He sent His Son to share our sufferings, then suffer and die in our place on the cross, providing the way for us sinners to find forgiveness and peace with God.
 3. *If God is real, why did He let this happen to me?* Listen closely and you will hear that the questioning of God's existence is based on a presumption that if God really existed, He wouldn't let people suffer so much. You can answer, "Oh, God is very much real. It's hard to understand the things God permits to occur in His creation, but He promised to always be with us and guide us through it."
 4. *God is punishing me.* I'm sure it feels that way, but God won't punish you for something that He already punished His own Son Jesus for. That's why Jesus went to the cross, to be punished for all our sins in our place. God is here to help you and comfort you.

FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES

Job's three friends each begin to answer the complaints in Job's lament. In this entire section of Job and his friends speaking (Job 4–37), be careful not to accept every word spoken as Gospel truth. There is truth in what each person says, but there is also error, as they mix Law and Gospel and make judgments about God and one another (which are neither charitable nor true).

ELIPHAZ'S SPEECH

Read Job 4–5.

Eliphaz speaks lofty platitudes but never connects with Job's pain. Through these platitudes, he ends up increasing Job's sufferings.

Q 7: Reread 5:4. What unintentional pain did Eliphaz's "encouraging" words cause Job?

- When Eliphaz spoke of the fool's children being unsafe, crushed in the gate with none to deliver them, Job must have been picturing his own dear children as they were killed in that violent windstorm—they were all unsafe, crushed beneath the house with none to deliver.

Q 8: What lesson can we learn when speaking with grieving friends?

- Even though it is well intentioned, don't launch into lofty words like "He is in a better place" or "You'll get over this in time." Don't be in a hurry to try to get their minds off of their pain. Let them share their hurts and learn about them; then, you will better be able to answer and share God's comfort. Remember the dark agony Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. Take them there for comfort; don't try to distract them.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 6.

In self-defense, Job lashes out at his friend, criticizing Eliphaz's attempts to comfort him.

Q 9: How would it have helped for Job to put the best construction on Eliphaz's comments?

- Job lashed out at Eliphaz and the others as though the only reason they had come was to gloat over him in his misery. He forgot that they first came in genuine love and concern.

Q 10: What can we learn from Job's reaction?

- When we are suffering greatly, we shouldn't expect our friends to truly understand what we are going through—especially if they have never been through anything like it themselves. We need to pour out our hearts to God our Father and Jesus our Savior, who knows what it is to suffer.

Read Job 7.

Job turns from his friends to address God. He pleads with God to leave him alone or put him out of his misery and let him die.

Q 11: What should we do when we are angry at God for things we are suffering?

- First, do not let it be an obstacle to prayer. Knowing it is a sin to blame God or be angry, it is tempting to bottle it up inside and pretend we aren't. Better to pour out our complaint to God—He has big shoulders; He can take it and forgive us. If you don't have the words, find a psalm to pray. Many complaints are poured out to God by the psalmists.

BILDAD'S SPEECH

Read Job 8.

Bildad suffers from a case of works righteousness. He believes that God is just, and the only reason a person could suffer evil is because he has done evil. He can't fathom that God would allow bad things to happen to people who hadn't done great wrong.

Q 12: Describe a time you judged your standing with God (or someone else's standing with God) on blessings received or suffering endured.

- It is almost natural for us to look for physical, tangible signs of God's favor or His wrath. But we live in a world ruined by sin, and we suffer at the hands of sinful people. When we do suffer in this life, we need to look for God's favor through the cross of Christ and His bitter suffering and death in our place. That is where God brings good out of evil, righteousness out of sin, life out of death, heaven out of hell.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 9–10.

Job agrees with Bildad that God is just and right. But knowing he is a sinner, Job admits he cannot stand before God without someone to stand as his advocate. In chapter 10, he expresses a sense of hopelessness—if he is a sinner, God will punish him, but even if he is righteous, God is the Creator who can do as He chooses with His creatures.

Q 13: When trapped under our own guilt as sinners or our weakness as humble creatures, how can we find comfort from God?

- God gives us His comfort through Jesus Christ alone—not through our righteousness or our status as fallen creatures. If we look for hope apart from Christ, we will never find any. But if we look to Jesus' sufferings in our place on the cross, then we have the assurance of God's complete forgiveness and promise of deliverance for Jesus' sake.

ZOPHAR'S SPEECH

Read Job 11.

Unlike Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar is blunt and completely tactless toward Job. For him there is no Gospel; all is Law. He argues that Job's future is completely in his own hands—if he repents and does right, God will reward him and the sun will start shining again.

Q 14: What is striking about Zophar's comments in 11:5–6?

- Zophar was so certain about being right that he wished God would speak to Job—to tell him how evil he is. Because for Zophar, it was perfectly clear that Job was a terrible sinner—otherwise God would not have submitted him to such sufferings. Again, we need to be careful not to judge a person's standing with God based on the circumstances of his or her life.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 12–14.

Job points out that God is in control and that God's creatures don't shape their own destiny. Job's problem is that, while acknowledging God's power and wisdom, he refuses to believe that God works those attributes for our good.

Q 15: What would you say to someone who says, "God has it out for me"?

- In our sufferings, we are shown how much of our life and its circumstances are completely beyond our control. When hardships continue, it is easy to feel the Law without feeling God's comfort. But once again, the cross of Jesus Christ shows that God is for us not against us.

SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES

Job has answered each of his friends, often with accusations. It shouldn't be surprising to find they are getting defensive and hitting a little harder in their efforts to convince Job he is wrong and they are right. Some still have the good intention of leading Job to repentance; others just want to prove him wrong.

ELIPHAZ'S SPEECH

Read Job 15.

Eliphaz feels Job thinks too highly of himself and his wisdom. Since Job refuses to confess the sin which caused all this calamity, he sets out to put Job in his place.

Q 16: What evidence do you see that Eliphaz might have taken Job's words personally and his pride was hurt?

- Eliphaz lashed out at Job and felt it too important to prove himself right and Job wrong. When we are trying to comfort someone who is in pain, we have to remember it is not about us, and we shouldn't take that person's complaints personally. Instead, we continue to offer God's hope and comfort in Jesus Christ.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 16–17.

Job starts with the phrase, "Miserable comforters are you all" (16:1). Their "comforting" words had only increased his pain and anguish. In 16:19–21, he makes a great confession that in heaven he has a witness or mediator with God. He is hinting at the promised Savior.

Q 17: Why is it important that Job did not look inside of himself for comfort or hope?

- Job had rightly confessed that he was a sinner. As a sinner, he deserved punishment—both on earth and forever in hell. Job's only hope, and ours, is in the Savior God promised to send Adam and Eve. In the midst of our struggles and complaints, we must not look inside ourselves to find a reason for hope. Job was correct in maintaining that our justification lies outside of ourselves. We must look to the Mediator the Lord has provided for us all—Jesus Christ and the cross.

BILDAD'S SPEECH

Read Job 18.

Bildad maintains his stance that if Job is to be justified, he has to change, get his act together, and live rightly.

Q 18: Why does this viewpoint always lead to false security or despair?

- Because we are sinners who deserve death and damnation. If we try to comfort a friend by turning him to his own resources, we are not being a friend. Our only hope lies outside ourselves—in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we repent of our sins and trust in Christ's salvation.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 19.

Job 19:25–27 is Job's high point of faith. These verses express one of the most profound statements in the entire Old Testament. Job doesn't rise this high again, but neither does he sink as low in sorrow and anguish as before.

Q 19: How did Job's speech in 19:25–27 attest to a physical resurrection from death on the Last Day?

- Job makes several references to his resurrected body: "In my flesh, I shall see God" (v. 26); he points out his confidence that though his skin will decay from off his bones, he will be raised with new flesh; he confesses, "I shall see for myself with my own eyes" (v. 27).

ZOPHAR'S SPEECH

Read Job 20.

Unfortunately, feeling insulted by what Job has said, Zophar goes right back to his accusing ways.

Q 20: In ways did Zophar preach a "theology of glory" rather than a "theology of the cross"?

- Zophar argued as if the only people who suffer reversals and calamities in life are evildoers. That thought was also widely held in Jesus' day (see John 9:2). That thinking caused prideful judgments of others and caused the Jewish masses to look upon Jesus on the cross and judge Him a blasphemer who deserved death. The problem with the theology of glory is it gives the wrong motivation for us to cling to the Lord. It encourages us to cling to God for earthly prosperity. What happens in the midst of suffering and death?

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 21.

Job easily disputes Zophar's argument. All they need to do is look around, and they will see openly ungodly sinners prospering and living lives of ease and luxury even as these sinners blaspheme God and break His Commandments.

Q 21: What are the benefit of considering the prosperity of evildoers?

- Like Job, we can see how undependable this earthly life is—and desire the comforts and glories of heaven instead. In the process of his grief, Job learned to look outside of this life on earth to God in heaven for hope and comfort in his time of suffering and loss.

THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES

In the final round of speeches between Job and his three friends, we notice the friends running out of steam. Eliphaz has one final speech which lasts a chapter. Bildad's final speech is only six verses long. Zophar is left speechless with nothing to say. By the end, it is clear that the three have not been able to convince Job that he is wrong.

ELIPHAZ'S SPEECH

Read Job 22.

Eliphaz proceeds with his assumption that God is just, so the only reason Job could be suffering such horrible loss is because he has committed horrible sins. In 22:5–9, he accuses Job of terrible sins which are all the fruits of his own imagination. In Job 29, Job will make a grand defense against these false charges, explaining all that he did to help the poor, the widow, and the fatherless.

Q 22: How do you see that Eliphaz's pride and arrogance led him to sin against Job?

- Eliphaz had judged Job as guilty of sin based solely upon the circumstances he saw Job suffering through. Since Job denied having committed any grievous sin to warrant such suffering, Eliphaz's pride was hurt, and he felt it is his duty to convince Job of great sin—even if he had to make it up.

Q 23: Why is it important for us to approach people who are suffering with humility and meekness?

- It is easy for us to jump to unwarranted conclusions about the reasons why God might permit someone to suffer—especially when we are enjoying favorable circumstances in our lives. But each of us can find ourselves in that other person's shoes as health, prosperity, possessions, and friends or family are taken from us unexpectedly, in an instant. Our job is not to prove ourselves correct and prove them wrong—but to lead them to Christ crucified, who is meek and lowly, full of love and compassion.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 23.

Job does not lash out at Eliphaz for his false accusations. He turns to the Lord. Job knows he doesn't have to answer to man for how he lives his life; God alone is his judge, and God is just and holy. But Job feels God is far away and difficult to find. He is also terrified at the thought of God's presence—because it seems God has struck him down arbitrarily—without any good reason.

Q 24: What could you say to someone who feels God is far away and doesn't hear or care about her problems or her suffering?

- God certainly feels far away in times of suffering. Remember that God comes to comfort and strengthen us through His Word and Sacraments. Psalm 22 (which Jesus quoted from the cross) shares that same sentiment that God is far away, but reading through the entire psalm reminds us that God does hear us and answers our prayers—just as He heard Jesus’ prayer from the cross and raised Him from the dead. Though God may seem very far away, He promises and assures us He is always here with us. Read and memorize God’s promise in Psalm 46:1 (“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”), and receive God’s comfort by reading through the entire psalm. Remember what Jesus promised in Matthew 28:20: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” And be sure to receive the forgiveness, comfort, and strength Christ Jesus gives through His body and blood in Holy Communion as often as possible.

Q 25: Why is the thought of God’s justice and holiness terrifying without knowing God’s love and mercy in Christ Jesus?

- All of us are sinners who cannot stand before God in our own righteousness. The purpose of the Law is to shatter our self-confidence and the delusion that we can sneak our sins by God without being noticed—or that God will ignore our evil deeds if we have done enough good deeds to “make up” for them. When the Law has done its work and terrified us at the thought of standing before our Judge, then we need the Gospel, which assures us that God’s own Son, Jesus Christ, paid the full and complete price for our sin in our place.

Read Job 24.

Job points out that many people are guilty of the things Eliphaz had accused Job of, but nothing happens to them—God does nothing to stop them or punish them. So Job can’t understand why God punishes him when he hasn’t done the wrongs they have.

Q 26: Describe a time you have seen that happen—when evildoers prosper and good people suffer at their hands—and nothing happens.

- We’ve all seen or heard about it. Often these people prosper for generations. But in His time, God will punish all those who hate Him and oppress God’s people.

BILDAD’S SPEECH

Read Job 25.

Notice that Bildad runs short on words. What he says is true—in comparison to the all-present, all-knowing, all-powerful God, we humans are puny and powerless (Job will experience this when Yahweh comes to speak to him). Like

Job, all of us are sinners who have no excuse for our sins and can do nothing to pay the price God rightfully demands of us.

Q 27: Where did Bildad's speech fall short?

- It failed to offer any real comfort to Job in his suffering. Bildad spoke the truth about God's transcendence (how high He is above us) but nothing about God's immanence (how close He comes to us in Jesus Christ to forgive us, comfort us, restore us, and renew us). Job's experience was telling him how powerful God is—and how powerless Job was. He needed the comfort of the Gospel, the assurance of God's tender love for His treasured creatures.

JOB'S ANSWER

Read Job 26.

Job expands on what Bildad said. What God has shown about His great power and wisdom through creation is truly mind boggling. Job confesses that what we see of God's great power in creation is just a tiny glimpse. God's great power towers over what we can see in the creation around us. When God speaks to Job, He will focus Job's attention on the wonders of creation and this little whisper we hear of God in His creation, a tiny exertion of His almighty power.

Q 28: How does this reminder of the Trinity's surpassing greatness make the incarnation of Jesus Christ even more amazing?

- God the Father absolutely towers over His creation, yet because of His great love for us, His eternal Son stooped down and became man, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. Jesus' entire earthly life in that state of humiliation is the answer to Job's complaints throughout this book. God the Father does notice our suffering; Jesus even came to earth to share our life of suffering and to solve our problems of sin, death, and hell by taking our sin upon Himself, going to the cross to satisfy His Father's just wrath, and rising victorious to promise us everlasting life in the glory of His Father's presence as His own brothers and sisters.

ZOPHAR'S SPEECH

Notice that Zophar has nothing more to say.

JOB'S ANSWER

Since Zophar is silent, Job is also silent.

JOB'S FINAL MONOLOGUE

Job concludes his discussion with his friends with a final monologue in which he reasserts his integrity, explores the difficulty of attaining true wisdom, describes how he befriended the poor and needy, bemoans how those same people he helped and befriended have now turned against him, and finally asserts his integrity and asks God to hear him.

Read Job 27.

Job shows the integrity of faith. Since he trusts in God's judgment rather than his own righteousness, Job is confident his accusers will be proved wrong. You will notice God has worked through the adversities Job faced to actually strengthen his faith and his character.

Q 29: How is it a sign of Christian maturity to be able to stand bold and confident of God's righteousness and His tender mercy for Jesus' sake when we are being falsely accused and don't know why God is permitting suffering?

- It is a sign of spiritual immaturity to accuse God of being unfair or to try and justify ourselves based on our own efforts, rather than trusting God to justify us through faith for Jesus' sake. By the confidence of faith given by the Holy Spirit, we can cling to Jesus' cross where God's love is openly displayed, even though it may be completely hidden in the present circumstances of our lives.

Read Job 28.

Job eloquently describes the accomplishments of mankind. We have learned to do so many things no other creature can do—including digging beneath the earth and bringing forth unimagined treasures. Yet no person can find true wisdom through reason or experience.

Q 30: What is the key to finding true wisdom?

- Realizing it comes from outside of ourselves—our wisdom, our imagination, our experience. True wisdom comes from God's Word. Through God's Word alone can we understand that we can only stand before God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. True wisdom causes a man or woman to bow before God's wisdom and to live in quiet trust and childlike faith.

Read Job 29.

Job 29 explains why 1:1 described him in such glowing terms. Look at how Job had befriended the widow, the poor, the helpless, and the dying—even when he knew it would never be profitable for him and they would never be able to repay him.

Q 31: How do we resist the temptation to place our confidence in our good works rather than in Christ's good work on our behalf?

- Job confessed his sin. When we look at the good deeds we have

done, we must remember that the desire and will to do them did not originate inside us but were given to us by the Holy Spirit working through faith. When we look honestly at our good deeds, we can see that we always could have done more and that there are good things we have left undone. One single sin is enough to topple all the good works we can accumulate—because God is holy and demands absolute perfection, which only Jesus was able to achieve for us.

Read Job 30.

This heartbreaking chapter shows the ingratitude and ridicule Job is receiving from the children of men whose lives he had saved, men who owed their livelihoods to Job.

Q 32: In what way does this remind you of the mockery heaped on Jesus as He hung on the cross?

- Jesus came to this world to save sinners; in His pain and agony, He was winning forgiveness and salvation for all people—freeing us from all our sins. But people jeered at Him, cursed at Him, and mocked His distress and pain.

Read Job 31.

In his final appeal, Job displays how he handled temptations in light of the covenant he made with the Lord in his youth and followed throughout his life. Since he lived with the realization that everything he did was done in the sight of God, Job knew he could never hide the guilt of sins such as those, his friends had accused him of committing.

Q 33: How might Job's life inspire you to more holy living?

- Job was a sinner like all of us. Yet by God's grace, he set his heart on honoring God and living a good and decent life. Job is a great model of the kind of people you and I should strive to be by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ELIHU'S SPEECHES

Elihu is a young man who has been listening in on the discussions between Job and his three friends. As he listened, his heart burned in anger at Job, because he justified himself instead of justifying God, and at the three friends, because they were unable to convince Job of this. He had remained quiet in the presence of his elders, but now that they have been silenced and unable to respond to Job, he takes the floor.

In the last chapter of Job, the Lord will rebuke Job's three friends and command them to repent. But God does not mention Elihu as one who needed to repent.

Read Job 32–33.

You will notice a striking difference between Elihu and Job's three friends. Unlike them, he speaks personally to Job. He also speaks gently, not in harsh, condemning words. While Elihu defends God's righteousness, he tries to persuade Job that the things he is suffering do not mean that God abandons the ones He has chosen.

Q 34: How can remembering Jesus' sufferings and death on the cross encourage us not to feel God has abandoned us in the midst of our own severe sufferings?

- If Jesus could suffer such things while still being God's beloved Son—without losing God's favor—we can be sure our sufferings do not mean that God has discarded or abandoned us.

Read Job 34–35.

While Elihu reminds Job that it is wrong for mortal men and women to tell God when and how He should act, he overreaches by attributing Job's loud complaining and protestation to unbelief.

Q 35: What gentle reminder would be appropriate to give to someone who is complaining that God is not acting fast enough?

- We can remind him of God's great wisdom and that there are many things we finite human creatures cannot take into account (e.g., how God may be working through my suffering to share His love with other people—especially those that have been brought into my circle because of this suffering, such as nurses, other patients, technicians, etc.). We can also remind him that God has a loving purpose for everything, and even when everything looks dark as it did on Good Friday, God is still bringing His good purposes about for His people.

Q 36: What are some things to keep in mind when we hear Christians who are suffering complain about the way God is treating them?

- On one hand, we don't want to be haughty and belittle things they are suffering which we don't understand. On the other hand, while we may sense that they are overreacting and accusing God of being unjust, we do well not to try to convince them they are wrong but to gently remind them of Jesus Christ and all that He willingly suffered to save them from their sins.

Read Job 36.

Elihu opens Job's mind to a possibility he had not considered before. God doesn't just send calamity to punish sins but to test us and sometimes even to deliver us.

Q 37: How can remembering this point be helpful the next time you face surgery or hospitalization?

- If we proceed from the idea that God loves us for Jesus' sake and—just as He promised in Romans 8:28—He is making all things work together for our good, then we might be able to see how God is doing great things for other people, especially as they try to understand how we can patiently and joyously endure sufferings because of Jesus, our Lord.

Read Job 37.

Elihu closes his discourse with a discussion of the powerful elements of God's creation and, in a way, foreshadows what God Himself will say to Job in the next chapters.

Q 38: What is the value in reminding a friend that much of life is outside of our control anyway, not just the bad things through which we suffer?

- Elihu uses the power of a storm to remind Job he is a mortal. It is unwise to dig in one's heels and try to stand stubbornly before God, relying on one's own power, wisdom, and righteousness. It is far better to humble ourselves before the mighty God to receive grace and forgiveness.

YAHWEH'S TWO SPEECHES

Ever since chapter 9, Job has expressed his desire to speak to the Lord directly, to hear God's answer to his question "Why me?" Now he gets his chance. With great anticipation, we turn from human thoughts and ideas to the words of God Himself.

But it is important to note the setting in which God speaks to Job. In 1 Kings 19:11–12, Elijah was frustrated and depressed, and he wanted to die. He met Yahweh on Mount Sinai. God sent a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire, but God did not speak to him through any of these; instead, He spoke to the prophet in a low whisper. But when Job has his long-awaited meeting with God, the Lord speaks to him out of the whirlwind.

Q 39: Why might you guess God would use this show of great power instead of humbly speaking in a low whisper?

- Job had been sitting in judgment of God, accusing God of mistreating him without any good reason. By coming with this show of great power and might, God was asserting His position as almighty Creator, while reminding Job he was a limited creature speaking of things about which he could not possibly have any idea. At the same time, we see God's grace, in condescending to come and speak with Job, and His mercy, in not destroying him in those tornado-like winds.

Read Job 38:1–40:2.

Job had spoken in arrogance, as if God was not present or aware of everything going on in Job's life. In this first speech, God highlights His work of creation—and how He did not require advice from any man or woman when He first created it, nor does He require human assistance as He continually manages His creation every moment of every day.

Q 40: Why didn't God directly answer Job's questions; why did He ask a series of questions about His creation instead?

- God could certainly have explained His actions, why He had chosen to permit the disasters to strike Job, but Job's understanding is not great enough to be able to comprehend all the factors at play as God weighs out how things will work in His creation, in which every act impacts nearly every creature within it. God's questions to Job make it clear that His ways are inscrutable, that is, impossible for humans to understand or interpret—we just aren't as smart as we think we are. By speaking of things in nature, God reminds Job that He is the all-powerful Creator who controls everything that happens throughout His entire creation.

Q 41: Pick out some verses in 38:39–39:30 in which God shows that He actively provides for the animals He created—even the largest and most fierce and impressive. Why do you think God pointed this out to Job?

- Job had said he felt that God was far away, even unaware of what Job was suffering. God wanted Job to see that even in his great suffering, God was providing for him, keeping him alive. God assures each of us that He is always present, governing the things that occur in our lives—He is not a distant God totally unconcerned about us.

Q 42: Consider how you approach God in your personal prayers. Describe a situation in which you prayed to God thinking you knew the solution and telling Him what He needed to do to make it all work out. Now describe how you could have approached God in humility, realizing and admitting that He knows better than you.

- Our prayers are much more meaningful and powerful when we approach God in a spirit of humility. There is nothing wrong with coming to God and offering a possible resolution which makes sense to us—but we should be quick to admit that we only see a small part of the situation and have no clue what circumstances may result if our prayer is answered as we ask it. By saying, “Thy will be done,” we are confessing our confidence that our heavenly Father knows every aspect of the situation and the very best way to resolve it—and He loves us enough through Jesus Christ that He only wants to work things out in the very best way, even if we can’t understand it at the time (as Job experienced through his long days of suffering).

Read Job 40:3–5.

Job has a moment to respond to the withering barrage of questions God has asked. His response is pure humility.

Q 43: What wisdom did Job show in his response to the Lord’s questions?

- He realized how little he really knew and said that would not speak up against the Lord again.

Q 44: What is the value in fostering that same attitude as we approach God’s Word or speak to Him in our prayers?

- So often we rely on our own wisdom to understand and apply Scripture, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us, speak to us, and instruct us in the truth. Likewise, when we pray, if we are aware of and willing to confess our great ignorance in the face of God’s omniscience, then we will more clearly see the grace and love of God as He answers our prayers, guiding the events of our lives—and the lives of those people for whom we pray—to our eternal benefit and the glory of His name.

Read Job 40:6–41:34.

Though Job is repentant and ready to drop his case, God continues. This time, He speaks of two great and fearsome creatures—a land monster called Behemoth and a monster of the water, Leviathan. Some scholars believe these

were animals we are familiar with—perhaps an elephant or hippopotamus for Behemoth and a crocodile for Leviathan. Others (especially scholars who believe the earth is young and creation occurred thousands of years ago) believe these were the last of the dinosaurs to survive after passing the flood in Noah’s ark—perhaps a sauropod (like brontosaurus) for Behemoth and a plesiosaur or dragon-like creature for Leviathan. Regardless of which creatures these actually were, it is clear that Job was familiar with them (so they weren’t likely fantastic animals that didn’t exist) and that, in his day and age, mankind had not learned to control, tame, or domesticate these wild and powerful beasts.

Q 45: What point was God making by comparing mankind to these great creatures?

- If humans trembled at the thought of confronting and trying to control these creatures, why shouldn’t they tremble at the thought of confronting the God who made them, provides for them, and limits their actions?

Q 46: In 40:19, God stated, “He is the first [most powerful—not first in order of creation] of the works of God; let Him who made him bring near His sword!” God implied that even He must arm Himself before approaching this fierce animal. How might this be a hint that God is indirectly referring to Satan and the fallen angels?

- Clearly God was portraying these monsters as creatures who defy Him, who work against His will. Even if the people of Job’s day—or our own day—learn to control and overpower every animal on earth or in the sea, none of us can overpower Satan, the fallen angel who began all of Job’s sufferings and loss, as well as all of mankind’s, in the Garden of Eden. We cannot free or save ourselves from his dominion. Only God was able to do that when He sent His Son Jesus Christ to crush the serpent’s head in His own suffering and death on the cross and in His glorious resurrection on the third day.

Read Job 42:1–6.

Job opens his mouth to answer God’s initial question and challenge: “Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?” (v. 3) and “Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to Me” (v. 4). Repeating those words back to God, Job confesses his total ignorance and how wrong he had been to accuse God of wrongdoing. He had been ignorant of both God’s might and His mercy.

Q 47: How does the Church’s confession reflect Job’s words “I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (v. 6)?

- In Divine Service, Setting Three, we confess, “I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment” (*LSB*, p. 184).

Q 48: What is the value in debasing ourselves, bringing ourselves so low when we confess our sins to our God?

- This is the “broken and contrite heart” God desires as our sacrifice in David’s great psalm of repentance, Psalm 51:17. When we open our hearts and souls to the all-searching eyes of our God and Creator, freely admitting our unworthiness and our guilt, God is pleased to forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ. Then we can know true peace and joy in God’s forgiveness, rather than trying to come before God in our own goodness and righteousness, hoping our good deeds are good enough and hoping we can hide our guilt and sin deep inside so God and the other people at church won’t find out how dark and evil we are.

EPILOGUE IN NARRATIVE PROSE

When God speaks, He not only confronts Job but He also rebukes Job's three friends, vindicating Job in their presence.

Read Job 42:7–9.

Not only does God show Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar that they had been wrong to falsely accuse Job and misrepresent God the way they did but He also defends and rebuilds Job's reputation in the minds of these, his friends. He also commands Job to pray for them, restoring their friendship again.

Q 49: How do you see God's grace for these three men and for Job in this process?

- When we are falsely accused and want God to vindicate us, it often has a selfish component—we want to be proved correct and want those who slandered us to feel terrible. God has a higher purpose—He wants to protect our reputation, to lead our accusers to repentance, and to restore a harmonious relationship between all of us. What a marvelous God we have—one whose ways are higher than ours and whose thoughts are higher than ours as well!

Read Job 42:10–17.

God completely heals Job and restores his fortune and family. The Lord gives Job twice the possessions he had enjoyed before—as though repaying Job with interest. But even more, God gives precious children to Job and gives him a long earthly life.

Q 50: What is significant about God giving Job ten more sons and daughters?

- Since our children are priceless gifts of God, the Lord does not restore Job's children (through resurrection) during Job's earthly life. Instead, He gives Job ten more for a total of twenty children who will share eternity with Job after their earthly lives are all finished. The names of Job's three daughters are Hebrew names that describe beautiful things—a turtle dove, Cassia (or cinnamon), and antimony (an ebony-colored powder used as eye shadow in Job's time).

God may not choose to restore prosperity to our earthly lives following times of loss and calamity, but He promises an eternity of joy, peace, and glory when Jesus Christ returns to restore creation and raise us to eternal life.