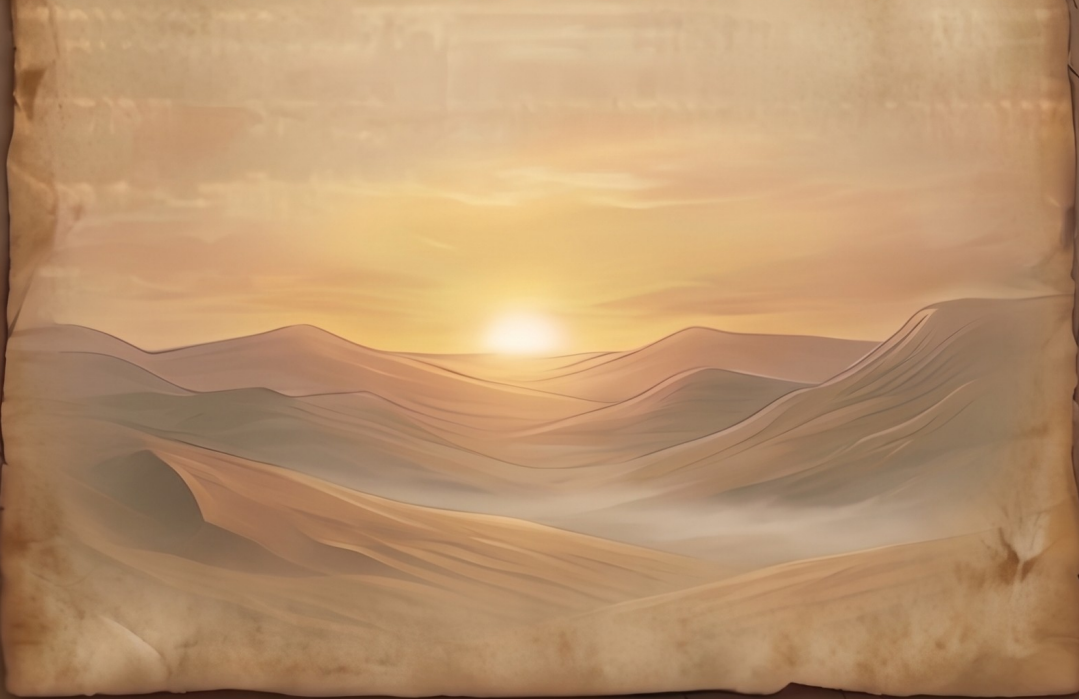


Job

When Faith Is Tested



by Robert J. Neral

A Study of Job

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A STUDY OF JOB

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INTRODUCTION: THE MAN NO ONE EXPECTED

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There are books of the Bible that teach us doctrine. There are books that record history. There are books that sing the praises of God. And then there is the book of Job — a book that does all of those things while asking the hardest question a human being can ask.

Why does the righteous suffer?

That question has been asked in every generation, in every language, by people standing in the ruins of what they thought God had promised them. It is the question of the hospital room at midnight. It is the question of the cemetery where the child is buried too soon. It is the question of the faithful servant whose life collapses while the wicked around him seem to prosper.

The book of Job does not answer that question the way we want it answered. It answers it the way God answers it — by pulling us into a story so ancient, so raw, and so honest that we cannot walk away unchanged.

Let me tell you about the man at the center of that story.

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WHO WAS JOB, AND WHEN DID HE LIVE?

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The first verse of the book tells us everything we need to know about Job's character — and nothing at all about his circumstances:

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." (Job 1:1)

Blameless. Upright. One who feared God and shunned evil.

That is not how the world would describe most of us. But that is how God Himself describes Job — not once, but twice in the opening chapters. And when God says a man is blameless, we need to take that seriously.

The land of Uz is mentioned six times in Scripture. The first three references use it as the name of a person. Genesis 10:23 lists the sons of Aram — one of whom was Uz. The last three references use Uz to describe a location, which tells us it was named after the man who lived there. The land of Uz was roughly in the area of modern-day southwestern Jordan and southern Israel.

But more important than the location is the timing. When did Job live?

If we follow the genealogy carefully, we can place Job somewhere in the generations after Noah. Genesis 5:32 tells us that Noah was five hundred years old when he begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Genesis 10:22 lists the sons of Shem — one of whom was Aram. And Genesis 10:23 lists the sons of Aram, one of whom was Uz.

So Job lived in a place identified with Uz, which means he lived after Noah, after Shem, after Aram, and after Uz. Most certainly after the flood, as we will see later in the study.

Here is something else worth noting. Job offered burnt sacrifices regularly — not as a ritual he invented, but as something God had instructed him or his fathers to do. That practice dates back to the earliest patriarchs. Job was living in a world where the knowledge of God was still being passed down directly from father to son, before

Moses, before the Law, before the prophets wrote a single word.

And in that ancient world, there was one man — just one — who stood out as blameless and upright before God.

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THE RICHEST MAN IN THE EAST

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Job was not just righteous. He was prosperous. Extraordinarily so.

"And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East." (Job 1:2–3)

I compare this to Solomon, who was blessed by God in such a way that he was considered the greatest in his time. Job held that same position in his generation. The greatest of all the people of the East.

And yet — despite all that wealth, despite all that honor — Job never forgot who gave it to him. Look at what he did regularly for his children:

"And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in

their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly." (Job 1:4–5)

Job rose early in the morning to offer burnt offerings for his children. Not because they had sinned outwardly — but because Job knew the heart is deceitful, and even a thought can offend a holy God. That is the heart of a man who fears the LORD. That is the heart of a father who understands what is at stake.

Job did this regularly. Not once. Not when he felt like it. Regularly.

If Job was blameless and upright before God, then I conclude that Job did what God had instructed him to do. And that tells us something important about the world Job lived in. The knowledge of God was real. The way of sacrifice was known. The standard of holiness was understood.

And Job lived it.

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THE DAY THE SONS OF GOD APPEARED

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And then one day, something happened in heaven that Job knew nothing about.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them." (Job 1:6)

Stop there. We need to understand who the sons of God are, because this phrase will determine how we read everything that follows.

The first time this term appears in Scripture is in Genesis 6:

"Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose." (Genesis 6:1–2)

And then this:

"There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." (Genesis 6:4)

This is difficult. The text is teaching that fallen angels came in to the daughters of men and bore them children. I know that is hard to accept. But let us read on and see if that understanding continues to make sense.

Back to Job 1:6:

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.'" (Job 1:6–7)

Here we see the sons of God showing up in heaven. This should exclude the possibility that the sons of God as referred to here is talking about humans, since humans did not have the power to travel from earth to heaven. The sons of God here are angelic beings. And with them comes their leader, Satan — who also has the power to travel from earth to heaven.

God asks him a question. Not because God does not know the answer, but because a conversation is about to begin that will change one man's life forever.

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SECTION ONE: THE HEDGE, THE WAGER, AND THE TEST

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We left Job in the land of Uz — blameless, upright, the richest man in the East, rising early every morning to offer sacrifices for his children. And we left the sons of God in heaven, standing before the LORD, with Satan among them.

What happens next is the hinge on which the entire book turns.

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GOD POINTS TO JOB

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"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?'" (Job 1:8)

Do you see what God is saying? There is none like him on the earth. Not one other person in the entire world. Job was unique. He was the only man standing at that moment in history who could be called blameless and upright without qualification.

God is proud of Job. He is pointing him out — not to Satan as if Satan did not already know, but for the record. For us. For everyone who will ever read this book and wonder: Is it possible to please God in this life? Is it possible to be counted blameless?

Job is the answer. Yes. It is possible. God Himself said so.

And then Satan speaks:

"So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!'" (Job 1:9–11)

This is the accusation. Satan is saying: Job only loves You because You pay him to. Job only worships You because You protect him. Job only serves You because You bless him. Take away the blessings, and Job will curse You.

Notice something carefully. Satan acknowledged the hedge. He said: "Have You not made a hedge around him?" Satan knew there was a wall of protection around Job that Satan could not penetrate. Satan could see it. He could feel it. He could not cross it.

That hedge was real. It was not a metaphor. It was not symbolic. God had placed a barrier between Job and the forces of darkness, and Satan could do nothing to breach it unless God Himself removed it.

And then comes the most sobering verse in the chapter:

"And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his

person.' So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD." (Job 1:12)

God gave permission. Not because God wanted Job to suffer. Not because God was indifferent. But because something was about to be proven that needed to be proven for all time.

Does a human being love God for who God is, or only for what God gives?

Job did not know any of this was happening. He had no idea that a conversation had taken place in heaven. He had no idea that Satan was about to be unleashed. He had no idea that every single thing he valued most in this world was about to be taken from him in a single day.

But God knew. And God trusted Job.

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## **THE DAY EVERYTHING FELL APART**

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"Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; and a messenger came to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away — indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!'" (Job 1:13–15)

The Sabeans came. They stole the oxen. They killed the servants. One man escaped.

Before Job could process that news, another messenger arrived:

"While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!'" (Job 1:16)

Fire from heaven. The sheep gone. The servants dead. Another lone survivor.

And then a third:

"While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!'" (Job 1:17)

Three separate attacks. Three groups of enemies. Three sole survivors, each one racing to Job with the same message: everything you had is gone.

And then came the worst news of all:

"While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!'" (Job 1:18–19)

All ten children. Dead. In one moment. In one house.

Job had just lost everything. His wealth. His workers. His children. Everything he had built. Everything he loved. Gone.

And what did Job do?

*"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head;
and he fell to the ground and worshiped." (Job 1:20)*

Please note that Job is not whining or complaining. He is worshiping his God.

*"And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and
the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the
LORD.'" (Job 1:21)*

The LORD gave. The LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.

That is faith. That is the kind of trust in God that Satan said did not exist. That is the answer to Satan's accusation — and it came not from a sermon, not from a theological argument, but from a man sitting in the ashes of everything he had lost, choosing to bless the name of the LORD anyway.

And then comes the summary verse:

*"In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with
wrong." (Job 1:22)*

Job passed the test. He loved God not for what God gave him, but for who God is.

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THE SECOND CONFRONTATION

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But Satan was not finished.

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.'" (Job 2:1–2)

The same question. The same answer. And then God speaks:

"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.'" (Job 2:3)

Still. He still holds fast. After everything, Job has not moved. His faith has not cracked. Satan's accusation was wrong.

But Satan has one more card to play:

"So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!'" (Job 2:4–5)

Satan is saying: take his health. Touch his body. Let him feel the pain himself, and then we will see.

And God answered:

"And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.'" (Job 2:6)

Again, God is giving permission. But again, God is setting a limit. Satan can afflict Job's body, but he cannot take Job's life. God is in charge. Always.

"So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes." (Job 2:7–8)

Job was covered. Head to toe. The pain was unbearable. The humiliation complete. He sat in the ashes — the place of mourning, the place of the outcast — scraping his sores with a piece of broken pottery.

And then his wife spoke:

"Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!'" (Job 2:9)

I want you to hear what she is saying. She is not advising him out of cruelty. She is advising him out of despair. She is saying: this is hopeless. You have lost everything. You are in agony. Just let go. Curse God and be done with it.

But Job answered:

"But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10)

Shall we accept good from God and not accept adversity?

That is the question every believer must answer at some point in their life. Will you trust God only when things go well? Or will you trust Him when the bottom falls out and there is no explanation in sight?

Job chose the second path. And in all this — even with his body covered in boils, even sitting in ashes, even hearing his own wife tell him to curse God — Job did not sin with his lips.

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THE FRIENDS ARRIVE

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"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place — Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him." (Job 2:11)

These three men heard what had happened, and they came. That much is commendable. They dropped what they were doing. They traveled to be with Job. They came to mourn and to comfort.

But when they arrived, they could not believe what they saw:

"And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great." (Job 2:12–13)

Seven days and seven nights. Not a word. They sat in silence because the grief was too great for words.

That silence was a gift. If only they had kept it.

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JOB BREAKS THE SILENCE

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On the eighth day, Job spoke. And what came out of his mouth was not a curse against God. It was a lament over the day he was born.

*"After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job spoke, and said: 'May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, "A male child is conceived."'" (Job 3:1–3)*

Job did not curse God. He cursed the day of his birth. He wished he had never been born. He wished the night of his conception had been swallowed by darkness. He wished the morning stars had refused to shine on that day.

*"Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?" (Job 3:11–12)*

Job is asking: why was I allowed to live if this is what life was going to be?

But listen to what comes next:

*"For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; then I would have been at rest with kings and counselors of the earth." (Job 3:13–14)*

Job is not saying death is the end. He is saying death is rest. He knows — somehow, he knows — that there is a place beyond this life where the weary are at rest, where the wicked cease from troubling, where prisoners rest together and do not hear the voice of the oppressor.

Job believed in life after death. He believed in rest beyond the grave. That is faith. That is hope buried in the middle of the darkest lament in Scripture.

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## **WHAT WE HAVE SEEN IN SECTION ONE**

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Before we move forward, let us take stock of what these opening chapters have shown us.

We have seen that God Himself called Job blameless and upright — and that there was no one else like him on the earth.

We have seen that Satan acknowledged a hedge around Job, a wall of protection that Satan could not cross without God's permission.

We have seen that God allowed Satan to test Job — not to destroy him, but to prove that Job's faith was real.

We have seen that Job lost everything — his wealth, his children, his health — in a single day, and yet he did not curse God.

We have seen that Job's wife told him to curse God and die, and Job refused.

We have seen that Job's three friends came to comfort him, sat in silence for seven days, and then — as we will see in the chapters ahead — opened their mouths and became miserable comforters instead.

And we have seen that even in Job's deepest lament, there was a thread of hope. He knew that death was not the end. He knew there was rest beyond the grave.

The question we will wrestle with in the rest of this study is this: How do we hold fast to faith when everything we thought we understood about God has been shaken to the core?

Job is about to show us.

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## **SECTION TWO: THE FRIENDS SPEAK — AND WOUND DEEPER THAN SATAN EVER COULD**

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We have watched Job lose everything. His wealth. His children. His health. We have heard him lament the day of his birth — not cursing God, but wishing he had never been born. And we have seen his three friends sit with him in silence for seven days.

Now the silence ends. And what comes out of their mouths wounds Job more deeply than anything Satan did to him.

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### **ELIPHAZ: THE VOICE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

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Eliphaz the Temanite speaks first. And he begins gently:

*"Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: 'If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking? Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees.'" (Job 4:1–4)*

Eliphaz acknowledges that Job has been a teacher, a comforter, a man who strengthened others in their weakness. And then comes the knife:

*"But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; it touches you, and you are troubled. Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?" (Job 4:5–6)*

In other words: You taught others to trust God, but now that trouble has come to you, you cannot handle it. Where is your faith now, Job?

And then Eliphaz says something that will become the refrain of all three friends:

*"Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." (Job 4:7–8)*

They are saying the same thing that was said to Jesus on the cross:

*"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." (Matthew 27:42)*

Eliphaz's logic is simple and brutal: the innocent do not suffer. The upright are not cut off. If you are suffering this much, Job, it is because you have plowed iniquity and sown trouble. This is your harvest.

God always protects the righteous, Eliphaz is saying, so your troubles are evidence that you are not in God's favor. You must have done something really wrong.

We should know that is not always the case, since we are reading the story from both sides at the same time. We see God directing Satan, and Satan — because he is evil — doing everything he can to destroy Job. But Job's friends do not know that. They only see the suffering. And they assume the worst.

Eliphaz then describes a vision he had in the night — a spirit passing before his face, a voice asking: "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" (Job 4:17). He uses this vision to press his argument: Job, even angels are not trusted by God. How much less you?

And then he offers his counsel:

*"But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause — who does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number."  
(Job 5:8–9)*

Eliphaz concludes with this:

*"Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole." (Job 5:17–18)*

The message is clear: Job, accept your punishment. Confess your sin. Repent. And God will restore you.

There is only one problem with Eliphaz's entire speech. It is built on a lie.

Job has not sinned. God Himself said so. Twice.

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## **JOB ANSWERS: MISERABLE COMFORTERS**

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Job's response to Eliphaz — and to the other friends who will pile on in the chapters ahead — is both a defense of his integrity and a cry for understanding.

*"Then Job answered and said: 'I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all! Shall words of wind have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you; but I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief.'" (Job 16:1–5)*

Miserable comforters. That is what Job calls them. And he is right.

Job is saying: I could do what you are doing. I could sit here and accuse you and point out every possible sin in your life and tell you that your suffering is proof of your guilt. But I would not. I would strengthen you. I would comfort you.

That is the difference between Job and his friends. Job understands what real comfort looks like. His friends do not.

Job then makes a statement that reveals how clearly he understands what is happening to him:

*"I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; for now, O Ephraim, you commit harlotry; Israel is defiled. They do not direct their deeds toward turning*

*to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst,  
and they do not know the LORD." (Hosea 5:3–4)*

Wait. That is not Job. That is Hosea. Let me correct that.

Job says this:

*"God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me  
over to the hands of the wicked." (Job 16:11)*

Job knows what we have read from the beginning of the book. He knows that God has allowed Satan — the ungodly and wicked — to have his way with him. Job does not know why. He does not know about the heavenly conversation. But he knows the source of his suffering is not random.

*"I was at ease, but He has shattered me; He also has  
taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces; He has  
set me up for His target, His archers surround me. He  
pierces my heart and does not pity; He pours out my  
gall on the ground." (Job 16:12–13)*

Job feels targeted. He feels shattered. He feels like God Himself is shooting arrows at him. And yet — and this is critical — Job does not curse God. He cries out to God. He appeals to God. He trusts that somewhere, somehow, there is a reason for this.

And then Job says something that will echo through the rest of Scripture:

*"O earth, do not cover my blood, and let my cry have  
no resting place! Surely even now my witness is in  
heaven, and my evidence is on high. My friends scorn  
me; my eyes pour out tears to God. Oh, that one might  
plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his  
neighbor!" (Job 16:18–21)*

Job longs for a mediator. Someone who can stand between him and God. Someone who can plead his case.

He does not know it yet, but that mediator is coming. His name is Jesus.

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## **BILDAD AND ZOPHAR: MORE OF THE SAME**

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Bildad the Shuhite speaks next. His message is no different from Eliphaz's:

*"How long will you speak these things, and the words of your mouth be like a strong wind? Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice? If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression. If you would earnestly seek God and make your supplication to the Almighty, if you were pure and upright, surely now He would awake for you, and prosper your rightful dwelling place." (Job 8:2–6)*

If your sons sinned, Bildad says, that is why they died. If you were pure and upright, God would restore you.

The cruelty of that statement is hard to overstate. Bildad is telling Job that his children deserved to die.

Zophar the Naamathite follows with the same accusation:

*"Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be vindicated? Should your empty talk make men hold their peace? And when you mock, should no one rebuke you? For you have said,*

*'My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in your eyes.' But oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you, that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves." (Job 11:2–6)*

Zophar is saying: God is being merciful to you, Job. You deserve worse than this.

All three friends are united in their conclusion: Job is suffering because Job has sinned. The evidence is the suffering itself. And the solution is simple: confess, repent, and God will restore you.

The problem is that their entire theology is built on a half-truth. It is true that sin brings consequences. It is true that God disciplines His children. But it is not true that all suffering is the result of personal sin. And it is certainly not true that a man who is blameless and upright before God will never suffer.

Job is living proof that the righteous do suffer. And his friends cannot see it.

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## **JOB DEFENDS HIS INTEGRITY — AGAIN**

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Job answers his friends again and again. And every time, his message is the same: I have not sinned. I do not know why this is happening. But I will not lie and say I am guilty just to make your theology work.

*"Then Job answered and said: 'No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you.*

*Indeed, who does not know such things as these? I am one mocked by his friends, who called on God, and He answered him, the just and blameless who is ridiculed." (Job 12:1–4)*

Job is saying: you are not wiser than I am. You are just louder.

And then Job makes a statement that cuts to the heart of his friends' error:

*"Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him? Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? Will it be well when He searches you out? Or can you mock Him as one mocks a man?" (Job 13:7–9)*

Job is asking them: are you defending God, or are you defending your own theological system? Because if God searches you out — if He examines your motives — will you stand?

It is easy for us to judge when others are going through hard times. But Job cautions his friends that they too may have their day of judgment.

And then Job makes the declaration that defines his entire response to suffering:

*"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him." (Job 13:15–16)*

Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

That is unconditional faith. That is the faith Satan said did not exist. That is the faith God knew was there all along.

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## THE GREAT CONFESSION — JOB 19:25–27

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In the middle of chapter nineteen, after his friends have accused him again and again, after they have told him his children deserved to die and that he is getting off easy, after they have turned their backs on him and left him alone in his suffering — in the middle of all that darkness, Job makes the most remarkable statement in the entire book.

*"Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God." (Job 19:23–26)*

I know that my Redeemer lives.

This is one of the most remarkable statements in the Bible. Job — this ancient man, who existed before all the teachings of the Bible were written down, before Moses gave the Law, before the prophets spoke — knows that he has a Redeemer. And he knows that his Redeemer lives.

And most importantly, he knows that when all his problems on this earth are over, he will see God face to face. In his flesh. In his resurrected body.

All the detailed teachings of a Redeemer are yet to be revealed, but remember that God in the garden promised that He would send the seed of a woman to crush the head of Satan. He promised a Redeemer. And somehow, Job knows.

*"Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within*

*me!" (Job 19:27)*

Job's heart yearns for that day. The day when he will stand before God not as a defendant, but as a redeemed son.

That is the hope that carries Job through the rest of this book. That is the hope that silences every accusation his friends throw at him.

I know that my Redeemer lives.

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## **WHAT SECTION TWO HAS SHOWN US**

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In these chapters, we have seen the friends of Job become his accusers. They came to comfort him, but they became miserable comforters instead.

They assumed that all suffering is the result of sin. They assumed that because Job was suffering, Job must have sinned. And they assumed that their job was to convince Job to confess.

They were wrong on all counts.

Job was not suffering because he sinned. He was suffering because God trusted him enough to allow him to be tested. There is a difference. And that difference matters.

We have also seen Job hold fast to his integrity. He refused to lie. He refused to confess sins he did not commit. He refused to let his friends' theology dictate his reality.

And in the middle of it all, Job made the great confession that echoes through every generation: I know that my Redeemer lives.

That Redeemer is Jesus. And Job knew Him centuries before He was born.

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## SECTION THREE: ELIHU SPEAKS — AND GOD ARRIVES

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By the time we reach chapter thirty-two, Job has finished his defense. His three friends have fallen silent. They have accused him again and again, and every time Job has answered: I have not sinned. I do not know why this is happening, but I will not lie to make your theology work.

And then a fourth man speaks. His name is Elihu, and he has been waiting in the wings the entire time.

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### ELIHU: THE YOUNG MAN WHO SPEAKS

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*"So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had*

*condemned Job." (Job 32:1–3)*

Elihu is angry. He is angry at Job for justifying himself. And he is angry at the three friends for condemning Job without being able to answer him.

Notice that Elihu waited to speak because the other men were older than he was. He gave them the floor. He listened. And when they had nothing left to say, he stepped forward.

*"Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused. So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said: 'I am young in years, and you are very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, "Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice.'" (Job 32:4–9)*

Elihu is saying: I am young, but that does not mean I am wrong. Wisdom does not come automatically with age. It comes from the Spirit of God.

And then Elihu makes his case. He speaks for six chapters — longer than any of the three friends. And his message is fundamentally different from theirs.

Elihu does not accuse Job of specific sins. He does not tell Job that his children deserved to die. He does not say that Job is getting what he deserves.

Instead, Elihu says this: God is greater than man. God does not owe man an explanation. God speaks in ways we do not always perceive. And sometimes God uses suffering to keep a man from pride or to turn a man from his own way.

*"For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. In order to turn man from his deed, and conceal pride from man, He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." (Job 33:14–18)*

Elihu is closer to the truth than the other three friends. He understands that suffering can have a purpose beyond punishment. He understands that God can use pain to teach, to redirect, to humble.

But Elihu is still missing something. He assumes that Job needs correction. He assumes that Job's suffering is God's way of keeping Job from pride or sin. And that assumption, though more gracious than the others, is still wrong.

Job does not need correction. Job is blameless and upright. God said so.

Elihu concludes his speech with a declaration of God's greatness:

*"As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, in judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress. Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart." (Job 37:23–24)*

And then Elihu stops. And God speaks.

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## THE LORD ANSWERS FROM THE WHIRLWIND

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*"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 'Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?'" (Job 38:1–2)*

God is speaking. Not to the three friends who accused Job. Not to Elihu who spoke longest. God is speaking directly to Job.

And His first question is pointed: Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

God is not rebuking Job for sin. He is rebuking Job for speaking about things he does not understand. Job has been demanding an audience with God. Job has been insisting that God answer him. And now God has arrived — not with an explanation, but with a series of questions.

*"Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:3–7)*

God is saying: Job, before you question Me, let Me ask you a few things. Where were you when I made the earth? Do you know how I did it? Can you explain it?

Of course Job cannot. And that is the point.

God continues with question after question. About the sea. About the dawn. About the gates of death. About light and darkness. About snow and hail. About the constellations. About rain and frost and ice. About the animals — the lion, the raven, the mountain goat, the deer, the wild donkey, the wild ox.

*"Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?" (Job 38:33)*

These are the deep questions that even science today cannot fully answer. And God is asking them not to humiliate Job, but to reorient him.

Job has been asking: Why is this happening to me?

God is answering: Do you understand anything about how I run the universe? Do you know how a single blade of grass grows, or how a sparrow finds its nest, or why the morning comes exactly when it does?

No?

Then perhaps you should trust that I know what I am doing with your life, even if you do not understand it.

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## **BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN**

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In chapters forty and forty-one, God turns Job's attention to two creatures. The first is called behemoth:

*"Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you; he eats grass like an ox. See now, his strength is in his hips, and his power is in his stomach muscles.*

*He moves his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are like beams of bronze, his ribs like bars of iron." (Job 40:15–18)*

A tail like a cedar. That is not an elephant. That is not a hippopotamus. Many scholars believe this is a dinosaur — a massive land animal that Job would have known about, either from personal observation or from the stories passed down from those who lived closer to the time of Noah.

The second creature is called leviathan:

*"Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, or snare his tongue with a line which you lower? Can you put a reed through his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?" (Job 41:1–2)*

Leviathan is described as a fire-breathing sea creature with impenetrable armor. No weapon can pierce it. No fisherman can catch it. No army can defeat it.

*"Out of his mouth go burning lights; sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke goes out of his nostrils, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth." (Job 41:19–21)*

This is not a crocodile. This is not a whale. This is something far more terrifying — and God is the one who made it.

God's point is clear: Job, you cannot control the creatures I have made. You cannot bind behemoth. You cannot catch leviathan. You cannot even understand them. So how can you presume to question Me?

*"No one is so fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who then is able to stand against Me?" (Job 41:10)*

If no one can stand against leviathan, then who can stand against the God who made leviathan?

That is the question God is asking Job. And it is the question He is asking all of us.

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## **JOB'S ANSWER**

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After God finishes speaking, Job responds. And his response is not what we might expect.

*"Then Job answered the LORD and said: 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.'" (Job 40:4–5)*

I am vile. I have nothing to say. I am done speaking.

But God is not finished. He speaks again, this time with even greater intensity:

*"Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?" (Job 40:7–8)*

God is asking: Job, are you really willing to say that I am wrong so that you can be right?

And Job answers again:

*"Then Job answered the LORD and said: 'I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, "Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?" Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, "I will question you, and you shall answer Me." I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'" (Job 42:1-6)*

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

That is the turning point. Job has been hearing about God his entire life. He has been offering sacrifices to God. He has been teaching his children about God. But now — after everything he has lost, after everything he has suffered, after all the questions and all the pain — now he sees God.

Not with physical eyes. Not in a vision. But in a way that is more real than anything he has ever experienced.

And when Job sees God, he does not repent of sin. He repents of presumption. He repents of thinking he could comprehend or question God's ways.

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## **GOD REBUKES THE FRIENDS**

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After Job repents, God turns His attention to the three friends who accused Job throughout the entire ordeal:

*"And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.'" (Job 42:7)*

Finally, the Lord sets them straight.

God is angry with them. They accused Job of sin. They told him his children deserved to die. They said he was getting off easy. And all of it was wrong.

Job, the man they condemned, had spoken rightly about God. They had not.

*"Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." (Job 42:8)*

God tells them to go to Job — the man they accused — and ask him to pray for them. Because only through Job's intercession will God accept them.

Think about what that means. Job, who had every reason to hold a grudge against these men, is asked to pray for them. And the text tells us he did:

*"So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job." (Job 42:9)*

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## THE RESTORATION

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And then comes the most beautiful verse in the entire book:

*"And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." (Job 42:10)*

When he prayed for his friends. Not before. Not when he complained. Not when he demanded answers. But when he prayed for the men who had wounded him.

That is grace. That is the heart of God.

*"Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters." (Job 42:11–13)*

Double the wealth. Ten new children. And one hundred and forty more years of life.

*"After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days." (Job 42:16–17)*

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## WHAT SECTION THREE HAS SHOWN US

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In this final section, we have seen Elihu speak — closer to the truth than the other friends, but still missing the mark.

We have seen God arrive in the whirlwind and ask Job questions he could not answer — not to humiliate him, but to reorient him.

We have seen Job repent of presumption and say: I have heard of You, but now I see You.

We have seen God rebuke the three friends and command them to ask Job to pray for them.

And we have seen God restore everything Job lost — double — when Job prayed for his accusers.

The book of Job does not answer the question "Why do the righteous suffer?" with a theological formula. It answers it with a Person. God Himself shows up. And when God shows up, the questions do not disappear — but they stop mattering.

Job does not need to know why. He needs to know who. And now he does.

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## CONCLUSION: WHAT JOB TEACHES EVERY GENERATION

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We have walked through one of the oldest books in the Bible. We have sat with Job in the ashes. We have heard his friends accuse him. We have listened to God speak from the whirlwind. And we have watched Job be restored.

Now let us step back and ask: What does this ancient story teach us today?

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## **SUFFERING IS NOT ALWAYS PUNISHMENT**

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The first and most important lesson of the book of Job is this: suffering is not always the result of sin.

Job's three friends believed it was. They had a theology that said: the righteous prosper, the wicked suffer. If you are suffering, it is because you are wicked. Confess and God will restore you.

That theology is simple. It is tidy. And it is wrong.

God Himself declared Job blameless and upright. Job's suffering was not punishment. It was a test. And there is a difference.

God tests the righteous to refine them. He allows trials to prove that faith is real. He permits the hedge to be lowered so that the world — and Satan himself — can see that some people love God not for what He gives, but for who He is.

If you are suffering today, do not assume it is because you have sinned. It may be that God trusts you enough to let you be tested. It may be that He is refining you like gold in the fire. And one day, when

the test is over, you will come forth brighter than you went in.

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## **SATAN HAS NO POWER EXCEPT WHAT GOD ALLOWS**

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The second lesson of Job is this: Satan is on a leash.

Satan could not touch Job until God gave permission. Even then, God set limits. Satan could take Job's possessions, but not his life. Satan could afflict Job's body, but not kill him. Satan had to ask. And God had to answer.

That is the picture throughout Scripture. Satan is real. He is powerful. He is malicious. But he is not sovereign. He is not in control. He cannot do anything unless God permits it.

And when God permits suffering, it is never random. It is never pointless. It is always purposeful — even when we cannot see the purpose.

The hedge around Job was real. And there is a hedge around you. Satan cannot cross it without permission. And if God grants that permission, it is because He has a reason — and because He knows you can bear it.

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## **THE REDEEMER LIVES**

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The third lesson — and perhaps the most glorious — is this: Job knew something that most of his generation did not know.

He knew he had a Redeemer. And he knew his Redeemer lived.

*"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God." (Job 19:25–26)*

Job lived before Moses. Before the Law. Before the prophets. Before a single word of Scripture was written down. And yet he knew — somehow, he knew — that death was not the end. That his body would be raised. That he would see God face to face.

That Redeemer is Jesus. And Job's hope is our hope.

We do not serve a God who is distant and indifferent. We serve a God who came near. Who took on flesh. Who died on a cross and rose from the dead. Who defeated death and the grave. Who promised that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Job believed that before it happened. And we believe it because it did.

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## **GOD OWES US NO EXPLANATIONS — BUT HE GIVES US HIMSELF**

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The fourth lesson is this: God never told Job why.

God never explained the heavenly conversation. He never said: Job, Satan accused you, and I allowed him to test you to prove him wrong. God never gave Job the backstory. He never justified Himself.

Instead, God showed up. And He asked Job questions Job could not answer. And in doing so, He reminded Job of something far more important than an explanation.

He reminded Job of who He is.

God is the Creator of the universe. He laid the foundations of the earth. He set the boundaries of the sea. He commands the morning. He knows the ordinances of the heavens. He made behemoth and leviathan. He feeds the lions and the ravens. He watches over the mountain goats and the wild donkeys.

If God can do all of that — and if He does it perfectly, without fail, every single day — then perhaps Job can trust Him with the one thing Job does not understand.

That is the answer to suffering. Not an explanation. A Person.

God does not owe us answers. But He gives us Himself. And that is enough.

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## **INTERCESSION OPENS THE DOOR TO RESTORATION**

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The fifth lesson is one we must not miss: Job was restored when he prayed for his friends.

Not when he complained. Not when he demanded justice. Not when he defended himself. But when he interceded for the men who had wounded him.

*"And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed  
for his friends." (Job 42:10)*

There is a principle here that runs through all of Scripture. Forgiveness opens the door to blessing. Intercession precedes restoration. Praying for those who wrong us breaks the power of bitterness and opens our hearts to receive what God wants to give.

Job had every reason to hold a grudge against his three friends. They accused him. They mocked him. They told him his children deserved to die. And yet, when God commanded them to go to Job and ask him to pray, Job prayed.

And God restored him.

If you are waiting for restoration, ask yourself: Is there someone I need to pray for? Is there someone I need to forgive? Is there a grudge I am holding that is keeping me from receiving what God wants to give?

Let it go. Pray for them. And watch what God does.

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## **THE TESTED FAITH IS THE REFINED FAITH**

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The sixth and final lesson is this: when God tests you, He is not trying to destroy you. He is trying to refine you.

Job said it himself:

*"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested  
me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)*

Gold is refined by fire. The heat does not ruin the gold — it purifies it. It burns away the impurities. It makes the gold stronger, brighter, more

valuable than it was before.

That is what God was doing with Job. And that is what He does with every believer He trusts enough to test.

Satan thought the fire would destroy Job. God knew it would refine him.

And when Job came out the other side, he was not the same man. He was better. Deeper. Wiser. More fully convinced of who God is and who he was in God's eyes.

The fire did not destroy Job. It made him gold.

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## **A FINAL WORD**

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The book of Job is not easy to read. It is raw. It is honest. It does not give us tidy answers or simple formulas.

But it gives us something far more valuable. It gives us a picture of a man who lost everything and held fast to God anyway. A man who was accused by his friends and vindicated by his God. A man who cried out for a Redeemer and somehow knew — centuries before it happened — that his Redeemer lived.

That Redeemer is Jesus. And the hope Job clung to in the darkness is the hope we cling to today.

If you are in the middle of your own test — if you have lost what you thought you could not lose, if your friends have become your accusers, if you are sitting in the ashes wondering where God is — I want you to hear what Job heard.

God is not absent. He is refining you. He is testing you. And when the test is over, you will come forth as gold.

Hold fast. Do not let go. Though He slay you, trust Him. Because your Redeemer lives. And one day — in your flesh — you will see Him.

That is the promise of the book of Job. And that promise is for you.

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# END OF A STUDY OF JOB

By Robert J. Neral

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