

## Devotionals April 8 – May 7, 2022: Job: A Suffering Saint

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Job had the perfect life. He was a godly man who was rich and successful. He had a loving family consisting of a wife and ten children. But in the blink of an eye his perfect life fell completely apart. In one day, he lost all his livestock and servants, and all his children were killed. Then to make matters worse he was afflicted with sores all over his body. Have you dealt with poverty, grief, or illness in your life? Can you imagine enduring all these afflictions at the same time? Job was overwhelmed with both physical and mental anguish. Yet even in his pain, he still recognized the sovereignty of God over his life. When his wife encouraged him to “curse God, and die” (2:9) he responded wisely, “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (2:10). Despite facing the most intense trials of his life, as a believing child of God Job recognized that he was not without hope.

Suffering with hope does not mean that the believer must always be happy and never be affected by pain or grief. It is okay for Christians to be sad sometimes! Even if we know that our loved ones who have died are in heaven, we may still mourn the loss of our earthly relationship with them. Even though we have hope that God has a purpose in our pain, we still struggle with the daily ups and downs of earthly suffering. There are many examples in Scripture of godly saints voicing their misery. There are approximately forty-two psalms written as “laments” where the psalmists are crying out to God to express their grief and sadness. The entire book of Lamentations expresses the great sorrow that Jeremiah had because Israel had rejected God. And as you will learn this month, the book of Job contains many statements of lament that emphasize the deep despair that Job felt because of his afflictions. Children of God should not be afraid to be honest about their pain when bringing it to him in prayer.

We are reminded in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that God has ordained different seasons for our lives, “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” In the times of mourning and weeping, turning our eyes to heaven in prayer and worship will take our mind off our suffering and ourselves and help us to view the events of our life from an eternal perspective. After he heard about the death of all his children, we read about Job both grieving and worshipping. “Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said...The LORD gave, and the LORD had taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:20–21). Job could still worship, even in his grief, because he had the hope of one who knew that his Redeemer lived and would come again one day to deliver him from this life of suffering for eternity (19:25–27). This hope is yours too!

When we are in the midst of a trial, we may struggle to remember this hope. God often gives us faithful friends and family who will come alongside us in our struggles to bring us the true comfort of Scripture and encourage us in prayer and worship. But this is not always the case. Our fellow Christians are all sinners just like us. Often those who are trying to help us unintentionally add to our suffering by what they say (or what they don't say). Job definitely experienced this. His own wife encouraged him to curse God, and his three friends brought cruel accusations of sin as supposed “comfort.” Yet Job prayed for those who hurt him and forgave them, and we should too. We should be thankful if God has given us the gift of supportive friends and family in our trials, but it is easy to idolize the comfort and attention that we receive from others when we are suffering. It is important to remember that our only unflinching comforter is God and our hope rests in him alone.

Job trusted that God was in control of his life, but as you will see, his great struggle throughout this book was that he wanted to understand why God had given him these great

afflictions. He was confident that his friends were wrong, and it was not because he had secret sins to repent of. But he speaks repeatedly about wanting to plead his case before God, whether personally or by means of a mediator. Have you ever asked God, “Why? Why are you sending me this trial?” Have you ever received an answer? Sometimes God will make the purpose of our suffering clear, but more often (as was the case for Job) his purposes will remain unseen in this life. God never did answer any of Job’s questions or explain why he had given Job such great trials. But Job eventually came to realize that understanding is not necessary (40:1–5). What we do understand is that none of Job’s suffering or your suffering is meaningless. Every single second of it is part of God’s perfect plan for your life. And what we do know is that the ultimate purpose of both our suffering and our entire existence on this earth is to glorify God. Instead of asking “Why?” ask God to show you how you could use your trials to further display his glory.

The book of Job is partially written as historical narrative that relates the events of Job’s life, but the majority is written in a style known as wisdom literature (like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon). The expressive poetic language of Job and his friends strikingly illustrates their arguments and emotions but is often difficult to understand. It would certainly be beneficial to do a more in-depth verse by verse study of Job, but this month’s reading plan is more of an overview since you will be reading one or more chapters per day. It would be wise to try to grasp the overall concept of each chapter and not get too caught up in trying to decipher the meaning of each phrase. An excellent resource to use alongside the reading plan for this month would be *Job: God’s Sovereignty in Suffering* by Ronald Hanko. Learning more about God’s character and his faithfulness to his people in their suffering as is displayed in the book of Job will better equip you to seek him in your own personal struggles.

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Read</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Psalter</b>
Apr 8	Job 1 & 2	What do you learn about the extent and limitations of Satan's power from his interactions with God here?	336
Apr 9	Job 3	Were you shocked by Job's deep expressions of despair in his lament? Or have you had similar feelings?	339
Apr 10	Job 4 & 5	Does God ever send suffering as a punishment for a specific sin like Eliphaz implies here? If yes, can you think of some examples?	340
Apr 11	Job 6	What part of Job's response to Eliphaz shows how his friend's words only added to his affliction? Have you ever been hurt by someone who was trying to help you?	342
Apr 12	Job 7	Do you ever hesitate to bring your burdens to God? How does Job demonstrate the truth of Hebrews 4:16 in this chapter?	343
Apr 13	Job 8	How does remembering the work of Christ on our behalf add necessary comfort to what Bildad says about God's justice and righteousness here?	346
Apr 14	Job 9 & 10	What does Job desire in chapter 9:33? How does Jesus fill this need in Job's life and in your own life?	350
Apr 15	Job 11	How did Zophar fail to apply the truth of God's incomprehensibility to himself? Do you ever forget about or ignore the limitations of your own knowledge?	351
Apr 16	Job 12–14	How can you explain the contrast between Job's attitude in verses 15 and 24 of chapter 13? Have you ever experienced this range of emotions while dealing with a difficult trial?	352
Apr 17	Job 15	How does Eliphaz wrongly apply the doctrine of total depravity to Job's situation in his second speech? Have you ever been tempted to judge someone's sin without knowing the truth?	355
Apr 18	Job 16–18	What made Job's friends such "miserable comforters"? What can you learn from their mistakes about how to help others when they are suffering?	358
Apr 19	Job 19	How does Job find hope in the resurrection amid great despair and loneliness? Do you have this same hope?	359
Apr 20	Job 20 & 21	What do you learn about the experience of the wicked on this earth from the different perspectives of Zophar and Job in these two chapters?	360
Apr 21	Job 22	Why do you think Eliphaz brought all these false charges against Job in this chapter? What can you learn from this wicked behavior?	361
Apr 22	Job 23	Have you ever experienced a time when God felt far away from you like Job describes in verses 8 & 9? What did God teach you during this time?	364
Apr 23	Job 24	Why does it seem like the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper in this life? How does keeping an eternal perspective prevent us from being discouraged by this? (See also Psalm 73.)	366
Apr 24	Job 25 & 26	How does Job further explain God's greatness and power in his answer to Bildad? Why is this truth a	368

		comfort to men instead of a discouragement as Bildad implied?	
Apr 25	Job 27	How was Job able to have such strong confidence in his righteousness despite the attacks of his friends' words? Do you have the same confidence?	370
Apr 26	Job 28	Where does true wisdom come from? How does wisdom help us when we are dealing with trials?	372
Apr 27	Job 29	Can you reflect on the blessings that you have experienced in your life so far? Have you thanked God for them today?	373
Apr 28	Job 30 & 31	Do you think that Job's confidence in his own righteousness here is sinful or is it a declaration made by faith? Why?	376
Apr 29	Job 32	What differences do you notice between Elihu and Job's other three friends? In what ways is he similar?	379
Apr 30	Job 33	Where does Elihu point to the hope that we have in Christ in his speech to Job?	381
May 1	Job 34	What sins does Elihu rebuke Job for in this chapter? Is his chastisement justified?	384
May 2	Job 35	What reasons does Elihu give here for why Job should trust in God despite his circumstances?	385
May 3	Job 36 & 37	How do Elihu's proclamations about God here serve as an introduction to God's appearance to Job in a whirlwind in the next chapter?	386
May 4	Job 38 & 39	What is God teaching Job (and us) with the many questions he asks in these chapters?	387
May 5	Job 40 & 41	What aspect of his character is God revealing to Job in these chapters? How is this a comfort to the believer experiencing trials?	391
May 6	Job 42:1-6	How did his experience of suffering help Job to know God more fully? How do your trials accomplish this as well?	392
May 7	Job 42:7-17	How does the fact that God doubly restored Job's wealth show us his covenant faithfulness? How do you experience this covenant faithfulness in your own life?	398

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