

# Trusting God Through Trials, Suffering & Evil

Part 3: The Book of Job

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



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**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**
- Job's friends were wrong! What's the **worst** advice you've ever received when you were suffering? Did you take that advice? Why or why not? What happened as a result?
- When we suffer, we automatically ask, "Why?" Why is that **not** a helpful thing to ask?
- Put yourself in Job's place. You've lost family, wealth, and health. You ask God, "**Why?!?**"—but this time he decides to tell you. "*You see, Satan said I wasn't worth praising unless I give people nice stuff, so I used you to prove him wrong.*" Is that knowledge **emotionally satisfying** to you? Why or why not?
- Understanding suffering is like viewing a tapestry or rug from the **back** side—and from **too close** up! Find a small area rug with a complex woven design. Turn it **wrong side up** and view it from a distance of two inches away. Describe what you see while a friend draws a picture from your description.  
  
Tell of a time when your life-circumstances looked like a jumbled mess—but now, in retrospect, make sense.
- What's the **best** advice you've received when you were in the midst of suffering? Did you take that advice? Why or why not? What happened as a result?

### Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, "*What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?*", how would you summarize the most important elements of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

## Sermon Summary Key Text: The Book of Job

Suffering comes to all of us; it doesn't discriminate. In the midst of pain we cry out to God, "Why me? What have I done to deserve this?" When you need him most, he seems most remote. Today we are going to examine the problem of pain and the dilemma of maintaining faith in the midst of such suffering. Unbeknownst to Job, God selected him to play a key role in history. Job was a godly man (1:1). He also happened to be quite wealthy (1:3). God had greatly blessed Job. He was holy, happy, healthy and wealthy. Job had it all! That is the background; the drama is found in v. 6-11. Satan told God that the only reason Job served him is because God had blessed him. He taunted God that if he took away his hedge of protection, Job would surely turn against him. Do we view worship and religious devotion as a coin which purchases God's blessing? Have you ever put money in a vending machine and the product you are purchasing doesn't fall down? Satan is attacking man's motive for worship. Satan said that we worship for hire. "What is in it for me?" Satan also attacked God's character, implying that God is unworthy of worship in and of himself and that the creature owes his Creator nothing in terms of worship or service. But God was confident that Satan would find in Job more than mere surface devotion, so he gave Satan permission to test his theory (1:12-19; 2:6-10). Can you imagine Job's emotional state at this point? Shock, despair, panic, disbelief, a profound sense of loss, deep sadness, depression. What was Job's response? Did he curse God as Satan insisted he would? No, in fact we are told that Job fell to the ground in worship (1:20-22).

We learn that bad things happen to good people (2:3). Job once believed that God always blesses the righteous and always punishes the wicked, so he had to adjust his thinking when his circumstances failed to fit his theology. Like Job, some of us need to overhaul our theology of suffering. We also learn that we must not judge a person's relationship with God on the basis of what they may be experiencing. In Job 4-28 his "friends" come to comfort him. But they end up condemning him! Like Job, their problem lay in their defective theology of suffering. The book of Job reveals four distinct views of suffering: (1) Satan's view is that people believe in God only when they are prospering and not suffering. This is wrong. (2) The view of three of Job's "friends" is that suffering is God's judgment for sin. This is not always true. (3) Elihu's view was that suffering is God's way to teach, discipline and refine. This is true, but an incomplete explanation. (4) God's "view" (aka "the truth") is that suffering causes us to trust God for who he is, not for what he does. So we have to be careful about offering pat answers when those around us are suffering. This is especially true when it comes to the "Why" of suffering

The reason for your suffering may not be revealed in this life-Job never knew what was going on behind the scenes! Job didn't get to read the first two chapters. He had to live out chapters 3-42 without the aid of divine perspective. That's what made Job's suffering all the more unbearable. Like many of us, he believed that the faithful were supposed to be blessed by God. It was the wicked who were supposed to suffer. Job knew that he was a righteous man. Not a perfect man, but a truly moral, loving, God-fearing man. He also knew that God was just and loving. What he couldn't figure out was how to put those two things together in light of his suffering. It just didn't make sense. And God never explained to Job the reason for his suffering. It remained shrouded in mystery. We too must learn to live with the mystery of suffering. It is futile to criticize God's ways; we sin when we accuse God of injustice. Despite all of Job's suffering, he never cursed God. Although he wavered, he maintained his faith and God won his wager with Satan (13:15).

But Job did sin. His sin didn't cause his suffering, as his friends supposed, but Job sinned by demanding that God explain and justify his actions. As each calamity strikes we wait for Job to turn his back on God, and he comes perilously close to doing so. You see, in this book, it is really Job who is on trial, not God. The test is this: Can a person remain faithful to God, even when God appears to him as an enemy? In the midst of suffering and pain, we feel as though we are being picked on. It may be that, rather than being picked on, we are in the privileged position of being chosen by God to demonstrate that faith is possible, even when the grounds for faith seem absent. When we suffer, rather than criticize God, we need to learn to trust him, knowing that he is good and loving and there is a greater purpose at work.

In the midst of suffering, it is more important to know who God is than to know why you are suffering. That is what Job learned (see chapters 38-42). Job repented of his arrogance in demanding that God answer the "Why" question, and so must we. We must not demand that God answer us. Even if we knew the reason for our suffering, I'm not sure that it would satisfy us. But in the midst of our pain we can gain comfort in knowing that a wise, loving and benevolent God is in control, and that he does care. We can trust him with our lives. When suffering, don't demand that God answer the "Why?" question. Rather rest in a God who is sovereign, loving and good. God is more interested in our faith than he is in our pleasure. For each of us, the pressing question is this: "Will we worship and faithfully serve God when the grounds for such faith appear lacking?"



Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

**Job learned that in the midst of suffering, it is more important to know who God is than to know why you are suffering. So, do you know who God is? I mean, who he REALLY is? Let's get to know him better...**

**Monday**—God is *not* like us. He is...

- Read Acts 17:24-25. What does God need from us?  
Read Job 41:11. What does God need from us?  
Read Psalm 50:10-12. What does God need from us?
- Read Psalm 102:25-27. What never happens to God?  
Read Malachi 3:6. What never happens to God?  
Read Psalm 33:11. What never happens to God?
- Read Psalm 90:2. What is God's life-span?  
Read Revelation 1:8 and 4:8. What is God's life-span?  
Read John 1:1-2, 14. What is God's life-span?
- Read Jeremiah 23:23-24. Where is God?  
Read 1 Kings 8:27. Where is God?  
Read Isaiah 66:1-2. Where is God?

**Tuesday**—God is not like us, but we *should* be becoming a little bit more like him. God is...

- Read Job 37:16. What does God know?  
Read Hebrews 4:13. What does God know?  
Read Matthew 11:21. What does God know?
- Read Romans 16:27. What do you learn about God's wisdom?  
Read Romans 11:33. What do you learn about God's wisdom?  
Read James 1:5. What do you learn about God's wisdom?
- Read John 17:3. What is the relationship between God and truth?  
Read Deuteronomy 32:4. What is the relationship between God and truth?  
Read Proverbs 13:5. What is the relationship between God and truth?

**Wednesday**—God is not like us, but we *should* be becoming a little bit more like him. God is...

- Read Psalm 100:5. What is God like "morally"?  
Read Psalm 147:17. What is God like "morally"?  
Read Luke 18:19. What is God like "morally"? Are people good?
- Read 1 John 4:8. What is God's inclination toward others?  
Read 1 John 4:10. What is God's inclination toward others?  
Read 1 John 4:19. What is God's inclination toward others? What should be our inclination toward others?
- Read Isaiah 6:3. What is God's relationship to evil?  
Read Psalm 99:9. What is God's relationship to evil?  
Read 1 Peter 1:16. What is God's relationship to evil? What is to be our relationship to evil?

**Thursday**—God is not like us, but we *should* be becoming a little bit more like him. God is...

- Read Deuteronomy 32:4. What are God's actions like?  
Read Romans 3:25-26. What are God's actions like?  
Read Psalm 145:17. What are God's actions like?
- Read Exodus 20:5. How does God feel and act when his honor is impugned?  
Read Isaiah 48:11. How does God feel and act when his honor is impugned?  
Read 2 Corinthians 11:2. How should we feel and act when God's honor is impugned?
- Read Nahum 1:2. How does God feel and act in the presence of evil?  
Read Mark 10:14. How does God feel and act in the presence of evil?  
Read Romans 1:18. How does God feel and act in the presence of evil?

**Friday**—God is not like us, but we *should* be becoming a little bit more like him. God is...

- Read Ephesians 1:11. What do we learn about God's will/purposes?  
Read Romans 12:2. What do we learn about God's will/purposes?  
Read James 4:13-15. What should be our attitude about God's will/purposes?
- Read Jeremiah 32:17. Will God's will come to pass?  
Read Genesis 18:14. Will God's will come to pass?  
Read Matthew 19:26. Will God's will come to pass?

**Saturday**—What are God's "summary attributes"? How can we describe him? God is...

- Read Psalm 18:30. God is...
- Read 1 Timothy 1:11 and 6:15. God is...
- Read Psalm 27:4. God is...
- What new, glorious things have you learned about your God this week?

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