



## *The Wisdom of Job*

A narrative about how to navigate hardship and suffering.

## **THE BIBLE**

Job 1-2, 30-31,38-42

*Prepare for the Story*

## **ICEBREAKER**

If you had to relive the same day for the rest of your life, which day would you choose and why?

*Rewind the Story*

**Background for Today's story:** There is a section of the Old Testament Scriptures that is comprised of five poetical books. These books may not sound like poetry to us. They don't rhyme, and they contain elements of history, prophecy, and song. However, the writing is stylized and contains many of the patterns of poetry.

The books of **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon** are sometimes called Wisdom Literature. They contain wisdom about suffering, romance, and how to live a life pleasing to God. These books may contain bits and pieces of God's story – but their purpose isn't to tell about what happened specifically but, instead, to shine a light on who God is and how His world works in general.

Scholars are divided on the **book of Job**. Did it literally happen? Or is this a stylized story to help people understand who God is and how His world works? For today, we will leave that up to you to decide. Either way, there is wisdom to be found in his story.

### **Scene One: Blameless and Upright**

In the land of Uz, there was a man named Job. He was blameless and upright; he feared God and avoided evil. Job had a large family: seven sons and three daughters. He was wealthy and successful. He owned thousands of sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys. To care for all that he had, he even had a host of servants which he treated well. He was well-known and respected by everyone who knew him.

Job was concerned about honoring God and went to great lengths to make sure that everyone in his family did what was pleasing to the LORD. If he thought someone had done something shameful or sinful, he would make arrangements for them to be purified, and he would personally make a burnt offering for them. This was his regular custom.

### **Scene Two: Satan's First Test**

One day, the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came with them. God said to Satan, "Where have you come from? Satan answered the LORD, "*I've been patrolling the earth, watching everything that's going on.*"

Then the LORD asked Satan, "*Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless – a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.*" Satan replied, "*Yes, but Job has good reason to fear You. He is surrounded by a wall of protection. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look at how rich he is! If you would take away everything he has, I am confident he would curse You to Your face!*" "*All right, you may test him,*" the LORD said, "*Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but do not harm him physically.* So Satan left the LORD's presence.

One day, Job received the worst news of his life. He received four messengers, each with worse news than the first. Raiders came and stole his livestock. His entire flock of sheep was consumed in a fire. His camels had been stolen, and his servants killed. And the final messenger brought the worst news of all. While his children were together sharing a meal, a powerful wind ripped through the home, and all of his children had died.

When Job heard this, he tore his robe in grief. He shaved his head and fell to the ground. He cried out, *"I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!"* Even in the face of extreme loss and tragedy, Job did not turn his back on God.

### **Scene Three: Satan's Second Test**

On another occasion, the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came with them once again. The LORD asked Satan, *"Have you noticed my servant Job? He has maintained his integrity, even though you have harmed him without cause."*

Satan replied, *"Skin for skin! A man will give up everything he has to save his life. But reach out and take away his health, and he will absolutely curse You to Your face!"* "All right, do with him as you please," the LORD replied, *"But spare his life."* So Satan left the LORD's presence, and he struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot.

Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still going to worship this god of yours? Look at you! Curse Him and die!" But Job replied, "Quit talking like a foolish woman. Should we only accept the good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" And Job still did not turn his back on God.

### **Scene Four: Job's Friends**

In the midst of Job's misery, his friends, who heard of the tragedies he had suffered, came to comfort him. When they arrived, they saw the terrible shape he was in, and they tore their robes in their grief. They sat with Job for seven days and seven nights, and no one said anything, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.

After a week of silence, Job finally spoke up. He said, *"I wish God would have destroyed the day I was born. He should have made it a black hole in space. He should erase it from the history books ... why didn't I die before I ever took a breath? I wish I never would have been born! The worst of my fears have come true. The thing I feared and dreaded the most has happened. I am shattered; my peace is destroyed. I will never recover. There is no rest for me ... all that I have is death all around me."*

Hearing Job's pain and anguish, his friends tried to comfort him. But they were miserable comforters. They blamed Job for all his problems, and they assumed that the bad things he was experiencing was God's punishment for Job's sins. Each friend took their turn sharing their perspectives and their thoughts about Job's situation. But none of them brought Job any comfort.

### **Scene Five: Job's Resolve**

Job listened to his friends but knew in his heart that he had not sinned against God. He would not accept responsibility for what happened. He didn't believe that God was punishing him, but he didn't know what to think about what was happening to him. So he complained and groaned and grumbled. He had a few things on His mind, so he cried out to God and demanded that God give him some answers.

*"God, where are You? I shout out to You, and I get no answer. I'm standing here waiting, but You don't respond! I worshipped You faithfully, and now You are nowhere to be found. What did I do to deserve all of this? Even though I lived a good life, what good has it gotten me? I followed all of your ways, and look what it's gotten me. If I had compromised and lived an evil life, I would understand this. But I have done everything in my power to live a godly life, and yet this is where I find myself. This is not fair ... this is not right. God, why won't you answer me?"*

### **Scene Six: God Speaks**

After Job had exhausted himself, God answered him. In fact, God's response to Job came from a whirlwind, and instead of answering Job's questions, God had a few questions of His own. *"Job, where were you when I made the world? Can you number the clouds? Do you rule over the animals? Do you know everything there is to know?"*

Hearing this, Job remained speechless. He didn't have an answer for God, And yet, God's questions were a kind of answer for Job. They taught Job to be humble. So Job covered his mouth and let God do the talking. God also rebuked Job's so-called friends for not speaking the truth about Job or about Himself. And when God was finished, Job apologized and confessed that God was God and he was not.

God was pleased with this response from Job. He accepted his prayers and blessed Job for his faithfulness. God even restored the fortunes of Job, giving him ten more children and even more animals and servants than he had before.

### *Retell the Story*

- How would you describe Job at the beginning of the story?
- What accusation did Satan bring before God?
- What did God allow Satan to do?
- What happened to Job?
- How did Job's friends respond in his time of need?
- How did Job feel about everything that happened to him?
- What did God have to say to Job?
- How did Job's story end?

### *Discuss the Story*

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- At the beginning of the story, everything is going Job's way. Do you think it's easier or more difficult to remain faithful when things are good?
- What do you think Job might have been experiencing as he received messenger after messenger who brought terrible news?
- Why do you think we are quick to question God when suffering happens?

- Why do you think Job's friends felt compelled to offer their perspective to his difficult situation?
- What do you make of God's response to Job's questions?
- On the other side of Job's tragedy, God restores the life that Job had lost. What do you think this might mean about what God values?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of *other* stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

*Join the Story*

## 1) BAD THINGS, GOOD PEOPLE

It's the question that so many people ask when they look at our world, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" For the most part, there is a belief in our world that if you are a good person, good things should happen for you or to you. The opposite is also believed to be true. How does Job's story address this viewpoint? How would you answer the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

## 2) FRIENDS

The topic of friendship is a popular one in the pages of Scriptures. The influence a friend can have is a powerful one. In this story, we see Job's friends attempt to explain what is happening to him. They do a great job of being with him in his pain but a poor job of bringing him any comfort. What are the most important qualities of a good friend? Why do you think God designed friendship to be a vital way that humans grow?

## 3) UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

On the other side of his trauma, Job has some questions for God. He demands that God answer them. And while God does answer, He ignores Job's questions. Instead, God reshapes the conversation. If you could ask God any question right now, what would you ask Him? Do you think He would respond, or like He did with Job, reframe the conversation?

Pray

*God,*

*Your love for us is endless and measureless. You have loved us because You have chosen to do so, not because of anything we have done. No matter the situations or circumstances that come our way, we will not forget this truth. At times, we will suffer from the consequences of our choices or the reality of a fallen and broken world. Even still, we will not turn our backs on You. Keep us rooted and grounded in Your love so that we can face any trial or storm that comes our way. Amen.*