

# Answers to the BIG Questions of Life from Genesis and Job, Part 3

## *This is the last of our series on Answers to the Big Questions of life*

- We've talked about why we are here, how Satan attempts to destroy us, but fails when we rely on God to help and finally, we established the truth that there is life after death.
- In addition, Jesus himself said that the only way to this life was through Him, which brings us to . . .
- **Our next question, *What about people who haven't heard about Jesus?***
- If He is the only way to eternal life, the answer to this question is critically important.
- It's also one that worries many and causes others to doubt the fairness of God.

## **Here is how the book of Job helps with an answer**

- It is true that no one gets into heaven without acknowledging and trusting Jesus as Savior but as for those who we assume "haven't heard" —
- ***How do we know who hasn't heard? How do we know what God has revealed to them?***
- Job reminds us that Bible does not tell us the story of all humanity.
- Our Bible is primarily focused on telling us a narrow part of the human story, primarily that of a chosen people, the Jewish people in the land of Israel, whose history leads to the birth of the Messiah, Jesus and then continues with the Church in the New Testament.
- The Bible is the story of how God narrows his focus from all humanity to one group who will become the Jewish nation, and who will by their history show plan of salvation to the world.

## **What's important to understand about Job—is that he isn't part of that story**

- Job was not a part of the chosen people; he was not a Jew or part of Abraham's line. He lived sometime after the flood, but before Moses.
- Yet he offered correct sacrifices and worshipped the true God.
- He was called "blameless" by God; he lived his life to please God.
- Job spoke of God as his Redeemer; he believed in an afterlife; he believed in moral accountability in accord with the standards later revealed explicitly in scripture.
- God personally intervened in his life and after his trials restored him.
- Though Job's friends made some incorrect accusations and conclusions, it is obvious that all of them believed in Jehovah God also.
- ***But neither Job or his friends were Jews, nothing else that we know for sure (though there are random speculations that cannot be proven) of their story is told before or after this book.***

## **Job isn't our only glimpse of God at work in unexpected places**

- We see many little pictures in the Bible of God's saving involvement in the lives of those who were not part of the "chosen people." For example:
- **Jonah** was sent to preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh, one of the most-cruel pagan nations of the time. We know many in Nineveh, repented in response to one of the shortest sermons ever preached with one of the worst

attitudes, where Jonah simply went around the city shouting, “40 days from now and Nineveh will be destroyed” (Jonah 3). Many responded and came to know God.

#### **Then there are the stories of—**

- **Rahab**—a woman of ill-repute who was part of a nation God said to destroy totally because of their idolatry. Yet she knew about God and His power. She risked her life to hide the Jewish spies and becomes an ancestor of Jesus.
- **Naaman**, commander of the army of the king of Aram, people who were enemies and oppressors of Israel. His household servant, a captured slave, persuaded him to go to Israel for healing, which he did, and in the process acknowledged a trust in the true God.
- I think it is reasonable to believe from the stories of Job, Rahab, and Naaman that God was at work in the lives of many in Old Testament times that we know nothing about.

#### **In the New Testament & today**

- We have no idea of what happened to the many thousands as the book of Acts says came “from every nation under heaven” who heard the story of Jesus at Pentecost that Peter preached after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension into heaven and who then went home to share that message.
- We read the story later in Acts of the Ethiopian eunuch, who the Apostle Phillip found reading the book of Isaiah and whose heart was open to the gospel and who responded by being baptized and then returned to Ethiopia.
- Today we hear many stories of Jesus appearing in dreams to Muslims whose faith prepares them for visions. Also, we hear reports from missionaries, who go to isolated people who somehow know about Jesus, a son of God who is a Savior, though He may have a different name.
- I imagine there are many more stories that we won’t hear until we rejoice over them in heaven, but Job gives a glimpse and assurance that God is involved in much we cannot see.

#### **In conclusion, the answer to the question**

- ***What about people who haven’t heard about Jesus as the only way to eternal life?***
- The answer is Two-fold;
- ***First, how do you know about those you have no contact with?***
- Trust God for them and yet we are not without responsibility. Pray for and support missionaries. Go on short-term mission trips or consider online evangelism.
- **GREAT RESOURCE--<https://searchforjesus.net/>**
- ***Second, for those you know—tell them.***
- There are many ways to do that today—personally, through social media, invite to a group.
- Bible805.com has podcasts and videos about what it means to become a Christian, check out ***The Story of the Bible is Good News, the good news of salvation in Jesus***—pass it on!
- The program, ***Christianity Explored*** for a group experience to share Jesus is highly recommended.

#### **Let’s now narrow down to the focus of why most people read Job**

- ***#5 Why do innocent people suffer? Implied question, is why am I suffering?***
- ***#6 How can we help people who are suffering?***

- Now we'll look at how the book of Job helps answer these questions.

### **First, let's see if Job fits the description of an innocent person suffering.**

- In c1 of Job, God said Job was blameless. Looking at Job's life as recorded in the rest of the book tells us what God considers a blameless life to be.
- See chapters 23, 29, 31, for specifics on what made him blameless before God, but in summary, Job did these things:
- ***Treasured God's words, helped the poor, counseled others, wept for those in need, sexually pure, just to the least, did not trust in money, did not rejoice over enemy's misfortune, he was host to strangers, he did not conceal his sin.***
- In summary he put into practice Micah 6:8 in that he did justly, loved mercy (kindness), walked humbly with his God.
- God's requirements don't change—personal godliness and caring for the less fortunate and the stranger are always important—these things define a blameless person.
- Job certainly fit into the category of an innocent suffering person as many do who suffer today.

### **If Job did what God wanted**

- Why didn't God continue to bless him? According to Job's friends obviously Job quit obeying God and so he was punished, right?
- ***WRONG! WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND how wrong this thinking is because this idea that you do something and then God will automatically do something is what we often hear today.***
- ***But it is incorrect. It is a transactional view of our relationship with God. God does not act that way—I'll explain it in more detail.***
- This view which often comes up in "health and wealth" and "name it and claim it teachings" is often proof-texted (which means pulling a verse out of context to prove something is in the Bible) by verses in Job.
- Pulling verses out of context to make them support a non-Biblical teaching is a huge problem, particularly today when many people don't read the ENTIRE Bible as they should, let alone the context of a book or passage.

### **Let's look at the context of the book of Job**

- We know in Job that what he was suffering was instigated by Satan. God has told us that, so we know that the reason for some suffering is because of spiritual warfare we don't see.
- Yet we struggle to explain it in human terms and the recorded arguments from Job's friends echo our concerns. Why are they in the Bible? What are we supposed to learn from them? Hang in there, the answer is complicated.
- ***To understand this, you need to read the whole book as you do any book because sometimes it isn't until the end all the pieces fit together. This is especially true in a book like Job because Job is part of what is called Wisdom Literature.***
- ***When reading Wisdom Literature, you must read all the book, the entire book, beginning to end, carefully to understand the argument and then the all-important conclusion at the end of the book.***
- The book of Ecclesiastics is similar in that after many chapters of confused thinking, it ends with, "the conclusion of the matter is this—fear God and keep His command." Obviously, Solomon did not do that and though he had every earthly thing, he had forfeited a life of peaceful obedience to God—back to Job.

Here is the conclusion you need to keep in mind

- At the end of the book of Job in Job 42:7 it says, ***“After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.’”***
- You must keep this in mind when you read the statements and arguments of Job’s friends. Their statements sound so good, so sensible.
- ***But God’s summary of their arguments is that they were not true.***
- ***YOU MUST read their comments with this in mind.***
- ***This is so important because the arguments from Job’s friends are the same ones people use today when someone is suffering. When you hear them remember, God said they are false.***
- Here is an example of what sounds good but is very wrong....

Here is a typical statement from Job’s friends

- *Job 22: 21 “Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.*  
*22 Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart.*  
*23 If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored:*  
*If you remove wickedness far from your tent . . . .*  
*27 You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows.*  
*28 What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways.*  
Job 22:21-30 New International Version (NIV)
- You may want to nod in agreement, until ***you remember that God said their words (taken as a whole), and their conclusions, were NOT TRUE.***
- What is wrong with them? Shouldn’t we submit to God, be at peace with Him, return to Him? Yes, of course we should—that isn’t the problem.
- ***Part of what they said was correct, but their conclusion was wrong.***
- ***The problem is that by doing what we are supposed to do, humans do not obligate God to respond in the way a human thinks God should.***

Again, this view of suffering and reward is an incorrect *transactional view of humanity’s relationship to God*

- Without thinking, this is how many people believe God acts today—in part because it is promoted by some teachers, writers, and churches.
- But it is wrong and ultimately disappointing because it doesn’t work, and because it isn’t true to how God truly works.
- Job’s friends believed Job sinned and he deserved to be punished. If he quit sinning everything would work out well.
- They believed evil is punished and good is rewarded by prosperity—***on a continuous basis in this life.***
- ***“Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored” Job 22: 21-23***
- ***God did not validate this belief then and he doesn’t today—this is prosperity gospel preaching—you do this, God will do that—NO!***
- We do not obligate God to do anything for us because we obey Him. He is our Creator and God, and we owe him our obedience, ***regardless of what He does for us. But was not a popular view then and it isn’t now.***

Much more is going on than we can see

- We are not guaranteed simple answers to the trials and troubles of this life.
- The answer as to why things happen is NOT a baptized version of karma, not a transactional view of God, where we do certain things and God will

respond in a certain way. God is not a genie under our control.

- If we are honest, we don't like this. We scream it isn't fair!
- **BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE IN CONTROL.**
- We want to control God by our actions; we want to think that if we do this, He is supposed to do that, we want Him as OUR puppet.
- But it simply doesn't work out that way.
- It didn't for Job, and it won't for us.
- Ultimately, we have no idea why there is the suffering in a particular situation, though Job shows us there is much more going on. Let's look at some of the areas....

### **Spiritual warfare is a reality**

- Ephesians 6 tells us *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*
- Somehow, we are part of it; somehow the troubles of this world are part of it and as part of it we know that in our trials....
- We are being watched by God and angels and demons.
- What we do in our lives and trials matters, perhaps far more than we can imagine.
- ***And in this life, we will probably know nothing about that aspect of it—though sometimes we might get a sense of it.***
- As you read in the end of Job, ***God never answered his questions***, he never knew from an earthly view what happened in heaven that caused his trials.
- With this in mind, we go to our next observation:

### **Sometimes it is only through trials or pruning that we grow in our Christian lives**

- The Psalmist says, *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word" Ps.119:67.*
- "In John 15 it tells us that Jesus is the true vine and those branches of believers that abide in Him and bear fruit ***will be pruned back***. Pruning results in more fruit and good, healthy growth. Bible commentator John Trapp (1601-1669) said, 'If it be painful to bleed, it is worse to wither. Let me be pruned, that I may grow, rather than be cut up to burn. All who know Christ will suffer.'" *"What Does It Really Mean to Know Christ?"* Ruth Celence
- I can't think of a single Bible character who was used by God in a significant way that had an easy life.
- Not that we want to intentionally punish ourselves, but I think C.S. Lewis has some great advice here and I don't think it applies only to this example.

### **"Does it pinch?"**

- When he was asked about how much people should give, his answer was something along the lines of. . . .
- If our expenditures, our lifestyle, our indulgences are the same as those of our economic peers, we may want to consider our lives.
- He summed it up by saying that to him the correct amount to give was that it ought to "pinch."
- I think that is excellent advice for all areas of life—if our giving, our service to the Lord and others does not "pinch" in some way, we might want to spend some time in self-evaluation. We ought not to expect a life lived as Jesus' disciple to not cost us in some way.
- Don't be surprised when trials come, when pruning is part of your life, when

it begins to pinch.

- A world-class athlete goes through very strict training, self-denial. A couch potato eats what he wants, does what he wants.
- God is in the process of forming you as his eternal disciple—you have no idea of how He might want to use you or what glorious task he is preparing you to do.

#### **Live your life so God can say of you**

- As He did of Job, *“Have you seen my servant Bill or Emily or whoever you are....”* and use YOU as an example to Satan—
- Because you are doing all you know how to do to please your God and grow in your relationship to Him.
- And you aren’t selfish about it as Job wasn’t—the needs of our world are immense, and the challenge is to determine before the Lord what HE wants you to do to give of yourself and your resources to meet those needs.
- Part of that might be taking the time to help those who are hurting which leads to our final question.....

#### **Question #6 How can we help people who are suffering (ourselves included)?**

- Share what I previously talked about. One of the best things you can give a suffering ***friend is the truth that the Christian life is not a transactional exercise of be good and get goodies; be bad and get smacked.***
- ***Share instead an eternal perspective that God is in control and will work out all things one day.*** That may not always help in the moment, but it is a core truth. People will come back to it when nothing else makes sense.
- Don’t be a miserable counselor or one who condemns or judges – WE NEVER KNOW why or what God is doing in another’s life.
- The person suffering may be greatly honored by God with this trial.
- Even if they are going through a time of discipline, let God do it, don’t pile on, don’t shoot the wounded.
- Follow Job’s advice here. *“To the one in despair, kindness should come from his friend even if he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.”* Job 6:14,15, NET
- Be kind and pray for others for strength and wisdom and trust in God.

#### **Remind them (and yourself) that just because God is in control, does not mean it will get better in this life**

- Though ultimate healing and blessing are guaranteed—***timing is not.***
- ***We will be healed and blessed, maybe on this earth, maybe not.***
- It did get better for Job and for Joseph.
- It didn’t get better for Jeremiah or the Apostle Paul or for many of the unnamed heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11.
- Or for Jesus.
- It didn’t get better for Moses from an earthly viewpoint. After 40 years of exile, after answering God’s call to lead Israel out of Egypt he spent 40 years babysitting a quarreling, unthankful, constantly complaining group of people, and then he does not get to go into the Promised Land because he loses his temper.
- I think God gave him the story of Job ahead of time as a comfort in this.

#### **Advice on what to do in the midst of trials**

- Do not wait “until” anything (for the pain to go away, for things to get better, for more money, health, whatever) before you:
- ***Express THANKS***—not “for” but “in” all circumstances—make it a discipline. Affirm you serve a good God. Out loud.

- **Give up a sin**—sometimes we aren't aware of what's wrong until trials come—evaluate and then take action.  
*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. Ps. 119:67*
- *Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want. . . . Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. 1 Pet.4:1a-2,7MSG*
- Sometimes it takes a smack on the head to get us to pay attention to what is truly important, and trials can do that.

#### **Pray for wisdom on how to respond when in a trial**

- Take the advice of this verse: *James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*
- We need wisdom in the midst of trials, so ask for it with these questions for yourself and use the same questions already discussed in how to help another person going through the trials—
- ***Am I doing something wrong? If nothing is revealed, ask for peace.***
- ***What do you want me to change? When it's clear, obey.***
- ***What have I missed in this situation, in making this decision, or taking this course of action? Hurry is seldom the answer.***
- And sometimes, ***What are you protecting me from?***
- From boyfriends to business opportunities—God always knows what is best. What might seem like a trial can be a blessing if we wait and ask for insight.

#### **Study the Bible—**

- Get a correct, a true view of how God works.
- You will **ONLY** learn the truth of how God works from ***reading the entire Bible*** and learning it well, thinking about, and intentionally developing your relationship with the Lord.
- Don't just act from hearsay about God.
- Observe in the Bible how others lived in trying times, we'll see great stories coming up in Joseph's life, David's, and many other Old Testament characters as we go through the Bible.
- Study the whole Bible so you don't have false expectations, but true hope as you come to see God's long-term plans for his people.

#### **One more suggestion if you are the one hurting**

- **Don't give up when hard times come.**
- Don't confirm Satan's accusation that you only serve God when things are going well.
- Acknowledge that God is good, faithful, and in control even if it is difficult to see now.
- Shake your fist and scream at the heavens that you believe and trust God—maybe through tears or pain—but let the hosts of heaven know.
- And quietly and in faith, continue to trust God and put one foot in front of the other each day.

**In closing, let's review what we learned from Job in answering the *Big Questions of Life***

- #1 How did we get here? ***God created us and all there is.***
- #2 What messed things up? ***Humanity in turning away from God; believing Satan rather than God.***  
Sub question: Who is Satan and what power does he have? ***A created being under God's control, but for now causing pain and suffering, constantly accusing believers.***
- #3 Is there life after death? ***YES! It is clearly taught from Job and Genesis to Revelation. Please see lesson "Life After Death" for more.***
- #4 What about people who have never heard of Jesus? ***We don't know what they have heard, but we do know God is at work in many ways we know nothing about. Tell who we can; pray for all.***
- #5 Why do innocent people suffer? ***Many reasons we don't understand, but we know all suffering is under God's control and no suffering for a believer in Jesus will last forever.***
- #6 How can we help people who are suffering? ***Be kind, be honest, encourage them to develop an eternal, not transactional view of God.***

**Concluding thoughts, underscoring key teachings**

- It is incredibly important for us, as it was for Moses to understand these truths as we go through the Bible and life. I think Moses needed Job's story before he could serve for 40+ years in the situation he did.
- We need them to live what is ahead. We live in a tremendously difficult time now and chances are there will be even more challenging trials ahead.
- GOD does not interact with us on a transactional basis of if we do this, He is NOT guaranteed to do what we want when we want Him to.
- God will do as He chooses even if it involves temporary suffering— and temporary might mean the rest of your life. But remember, in light of eternity what a tiny time that is.
- Spiritual warfare is a reality that is pervasive, unrelenting, and somehow involves us, though God is always in control.
- God's will for us and what happens to us goes beyond this life.
- And His will and plans for us are good.
- We may not get a personal vision of God as Job did, but we see Him in his Word and in His Word....

**He promises—**

- *In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*
- *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Revelation 21:4*
- *Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Ps.23:6*
- Keep in mind the lessons of Job, the long view of the trials, and be assured that at the end of it all, with joy complete, we **will** have all our questions answered, our hearts will be at peace, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

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# **DISCUSSION GUIDE for Answers to the BIG Questions of Life from Genesis and Job, Part 3**

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## **Brief Lesson Summary**

In this final lesson in the Genesis and Job series, we explore three important questions: What about people who have never heard of Jesus? Why do innocent people suffer? How can we help people who are suffering?

Through the story of Job and examples throughout the Bible, we see that God is at work in ways we often cannot see or fully understand. We learn that God does not relate to us on a simple transactional basis where obedience guarantees earthly prosperity. Instead, God is sovereign, spiritual warfare is real, suffering can serve purposes beyond our understanding, and God's ultimate plans extend into eternity. We are called to trust Him, help others with kindness and wisdom, and maintain an eternal perspective in both suffering and service.

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## **Ice-breaker Question**

Have you ever gone through a difficult situation that only made sense to you much later? What did you learn from it?

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## **Discussion Questions for a Group; Journal Questions for Individual Study**

1. What does the story of Job teach us about God's work among people who are outside the main biblical narrative of Israel and the Jewish nation?
2. Why do you think many people are attracted to the idea that if we obey God, He is obligated to bless us in specific ways? How does the book of Job challenge that belief?
3. What are some reasons suffering may occur in the life of a faithful believer according to this lesson and the Bible?

4. How does understanding spiritual warfare help us view difficult circumstances differently?
  
5. What practical advice from this lesson stood out to you for responding to your own trials and difficulties?
  
6. According to Job and this lesson, what are some helpful and unhelpful ways to respond to people who are suffering?

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### **Life Application Suggestions, consider and respond**

1. Evaluate whether your relationship with God has become transactional. Are you serving Him because He is worthy of worship, or primarily because of what you hope to receive?
  
2. When facing a trial this week, intentionally thank God in the midst of the situation and ask Him for wisdom rather than immediate answers.
  
3. Identify one person who may be struggling and encourage them through kindness, listening, prayer, or practical help.
  
4. Commit to reading the Bible regularly so your understanding of God is shaped by His Word rather than by popular opinions or isolated verses.

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### **Prayer Focus**

Pray for a deeper trust in God's wisdom and sovereignty, especially during difficult times. Ask God to help you develop an eternal perspective, to give wisdom in trials, and to make you a source of encouragement and kindness to those who are suffering. Pray also for people who have not yet heard the message of Jesus and for those who are sharing the gospel around the world.