

## *Discussion Questions*

### ~ Looking Back on Lesson Three ~

- 1) From Psalm 33 we read about where our hope and trust should be. Daily we can be challenged to actually live like we place our trust in God. How did you respond on page 108 and how has reading through these Psalms encouraged you to be more steadfast in your hope?
- 2) As a group, read aloud Psalm 33:20-22. What do you think it means that God's love/mercy/lovingkindness rests on us?
- 3) Have you ever heard someone say that they couldn't be a Christian because "Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites?" Maybe you've even felt that way yourself. In light of your answers on page 113, how would taking God at His word and making God's word a priority in your life change this perception? Do you think it would? Why or why not?
- 4) What verse or verses did you commit to memory from Psalm 119? If you didn't memorize a verse, which verse from this Psalm spoke to your heart the most? Refer to page 115 in your study.
- 5) On page 119, I shared the story of the woman who thought that the bad things happening in her life were because God was punishing her. Maybe you relate? What did you read from Psalm 25 that encouraged you or that you could share with a discouraged friend? (I'm soooooo excited for our upcoming study in Job!! We're reeeeeally going to break down this whole misconception about suffering and punishment! When you get back to the big room in a few minutes, I'll give you a little preview...but seriously, I'm soooooo excited to do Job with you!) 😊
- 6) The Songs of Ascent...did you love these? I really enjoyed writing these study days for us! The beginning of this section I really just wanted you to write, write, write God's words. Which verse from pages 123 – 125 most spoke to your heart and what you're going through right now?
- 7) On pages 126-127 I shared about my husband's recovery from alcoholism and abusive behavior. He had been a "church husband" and a "home husband." In deliverance we have both found so much joy. Which phrases stood out to you from chapters 123-132 that you wrote down on page 127?

## "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

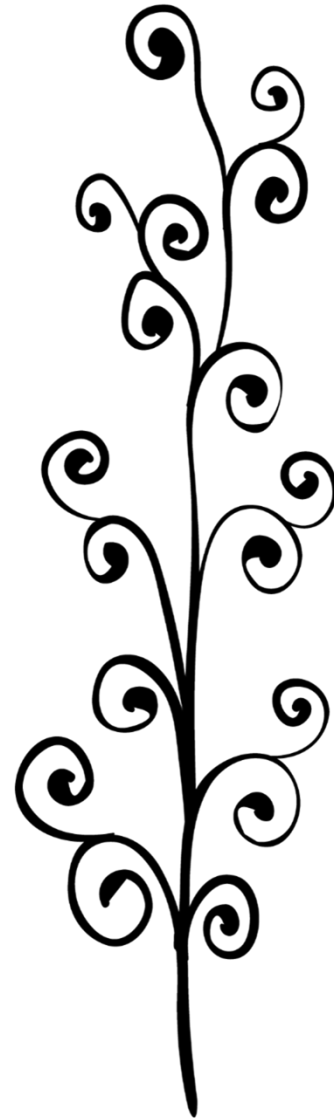
by Edward Mote, 1797-1874

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,  
I rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, His covenant, and blood  
Support me in the whelming flood;  
When every earthly prop gives way,  
He then is all my Hope and Stay.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh, may I then in Him be found,  
Clothed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne!  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.



# Hope Study Teaching Notes

Chapter Three Review: A Study in the Psalms: Wrestling and our Hope



# ~ Lesson Four Introduction ~

Scripture Focus: Job

*Can I be honest with you?* The book of Job has always troubled me. I've heard it told and read it many times over my years as a Christian. I've heard sermons about it, read books about it, listened to college professors teach about it but, the thought that God allowed Satan to torment Job to this degree has not settled well with me. As someone who takes God at His Word and who believes that this account is an historic truth, I have always ached trying to come to terms with its content. In addition, it is one of the most hotly contested books in the Bible. From Jewish sages over three millennia to Protestant, Catholic and even secular scholars, debates have carried on about the historical evidence of Job, the Hebrew language used, when it was written, by whom, etc. It's not an easy book to work through both from a basic understanding as well as an academic approach. So, I've tried to avoid it. There. I said it.

*And as I prepared this study on hope,* I was tempted to continue to ignore this book and simply find other Scripture to work through that would point us to hope. But my studies kept bringing me back to Job. I realized I couldn't be intellectually or spiritually or even emotionally honest if I couldn't dig into this story and really face it. It's the most devastating story I've ever read. I really wanted to be able to learn about God's truth about hope without having to grapple with Job and what Satan, with God's permission was allowed to do. I didn't want to deal with Job's "miserable comforters" and their flawed advice. Sigh.

*But I kept having to come back* to Job and ultimately I realized that if I wanted to be able to pastor and teach other women, I needed to be honest with my own issues here and face this tough book. You can call me the "reluctant pastor" now because I reeeeeeally wanted to ignore Job. But the more I ignored it the more I felt God calling me into it. And so, I obeyed. I read Job cover to cover a dozen times prepping for this portion of our study and here we are. Here you are. This is not a scholarly approach. I'm not well-versed enough in textual criticism to even attempt that. And besides, you want a Bible study, not university level exegesis and analysis, right? Phew. Me too.

*I know that God* wants us to dig in here and really be willing – or sort of willing as in my case – to face hard truths in His word. I'm not smiling as I am writing this. I'm actually crying. This was not an easy book to go through. In the next several days we won't be able to plumb the depths of what we have to learn, but we'll dip in and get started. It is my fervent prayer that you will, as I now have, honestly see God and realize truths about hope that you could never have known were it not for Job and what his testimony shows us about God and life and our own hearts.

*The life of Job offers* some of the most quoted sayings in human history – right up there with Shakespeare but about 3,000 earlier! This book gives us an understanding to the problem of pain and explores some of life's biggest questions: Why does God let bad things happen to good people? Can what feels like random pain have meaning? Can I trust that God is just in this unfair world? Will God finally show up? If so, when? We'll read and study and pray together to answer these and other questions. I believe you'll find new and deeper hope in our Savior through life's most difficult seasons.

**You'll need a couple of things ready in order to effectively read this book:**

- 1) Your Bible – Remember, no paraphrases. Please use a good translation like the New International (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV). The New Living Translation and The Message are both paraphrases so please do not read from them for this day’s study time. Also, you might consider using a basic Bible instead of a study Bible. A study Bible has notes and commentary with each chapter, but for the purpose of our study and growing our own skills, I recommend you get a basic Bible. You can even print the book of Job from [Biblegateway.com](http://Biblegateway.com). Another tip is to get the International Inductive Study Bible. It has lots of margin space to write your own notes but no commentary from other writers. So, you’ll be free to think and reason on your own.
- 2) Your own note paper or the included note taking pages from this study.
- 3) Highlighters or colored pencils (blue, green, orange)
- 4) Hint: I have found it helpful to listen to the Bible with my YouVersion Bible app. I like the ESV audio version the best because his voice is easy to listen to.
  - I have read the book aloud and posted it on the Dwelling Richly podcast. The link is here: [www.DwellingRichly.podbean.com](http://www.DwellingRichly.podbean.com) You can listen along as I read it with you.

*I encourage* you not to be intimidated to take notes while you read. When I’m reading I just jot some thoughts as they occur to me. I’m not trying to connect the dots while I read, make a new theological discovery, or try to come up with an insight no one has ever thought of, just me and the Word and my thoughts. So, as you read, take a few notes and mark them by the verse that the thought or question occurred to you. Also, be mindful as you read to note what that passage says about the character, behavior, approach of:

1. God - mark those in blue
2. Satan – make those in orange
3. Job – mark those in green

Consider what the passage says about:

1. The relationship between man and God
2. Sin and righteousness
3. How to respond to or comfort those in pain

This is a big, beautiful, and bold book of faith, and it is more than we could possibly cover together in two weeks – even in two months or the whole year. Our purpose here is not to plumb the depths of this book and come to a full and complete understanding of its truths. Our purpose is to continue to grow in our understanding of hope and what hope looks like in light of God’s Word. If we are to be women of the Word then let us be true students of its message. Over the next days of our study you’ll need to do just that – study.

I am praying that you will embrace the process and enjoy immersing yourself in Scripture. God has great insights ahead for those who enter in to this study. Let’s honor Him with our time and devotion. Prayerfully begin each day of study – not only for yourself and your understanding, but for your sisters in Christ. Let’s cover one another in love and prayer over the next two weeks. I’m there with you!

You are loved and prayed for,

*Jennifer*

# ~ Lesson Four – Day One ~

## Job chapters 1-3

*I had a few “ah-ha” moments* in college that helped me become a grown-up – two in particular. The first was learning that not everyone has the same point of view in life. The second was that just because something’s in print doesn’t make it true. Simple enough, but we’re not born with that information. We “gots to get edumacated” in those things along the way. Do you relate? We’re all grown-ups here, so I’m making the assumption that you’ve realized by now that not everyone sees the world from the same point of view as you do. You may have simply come to that realization, but for me it came in two distinct moments:

*My first alert* to one of these pretty obvious realities came the morning that I innocently asked my new roommate if I could borrow her roll-on deodorant. It was my freshman year in college when I was living in the dorms at Westmont, a Christian college in the beautiful hills above Santa Barbara. Looking back, I can totally get why she cringed and said, “Um, ew. No.” She was polite, but had a look on her face that made me realize that she must have thought I was kidding to even ask. But I was completely serious. I had grown up with sisters and well, “miyo es tuyo” – What’s mine is yours, right? Oh my, no! A scarf, maybe. Deodorant, no way no how! Lesson learned.

*The next ah-ha moment* on this came with Parent’s Weekend. Even though my parents lived only a couple hours down the coast, I was so happy to have them up for the weekend! I couldn’t wait to hug them, show them my room, introduce them to my professors and show them that their little girl was doing well and loving college life. But, as the weekend approached, I noticed that while I was happily talking about what I’d be doing when my parents came, several of my suite-mates were either dreading the visit or happy that their parents lived too far to come. I was so sad for them. As the semester moved along I heard girls on the hallway payphone yelling and crying on phone calls with their parents. I listened as my new friends shared how hard their relationships were with their families. It was a heart opening season for me as I grew in empathy for the life stories of these other young women. I don’t know how successful my seventeen year-old self was at being empathetic, but when I look back I know those experiences had a lasting impact on my life and have helped me to this day to not only appreciate the blessing and rich heritage I have coming from a god-fearing and loving family but to be aware that many, many do not come from happy childhoods and loving families. As flawed as our family was, my parents truly loved and honored God and that is a treasure to me in ways I’m still discovering.

*The account in Job* calls to mind this same idea, that we all come at life from the perspective we are given. We can gather perspective from the lives of others if we care to notice, but we only get to peek at what’s happening based on what we have seen or can imagine. The story of Job is an opportunity for us to view life as Job experienced it, but more than that, because of the way the account has been recorded, we can gain perspective from the responses of his wife, his friends (three in particular), Satan, and even God. As it relates to hope and our ability to hold on to it, Job is either the most devastating account or the most hope-filled.

*Our study* will only dip into the well of wisdom, understanding, and hope that Job's life story provides, but it will dip deeply. My prayer is that you will see a culminating of our past lessons on hope in the Bible: the essential truth of the resurrection, the reality of the relationship and the challenge of actually wrestling out what hope looks like in our lives.

NOTE: I've divided our first day into a morning and evening session. You can do it all in one sitting, but it's a little longer than most days, so you might want to complete the first half this morning and the second this afternoon. Either way, I'm looking forward to our time studying together!

Are you ready? Let's study!

Please remember two things that are important to Bible study:

- 1) Read from a translation like the NIV, ESV or New King James and not from a paraphrase like The Living Bible, New Living Bible, Message or Voice.)
- 2) Don't use a commentary or the commentary notes in your study Bible. Simply read and just let the Holy Spirit teach you. Be ok to not know the answer or understand fully what's going on there's great learning that comes from the ah-ha moments we get to through the learning process. Don't cheat yourself from that by using someone else's notes and ideas.

**MORNING SESSION:**

1. Read Job chapter 1. What is Job's first recorded statement after his first "test"? Write it here:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. After his second test what statement was written about how Job responded? (1:22 & 2:10b) Write it here:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Read 1 Peter 5:8 – How does this compare to Job 1:7 in regards to Satan – what he can do and where he can go?

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4. Satan is not in hell right now, as some people think. Read Revelation 20:10. What does this say about Satan's rule and final judgment?

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5. From Job 2:13, what did his friends do when they came to see him?

How does this contrast with his wife's statement to him in 2:9?

6. I've been alongside more women than I wish I had as they've been through deep sorrow, pain, loss, and death. It's so hard to know what to say. It never seems to get any easier. What have you found helpful to say to someone going through deep pain? Or, what would you have liked someone to say or not say to you when you were grieving? Write it here:

7. God is referred to as "The Almighty" thirty-one times in Job. This speaks to God's absolute sovereignty in all things. As you read the conversation between God and Satan, think about this: Does God find fault with Job? Write the verse that supports your answer.

Who found fault with Job and why?

**EVENING SESSION:**

8. Is God worthy of our worship? Our loyalty? Our reverence? Or do we just hang on to God because He keeps things going well for us? If God is truly worthy of our worship, we must submit to His full and entire nature and the means by which He operates and allows the world to operate. Read the following and write what they say about how God is at work in our lives and how Satan is permitted to be involved:

**Romans 8:29 -**

**I Corinthians 4:9 –**

**Psalm 8:2** – This is an interesting verse because of its implications. Read it carefully and note why “praise” (NIV) or “strength” (ESV) is coming from the mouths of infants. What does this do to the “foe/enemy and avenger?”

9. In two words, sum up how Job responds at the end of his first round of testing: (Job 1:21)
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Are you under trial or testing, my friend? Are you stunned by the loss you’re going through? My heart aches for you. If I could be with you today I would sit with you and just be still and silent and rest with you and weep with you.

I’ve done that before.

When I got word that my dear friend’s daughter had committed suicide I dropped everything and drove to her home. I laid with her... crumbled and sobbing together on the sofa, we just held on and wept and sighed. I poured silent prayers over her broken heart and body as we wept and trembled together. No words. Not a single one. Just tears and silence. We cried and held on until she was ready to look up and together, eye to eye, heart to heart I looked at her and held her wet face in my hands, “I’m so sorry.” That’s all.

In time we could speak. In time she could breathe, and she did. And she began the asking and the grasping – Why? But this amazing, strong, brave woman reminded me more of the righteousness of Job than anyone I’ve ever known. In her despair she looked up through the shroud of pain and confusion, through the dimness of this earth into the light and life of Heaven and she kept her eyes on her Savior. She has been an example of courage and faith like none I’ve ever known.

Perhaps the tragedies that come through our lives are actually weapons of God to “still the enemy and the avenger” like it says in Psalm 8:2. This side of heaven we will likely never know why God allowed loss and pain to happen.

Read Psalm 34 in closing today. Write three truths from this chapter that you can cling to as you experience affliction or come alongside someone who is suffering.

1)

2)

3)

Take a moment to pray that the Father will help you grow in your discernment. That in light of the perplexing and challenging situations you have to deal with in your life you will increase in your ability to respond in a godly way.

Over the next several days, we will have more opportunities to dig through and reflect upon some of the most difficult situations in Scripture. My prayer for you is that you will find hope and deepen your understanding of God, His will, His heart and what that all means for you personally.

I'm praying for you today, sweet sister. If you are aching through the pain of loss and sadness today; if you need someone to just sit and be still with you or wash you with Words of Scripture; if you need counsel and prayer – please do not hesitate to reach out. My heart is to come alongside the weary and tired, the lost or confused, the worried or even angry...and just be a friend who will listen and pray with no judgments or platitudes. You can call me at 562.755.4964 or email me at [Jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com](mailto:Jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com)

Until we meet again, know that you are loved and prayed for,

*Jennifer*

## ~ Lesson Four – Day Two ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 4-10 part 1 of 3

*What kind of religion do you want?* Swiss psychologist Paul Tournier suggested that, “We are nearly always longing for an easy religion, easy to understand and easy to follow; a religion with no mystery, no insoluble problems, no snags; a religion that would allow us to escape from our miserable human condition; a religion in which contact with God spares us all strife, all uncertainty, all suffering and all doubt; in short, a religion without the cross.” (*Reflections*, Harper & Row, 1976, p 142)

*As we move* into today’s study, let’s agree to be honest about our faith and our religion. If I’m going to live out what I say I believe, I must consider the implications and the cost. Christianity is only easy if we don’t really grapple with the hard questions.

*Knowing I was writing* a study on Hope and going through the book of Job, a Christian friend admitted to me that while she read the Bible cover to cover every year, she skips most of Job. “Just about everything his friends say is so bad I just don’t like to waste my time in it.” I get that. But – and this is what I told her – we all have friends like Job’s in our life, and honestly, we all can be just like them. Job’s friends, while having plenty of foolish things to say, also spoke some good and true things. Much of their problem is rooted not just in inaccurate thinking about God – who He is, how He engages, what He expects, etc. – but in a lack of willingness to face the complexities of this God and how life looks when we don’t actually know what the heck is going on. This is why we must take a look at their comments, read with discernment, and tighten up our theology.

*There. I said it. “Theology.”* A Christian friend (not the same one as above) said, “I don’t need theology. I just love people.” Hmmmmm. Folks, whether you understand it or not, you. Have. A. Theology. You have an understanding about who you think God is and how you think He interacts with us and what you think He expects – if anything – from us.

*You may have never* thought about your faith in terms of having a theology, but you do. However accurate or inaccurate, you have an understanding about who you believe God is. This is your theology. And as we’ll discover the accuracy of your theology makes a big difference in how you live out your religion. As you move through life, you’re going to encounter your own theology and the theology of those around you will be revealed in how they respond to life. You’ll meet an old *Eliphaz* with a graceless theology, a legalistic *Bildad* who quotes old sayings and proverbs at you, or a young *Zophar* type who speaks in merciless dogmatic quips.

*Pat answers, pithy quotes, dogmatic explanations* – We’ve all known or been the person who responds like this. Reading the answers of these “miserable comforters” will tighten up our theology

and tune up our sensitivity to God's truth. When we hear error we'll be better equipped to respond with truth.

Are you ready? Let's study!

1. "The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause."  
~Mark Twain

After pausing (rightly) alongside of their friend, Eliphaz is the first of Job's friends to speak up. He tip-toes into the dialog with a question in verse one, acknowledging Job's position of respect in their circle, and courteously asking to be heard. Eliphaz speaks as the voice of experience. In fact, that might be a good way to remember him: Eliphaz/Experience. Experience, while helpful, is not always used to bless others. In fact, sharing your experience might not only be wasted, but downright annoying. In 4:12-21 Eliphaz tries to strengthen his position with Job by asserting his hair-raising, even creepy vision. What would you do if someone affirmed their position by saying they had a vision?

2. What accurate truths about God did you find in chapters 4-5?

3. Re-read 4:12. From where does Eliphaz get his vision?

4. Does Eliphaz get this vision from God? \_\_\_\_\_ Be careful, my friend, when accepting the words, even powerful words that may have come from someone with a supernatural experience. Just because it's intense doesn't necessarily mean it's from God. Actually, God doesn't sneak up on people and scare them. So, this makes me question the source of this vision.

5. Eliphaz makes an accusation against Job in 4:5-11 which is not only a basic accusation to come from each of his friends and is a common quip even today 3000 or so years after Job! Review these verses and sum up in your own words this accusation:

(Hint: I've actually heard 4:7-8 quoted at someone going through difficulty!)

6. Is it our sin that causes evil in our lives? This is a natural question. We make observations and form our position about life based on what we can see and personally experience. No harm in that – or is there? Are we omniscient (all knowing)? Are we omnipresent (all present

everywhere)? We have a natural inclination to want life to add up. A rude driver swerves recklessly through traffic and a block later you see him pulled over getting a ticket! “Ha! You got what you deserved!” we’re likely to think. But does evil behavior end in punishment, or is perceived punishment the result of evil behavior? Read Psalm 73. What does this say about the wicked and their lot in life?

7. Read John 9:1-3 What does Jesus say about how the world looks at suffering and our assumptions about sin?

8. Eliphaz makes a series of statements, admonitions and assumptions about Job and the state of his heart. Review chapters 4 and 5 and write out any Read 5:17-18 Eliphaz is making an assumption about Job. What is it?

9. Like a bad cop trying to get a confession out of an innocent man, Eliphaz tries to persuade Job to confess and submit to God’s discipline. Re-read Job 1:8. Was Job under God’s discipline?

What did God say of Job? Write it here:

So, no one sinned. This man’s blindness wasn’t the fault of his parents and it wasn’t his fault either. And yet, surely we do “reap what we sow” and “get what we deserve.” God’s Word makes this clear as well. Here’s the challenge: Both are true. Is Job’s situation the norm in light of life’s general experience? No.

Most people do not experience anything near the utter devastation, loss, and personal torture as did Job. This is why he remains - some 3000 years later - a paragon of virtue. Because of his righteousness, his life story is recorded for all to read to this day.

We turn to Job’s account to find answers and insight to life’s most basic questions about God and why bad things happen to good people. Close your time in prayer today, my friend, and ask the Father to give you discernment when you’re facing trials. If you’re in sin, confess. If you’re not, ask for wisdom and the patience and virtue to wait righteously and honor God through it all.

## ~ Lesson Four – Day Three ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 4-10 Part 2 of 3

*In the mid-eighties* my husband Glen worked for Focus on the Family – a Christian organization founded by Dr. James Dobson. Focus had and still has a radio ministry that reaches millions of listeners every year with truths and hope for families and relationships that are founded on biblical principles. Glen worked in the department that would reply to letters received from listeners. Listeners wrote in asking for prayer, counseling, resources or all of the above.

*Glen and all the others* in his department were responsible for replying to the hundreds of letters that would come in, but specifically, to reply in a way that reflected the position of Dr. Dobson and Focus on the Family as a Christian ministry. So, instead of just crafting a letter off the top of their heads, they had a huge database of response letters from which to draw. If Sally from Lincoln, Nebraska wrote in for marriage advice, Glen could turn to a response from Dr. Dobson to offer advice and encouragement to her. If Bill from Seattle wrote in for prayer concerning his prodigal son, Glen and the others in the department had Dr. Dobson's own words from which to draw in writing back. Even if an angry, antagonistic person wrote in with hateful words, they had a loving reply ready to go. The response team used Dr. Dobson's wise words, and they were also able to add their own personalized touches as they responded. It was quite a thing to observe this team in action and know that God was using them in this way to minister to hundreds and thousands of Focus listeners.

*Wouldn't that be great* if we had such a database? When confronted with hardship, relationship challenges, illness, angry accusers we could just look up a wise response and be on our way. Guess what? We do! Job is an amazing testimony to us today of the power of truth and absolute trust in the will and ways of God. His relationship with God is clear in his responses. Was he confounded as to why he was suffering? Yes. Confused? Yes. Questioning? Yes, again. But, while not perfect, his theology was largely sound and this bolstered his resolve to remain firm in his assertions that he had not sinned.

*We are reading* Job's account with the advantage of knowing what was playing out in the heavens. We know about God's agreement with Satan. We know how God feels about Job's virtue. But Job doesn't have this advantage. All he has is what he has come to believe about God. Take careful note as we move into his first response and the responses to come. Job didn't have a notebook of pre-written replies from which to answer his friends, or even his own hurting heart, but he did have his relationship with God and basic knowledge of who God was.

The next chapters begin the first of Job's eight responses to his friends who had started off great by simply sitting in silence with their friend upon the ash heap of misery. They soon decided to speak up because, "who can keep from speaking?" (Eliphaz from 4:1). When confronted by a friend whether in casual conversation or in conflict we all have a natural tendency to defend our position and reason for doing or saying what we've done or said. Job is no exception. Let's study his response and see what we can learn from it.

Are you ready? Let's study!

1. Read Job 6:11-14 Job's making an honest and emotional admission here in these verses. In your best words, sum up what he's admitting:

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2. Read Galatians 6:1 – What should we do when we engage with other Christians? How do we respond if we believe they are in sin?

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How are Job's friends doing so far in this regard?

3. Read Job 6:29-30. What is Job's basic appeal to Eliphaz?

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4. Read Job 7:4. Maybe like Job you've had sleepless nights as your mind is full of worries or your body aches from pain. Compare how he feels the sense of time's passing in 7:4 with how he senses time in 7:6-9.

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5. Read Psalm 39. Write a verse or two that resonates with you.

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6. Read Job 7:11-16. What words do you read here that describe Job's emotional state? List them here. Then from the end of verse 16 write what Job asks God to do.

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## ~ Lesson Four – Day Four ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 4-10 Part 3 of 3

Honesty. Wrestling and being honest with our emotions. Have you ever been accused of being a bad Christian because you complained about your situation? Shared that you were in anguish? I have. I been scolded for speaking my anger and anguish aloud. I've had people toss Bible verses at me like "I can do all things through Christ." or "God works all things for good." or "The joy of the Lord is my strength." In an attempt to quiet me. While these are all the true, inspired words of God, they were all – every single one – egregiously quoted out of context and used to keep me from feeling the depths of my pain. Ephesians 6 describes our faith as a shield with which we can use to extinguish the "flaming arrows of the Evil One" - and guess what? Our faith can be used to protect us against the ignorant ones as well! People who are ignorant of God's Word can use it poorly. This reveals their shoddy theology and their immature faith. Don't be one of them. Wrestling with hard seasons of life is a not a sin to be confessed. Not a grievance anyone should get scolded for.

Great men of God wrestle honestly with grief, loss, anxiety. We relate well with Job and David because we too have felt dumfounded by what is happening around us and the apparent meaninglessness of the troubles. As you read, be encouraged that you are not alone. You are not a bad Christian for expressing your grief! You are a real person with real emotions seeking answers from a real God who – guess what? – really loves you! Don't misunderstand me here, my friend. If you're whining and complaining, God knows your heart and you'll not be blessed if you keep up a whiny attitude and claim, "Hey, Job did it. So, I can too." Let's hold each other up to the truths of God's Word and not hold each other down by misquoting or misusing it.

7. Read Numbers 11:1-4. Um. Yikes. What does this say about God and how He feels about complainers?

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8. Does God do the same to Job? Is there an inconsistency here in the nature of God? Why or why not? If possible, use Scripture to back up your thoughts here.

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9. Read Job 7:17 and compare Job's rhetorical question (the first three words in particular) to David's in Psalm 144:3 and Psalm 8:4-8. Job is actually making a request while David is making a statement. What do you observe?

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10. Read Job 8:1 – How does Bildad’s tone and approach differ from Eliphaz’s?

11. From Bildad’s speech:

- a. What assumptions make about Job’s character?
- b. What advice does he give Job?
- c. What results does he predict will happen?
- d. Putting Bildad’s assumptions about Job aside, are his words of advice and conclusions about how things could play out accurate in the grand scheme of things? Why or why not?

12. Read Job 9:1 What does Job acknowledge about Bildad’s advice?

*As a freshman in high school* I rededicated my life to Christ and was excitedly absorbed in God’s word, devouring writings and teachings of godly men and women of the faith, and flooding my mind and heart with music that spoke truths of God and ministered to my spirit. My favorite musician was a dynamic former druggie who became a follower of Jesus after leaving the Christian Science cult and subsequent paths from Eastern mysticism to spiritual skepticism. His name was Keith Green. His folkish songs styles sang profound truths in an accessible way, and I listened to the words like a parishioner to a preacher’s sermons. Not only was his message fueling lives of believers like mine, but his message was bringing thousands to Jesus. It was an exciting time to follow Christ.

*My sophomore year,* still on fire and passionately living my faith, I volunteered to be a counselor at a Christian camp for girls through the Pioneer Girls Club I was involved with. That season of spiritual fire was fueled by the high of being literally on a mountaintop and enjoying the blessing of being at this great camp. It was a great week and we were all thrilled to share God’s love with the campers He brought up the mountain that summer of 1982. Then we heard the news....

Keith Green had died.

*Disbelief led to horror* at hearing that he and his two children along with nine others in service to God died in a plane crash. Even though I had never personally met Keith Green, his sudden and seemingly senseless death was the first time I had to personally face the questions: Why? What good could possibly come from the death of this godly servant of the Lord? Why on earth would God take such an influential minister of the gospel? It seemed like such a waste to me.

*Like Job, I was questioning* the waste of a good life. Maybe you've observed what seem like empty and wasted experiences and asked the same of God? Do you want an answer? Do you want God to come close and whisper the reasoning in your ear? Do you want God to send you a vision and spell it all out for you? What if God did that? What if, instead of waiting in anguish, we just dialed a number through the miracle of prayer or some other mystical, spiritual method and got a direct answer to our questions of why straight from the horse's mouth as it were.

13. Read Mark 14:3-9. What did the disciples accuse the woman (Mary, Martha's sister) of doing? And what was Jesus' response?

Did Mary "waste" that expensive perfume? No! Long after the aroma of her sacrifice faded we are reading and learning from her testimony. Not only that, but Jesus was immediately blessed by her act of worship. You've heard it said perhaps, "There are no wasted experiences?" It's true. The challenge, my friend, is waiting for the reason and acknowledging that we may never have an explanation – not on this side of heaven and potentially, not ever.

My friend, I get it. When we're honest, we ache to know why. We ache for purpose and meaning. We desperately want to know that what we've suffered through, what we've lost or what lot we've been given, has a meaning, a purpose, an end-game where all is made right and all the pain accounted for and explained to us.

Along with the disciples, we were privy to the explanation of the perceived "waste" in Mary's anointing of Jesus. However, most experiences don't come with explanations. Most of us will never see the bigger picture. Let's not let this bring us to despair. If God wanted to, He could explain it all. But where would we be with the explanation. If God had said to Job, "Hang in there, buddy. This is going to all work out." Job could have just sat there waiting smugly for it all to pass. Instead, Job had to wait for God and wait he did.

14. Read James 5:11. How do we remember Job?

Here's what I can tell you: the very fact that we ache is evidence that there is a salve. The very existence of our pain is proof that there is a healing. The reality of our sense of loss points to a solution. We would have no sense of the darkness if we weren't wired to live in the light. The skeptic who uses senseless pain

and horrific acts of evil to deny that there is a God is actually proving his own argument to be faulty. The existence of evil doesn't mean there couldn't be good God. On what basis do we say this or that is evil or painful or wasted?

The skeptic leads a truly empty life if she continues to refuse to acknowledge that life indeed has meaning. On the contrary the life of the simpleton, unwilling to question her reality or acknowledge the dissonance is empty as well. Their emptiness may not lead away from God, but that person's life, I assert, will be "not worth living." Harsh? Perhaps.

But I challenge you today, my friend to take seriously this story of Job and to be willing to bring your hard questions to God. Think about your life.

You claim the name of Jesus? You profess to trust in Him?

15. Read Philippians 2:12. What does Paul admonish us to do?

This isn't because we could lose our salvation. It's because we have issues to wrestle with and work through, and it's so worth it!

Something to ponder...

*"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, funny-photo-man-falling-rain why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it? A man feels wet when he falls into water, because man is not a water animal: a fish would not feel wet. Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense. Consequently, atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be a word without meaning.*

*C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (1952; Harper Collins: 2001) 38-39.*

As we close today, consider your heart and your willingness to work through hard realities of life in light of who you say you believe in. Pray for wisdom and continue to be a willing and serious student of the Word so that you will "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:5)

Be brave. Be willing to ponder hard questions. Be open to hearing from your own heart and the heart of others searching for truth. I'll be praying specifically for you today, sister, that you will encounter Christ in a truer, realer, more tangible way because you were sincerely seeking for Him even through hard questions. Until we meet again, know that you are loved and prayed for,

*Jennifer*

# ~ Lesson Four - Day Five ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 11-19 Part 1 of 2

*In Greek mythology,* Pandora held a jar that contained all the evils of humanity. After she released the evils, the only one left in the box was “hope.” The myth of Pandora and her jar (not a box, by the way) of evils is an attempt of Greek philosophers to explain the problem of evil. If you’ve ever pondered the why’s of this apparently capriciously evil world, you’re in good company. Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher said, “Hope in reality is the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torments of man.” Were they right? Is hope an evil that is best left in a box? Is hope worthless because it torments the hopeful?

*If there is nothing* worth living and pressing on for, then yes. I say, yes! Hope is worthless at best, and actually evil in the end for the atheist or for the one without a saving faith in God. In our first study from Lesson One you may remember that the entire premise of our hope is built on the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you have not completed that portion of this study, I would urge you to pause here and go back to those first lessons. You’ll want to be grounded in that truth in order to move ahead in today’s studies. Otherwise, carry on, dig in, we are going into some heavy territory! I can’t wait to study this with you today!

Are you ready? Let’s study!

1. Read Job 11 - Zophar must be the youngest of Job’s three friends for he speaks last. When he does, his youth and zeal are not hidden or softened by the courteous words like the ones the elder Eliphaz opened with. He really lets go on Job. Write down three of Zophar’s harshest points:

|

Zophar’s logic is about as faulty as Maria’s from “The Sound of Music” when, swirling with the joy of new love for the handsome Captain, she sings:

*Perhaps I had a wicked childhood  
Perhaps I had a miserable youth  
But somewhere in my wicked, miserable past  
There must have been a moment of truth  
For here you are, standing there, loving me  
Whether or not you should  
So, somewhere in my youth or childhood  
I must have done something good*

Where Maria sees her fortune and concludes she must have, in spite of her “wicked childhood”, earned it somehow, Zophar sees Job’s misfortune and concludes he must have earned it because of his unrighteousness. Does our wickedness or goodness necessarily bring us blessing or hardship? We’ll continue to think through that question. For now, read on...

2. Zophar makes three basic accusations against Job. Write them down here:

- a. Job 11:1-4 (about Job personally)
- b. Job 11:5-12 (about Job's understanding of God)
- c. Job 11:13-20 (about hope in general)

Job's reply is equally strong! Reading the next three chapters I found myself simultaneously cheering and having deep compassion for this boil-covered man, "Go get 'em, Job! You poor thing! Hang in there!"

- 3. Read Job 12-14. Throughout his reply we hear him affirm his views on God and himself. These don't always feel great. But, you gotta love Job's honesty here! Write what Job says in response to Zophar's accusations:
  - a. Job 12:5-6 and Job 13:13-17 (about himself and his intent)
  - b. Job 12:12-25 (about God)
  - c. Job 14:6; 14:13-14 (about the current state of his hope)

## ~ Lesson Four - Day Six ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 11-19 Part 2 of 2

Reading on, Eliphaz chimes in again and then Bildad and Zophar. But pause a minute to read Job's comment in 16:2.

*"I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all."*

HA!!!

Looooooooove it!

I cannot tell you how much I love this verse! Job, oh, Job, you tell it like it is, and your honesty is refreshing!

*We're all just doing the best we can.* I'm an optimist. I believe that most people are trying.

But, oy! The cluelessness of some people. Sometimes we can look past it and give them the benefit of the doubt. Sometimes we can call them out. Sometimes it stings, and we're too hurt to even know how to respond.

*From* 1999-2001 I was the director of the MOPS – Mothers of Preschoolers – program at our church.

With over 100 women in the MOPS group we had an amazing group of leaders to help with all the crafts, small groups, and childcare. It was a wonderful gathering of godly women who, to this day, I still count as my dearest of friends. So hear my heart when I share this next moment:

*At a leadership council meeting* we were going around the table sharing prayer requests.

“My mother has been ill. We’re so tired from caring for her and for our infant and toddlers as well.”

Then from another, “I have to go to the doctor this week to get results of a test.”

But then another said: “I’m pregnant.” One of the table leaders tearfully shared what would normally be happy news of a pregnancy, but she was visibly distraught. Her voice broke as she continued, “I know I should be happy, but I’m so tired raising the two I already have. How will I handle this one?”

*Those sitting next to her* reached out a hand and comforted her. Everyone paused to embrace her sadness and give her a moment to breathe. But I sat there with my own grief. For seven years I had prayed and prayed that God would open my womb and let my husband and I have a child. As the years wore on, test after inconclusive test gave us no hope. We were simply infertile.

Until.

June 14, 1995, after six years of trying, I found out I was pregnant. I will share the details of that day another time, for now, remember this: Proverbs 15:12 says, “Hope deferred make a heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.” That little blue line on that little plastic home pregnancy test was my “longing fulfilled” and to hear the doctor confirm my pregnancy was the end of my deferred hope. I. Was. Pregnant.

*Little did I know* that this would be our one and only pregnancy. In spite of prayers and longings, the Father never opened my womb again and our Jonathan David would be our only child.

Hearing this sweet friend cry and ask for prayer because of a third pregnancy when I was struggling to deal with the sadness of yet but one and the longing for so many more, left my heart parched. I feigned compassion for her that day around our prayer circle. We prayed, and after the meeting I walked to my car with Jonathan in tow and my heart sagging somewhere behind.

*When I called a friend later* that afternoon to share my heart, she couldn’t have known how broken I was, and she surely had no idea that the words she would offer from her sweet, honest heart would sting as much as they did, but in her attempt to comfort me she said, “At least you have one.”  
Stab.

Yes. I do have one child. But, I why should she be mourning that she is having a third child when I just want another so desperately?

Yes, I should be happy, but my hope was for something else. I wanted a good thing. I wanted a “full quiver.” I wanted three or four! Why, after so many years do I get only one and someone else gets three?

“Miserable comforter” she was. But she was offering what she felt she could.

*As we continue through Job,* consider the “comfort” Job’s friend offer. Consider how we’re all just doing our best to offer hope in what seems to be a hopeless world. We’re all attempting to make sense of the events happening to us.

4. Consider Job’s replies in chapters 16-17. What statement of Job’s ring most true to you? I’ll be honest, I found his tone very funny. His words are dripping with impatience and sarcasm. Write the statement(s) here that you think you might have said if you were in his place:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Read Job 16:18-21. Job describes that he relates with God in at least four ways (NIV). Write them here:

How does this compare with who we read about in Revelation 12:10?

God is our \_\_\_\_\_

Satan is our \_\_\_\_\_

6. As you read these chapters note that while Job's friends speak truth, their truth is misplaced or lacks discernment. Remember: Just because a tomato is technically a fruit doesn't mean it belongs in a fruit salad, right? When my friend tried to comfort me she said, "At least you have one." True. But not comforting and not helpful at that moment. List a couple of "truths" cited by one of Job's friends that are misplaced:

7. Read Job 19:25, "I know that my Redeemer live and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. and after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God." We'll be really unpacking this statement when we meet together next time, but for now, write your own thoughts here about what this means to you and any insights or questions you have:

Did Job know of Jesus? Did he realize the depths of the truth he was boldly stating? No, Job was not referring to Jesus – the Jesus you and I know – he knew God well enough to realize that God would be his redeemer. God would make it right.

Melody Green, Keith Green's wife, wrote a beautiful song that Keith made famous. It captures this truth of Jesus as our Redeemer:

*There is a redeemer, Jesus God's own son  
Precious lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One  
When I stand in Glory, I will see His face  
And there I'll serve my King forever  
In that Holy Place, Thank, O my Father  
For giving us Your son, And leaving Your Spirit  
The work on earth is done*

~You can find this song on YouTube by searching, "There is a Redeemer Keith Green"



Job's friends have been attempting to break him down, to get him to come to their version of truth to see what they see "as in a mirror dimly."

This is the same thing the Devil does in our lives and exactly what he was attempting to do when he first approached God. "Slay him! Remove your 'hedge of protection', God, and Job will curse you!"

But no. Job is holding fast. He has lost everything; his life is splayed open; his anguish is obvious. He may have said he wanted to die, but he was not speaking of annihilation. He was speaking of a death that would end his troubles because he knew he would rise again.

8. Read Philippians 1:21 and write it here:

|

Job didn't know that the name of the who would one day stand to be the redeemer of all mankind was Jesus, God's own son. But what Job did know was the essential truth of the resurrection and redemption plan of God.

And like Jesus responding to the Accuser Satan on the mount during his temptation in the wilderness, Job sits in an ash heap and responds with truth – firm and sure – just the same.

In our previous study from Lesson Three we went through various Psalms and how they speak of the hope we have even through wrestling. In Psalm 119 I asked you to consider where your hope could be found and asked that you be prepared to recite with sureness, "I have put my hope in your word!" (Psalm 119:114)

As we conclude today's study here we are again. Finding that it is in the truth of God's word that we find hope. Like Job, you can answer the accusers, doubters, and "miserable comforters" of your life with the truth of God's word...

If.

You.

Know.

The Word!

So, today, before you close your Bible take a moment to ask the Father to reveal to you how you can better use His words and His truth in your life. Memorizing Scripture might not be something you've ever done, or perhaps it's been since grade school and getting a sticker on a memory verse chart in Sunday School since you've memorized God's Word. But, I urge you to do it.

Pick any verse from our study thus far and commit it to memory. Write it out here then meditate on it and bring it with you ready to share and encourage others at our next get together. Call or message one of the women in your study group and share the verse you're working on. Don't have her number handy? No problem! Here's mine!

**562.755.4964**

Text me right after you write your verse down here and let me know which verse you're memorizing! I can't wait to hear from you!

Until then, know that you are loved and prayed for!

*Jennifer*

*~ My Memory Verse ~*

# ~ Lesson Four – Day Seven ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 20-25 Part 1 of 2

Remember that camp song where you'd sing the same silly lyrics over and over but in between choruses you'd sing, "Same song, second verse, robot voice and a little bit worse..." then "third verse, opera voice..." then "fourth verse, baby voice..."

Well, at this point I'm reading Zophar's words but in a robot voice. Zophar chimes in again and is beating the same drum as he did back in chapter eleven. Eliphaz, same words, opera voice ('cuz he's the old guy) and then to sum up, Bildad – in a baby voice – you know, 'cuz he's the whipper snapper of the trio. Read on...

1. Read Job 20:1-3. How would you describe Zophar's tone in his direct retort to Job's closing words from 19:28-29

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Read through chapter 20 and sum up Zophar's position regarding the fate of the wicked:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Read Job 21:7-15. In contrast to the wicked and their ways as described by Zophar, Job has a different take. How does he paint the wicked in these verses?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Read Job 21:16. What does Job say about the wicked and how he sees them?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. While Job speaks of his personal experience he also speaks of many of ours as well. Does God see the righteous? If so, does He care? Write your thoughts here:

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Read Psalm 139:7-10. What does David say about God's presence?

7. Read Psalm 42:1-2 How does David describe what he wants to do in these verses?

8. Read Psalm 42: 9 and 43:2 Now how does David feel toward God?

Is it possible to have one mind and one heart but think and feel two things that seem mutually exclusive? Can we speak in the morning with confidence that God sees and after the day is over question if He really does? Can we be that fickle? That unsure? Take a moment to reflect on that. And write below your thoughts on the matter. When we meet next week for our small group time we may have time to share our thoughts on this – we may not. Either way, if you struggle with this, please know that I will listen to you any time if you'd like to talk about this. Write your thoughts here:

In case you weren't sure, let me assure you...the answer to the questions above is yes. Yes, you can think one thing and say another. Yes, you can feel confident and yet worried. Is this the best position to remain in? Nope. Is it human? Yep.

My friend, if you are a child of God – you've surrendered your life to Him and call Him Lord and Savior – then you are saved. You are redeemed. You have been justified (made right and cleared of the punishment of sin in God's righteous judgment.) And while that is a sure thing and a completed act, you are now in the process of being sanctified. Sanctification is the ongoing process of being made holy.

Let our lives reflect the heart of the father who son was demon possessed:

*Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."  
Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (from Mark 9)*

And Jesus healed the boy. Belief and unbelief – keep your eyes on Jesus to continue to make you holy and increase your belief...Pray and seek God today for this.

## ~ Lesson Four – Day Eight ~

Scripture Focus: Job chapters 20-25 Part 2 of 2

*One crisp autumn day,* I sat in my office with a woman who wanted to meet with me for pastoral counseling. After some warm small-talk, she grew quiet, drew in a deep breath and looking down on her lap into her nervously clasped hands she brought herself to say what she had come in to say, “I don’t think God really sees me.”

*A big tear slowly rolled* down her pale cheek. She sighed and sniffed. Her eyes quivered. Her shoulders slumped. Her words had slipped past her lips from the deepest part of what was clearly a broken and tired heart. I reached and handed her a Kleenex as she continued, grasping the tissue in one hand and massaging the gold cross charm hanging from the end of her necklace in the other. “For fourteen years I’ve prayed for my husband to come to know the Lord. He’s an atheist. He doesn’t care that I go to church, but he really hates the idea of me believing in God. He poisons our children against my faith. He mocks me and I just don’t even know how to respond. After all these years of me praying, reading the Bible, trying to do things the way God would have me – I live a virtuous life – he’s still so far away. I’m patient and kind and don’t nag him...” sniff. . . “I just try to love him. But he is angry and distant about it all and now he’s angry and distant even more with me. I think I’m done. I’m too tired to keep on. If God were there, I think He would have answered me by now. I don’t think He’s there. I think all this – my faith - is like my husband says, ‘a crutch for the weak-minded.’”

*My heart broke for her* in all the pain and hopelessness she was feeling. I didn’t have any easy answers for her. I put my hand on her knee, leaned in and reassured her that God was real and that while she was weary, she could have faith in God still. While she felt invisible to and unheard by God, He did indeed hear and see. I reassured her with truths from God’s word about His mercies that are new every morning, about His timing that may appear slow to us but is perfectly paced on His eternal schedule, about His compassion for the broken-hearted and strength for the weary. We prayed and hugged and she left lifted again to a place of trust in her God and confidence, albeit a little shaky, that God would be there for her even in this very difficult season.

How different Job’s experience would have been had his friends comforted him with sound encouragement from God’s words. And yet, in spite of all the words these miserable comforters used to justify their own self-righteous positions, Job maintains his innocence before God. He might have questioned and gnashed and cried out in confusion at the injustice of his plight, but he is merely stating what appears to him to be obvious.

9. Read Job 23:8-14. What does Job say here about God? Contrast this with David’s experience in Psalm 139:7-10 as you answered above:

|

10. Read Job 23:15-16 and Proverbs 1:7 – How do these verses relate to Job and his statements about God?

|

Is it possible for someone who knows nothing about God to speak of Him as if they do? Can someone speak generalities about God without really knowing Him? If you're unsure, read on. Bildad will clear things up. In the shortest chapter of Job, Bildad in six verses speaks truths about God.

11. Read Job 25 and list three truths Bildad speaks about God:

|

And yet, in the end, God calls out all of Job's friends. They may have spoken factual truths, but they did not do so with the wisdom and justice and compassion or love of God and so, nope. "Close, fellas, but no cigar" as my grandpa would say.

12. Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-3. What does Paul remind us here about the weight of love over everything else? What does this say to you today as you engage with those the Father brings into your life? What about the opportunities you'll have to speak truth into their lives? What can you take away from this lesson?

|

Wisdom without love is \_\_\_\_\_

Truth without love is \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge without love is \_\_\_\_\_

Close your study time today and pray that you would grow in wisdom, truth, knowledge and most of all – love.

# ~ Lesson Four – Day Nine ~

## Review Job chapters 26-33 Part 1 of 2

Surely the greatest writers from Socrates to Shakespeare, Twain to Churchill have been inspired through the ages by Job’s sarcastic wit and humor at some point. The brilliance of Job’s biting sarcasm throughout this book makes me smile every time. In the heaviness, don’t lose sight of what Job didn’t: humor.

Humor, as Mark Twain said, “Genuine humor is replete with wisdom.”

- quoted in Mark Twain and I, Opie Read

1. Read Job 26:6-14 After opening this portion with a soliloquy of sarcastic praise that reveals Job’s contempt for Bildad, if not all his “comforters” – Job speaks beautifully of God. After reading these verses, rewrite v6-14 in your own words:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Chapter 28 contains a beautiful poem where Job uses the analogy of mining precious metals. While there is much debate as to the dating of the book of Job, many place its story before the time of Moses during the era of the patriarchs. Surely the writers to follow found inspiration in the analogies he uses in this chapter. How do the following verses compare to the analogy of chapter 28?

Psalm 19:10

Psalm 73:25

Psalm 21:3

3. Have you ever caught yourself saying something like what Job said in Job 29? Longing for the “good ‘ol days?” I have. Who could blame Job though? Make a list here of how Job saw himself before God allowed Satan to test him. Remember, unlike you and I who might exaggerate the goodness of the days gone by, God was on Job’s side in acknowledging his righteousness. The good ‘ol days really were good.

4. Can you feel Job’s utter weariness in these verses? Read Job 2:10 again. Write it here in BIG BOLD LETTERS:

Compare that with Job 29:2 “Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. My heart really broke for Job here. C.H. Spurgeon said, “Too many people write their blessings in the sand but engrave their sorrows in marble.” Job, of all believers at least remembered that he was blessed. Do you? Or do you have a goldfish memory for blessings and an elephant’s for trials? Take a moment before going on and pray that God would help you remember

5. In sharp contrast to Job 29, Job 30 begins with “...but now they...” Things have changed a reversal of fortune such as has never been heard of since. Contrast 29:20 and 30:11. What metaphor does Job use to visualize how he feels? \_\_\_\_\_
6. In Job 28:28, Job quotes God saying: “The fear of the LORD – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.” Job continues in chapter 31 to not only defend his righteousness before his accusers, but to spell out a list of evils he has shunned. This is Job’s final defense. Chapter 31 concludes with, “The words of Job are ended.” Read through Job 31 and summarize in a word or two the sins that Job is asserting he has never committed. Use the following verse breaks as a guide. I’ve completed the first one for you:

31:1-4 -- *Lust*

31:5-8



31:9-12

31:13-15

31:16-23

31:24-25

31:26-28

31:29-30

31:31-32

31:33-37

31:38-40

At this, Job is done. He has spoken his mind. He has no more to say. Deep sigh for Job and all he has endured.

## ~ Lesson Four - Day Ten ~

Review Job chapters 26-33 Part 2 of 2

7. A new voice! Up till now we've only heard from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Now: Elihu. In Job 32-37 Who's this guy? Where did he come from? The drama continues and we meet young Elihu. Read 32:1-6. Write some basic observations about who Elihu is:

Son of \_\_\_\_\_

From the land of \_\_\_\_\_

From the family of \_\_\_\_\_

Feeling quite \_\_\_\_\_

Because Job is so \_\_\_\_\_

And the other three friends were so \_\_\_\_\_

Age in relation to the others: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Read Job 33:19-24 As you read through Elihu's speech you'll see a difference in his approach. The other three men argued that Job's suffering must have been because God was punishing him **for** his sins. But Elihu takes a different approach. What is he saying about why God allows suffering?

But again, recall that even this explanation in Job's case is not correct. The whole premise for this entire account is that God knows that Job is blameless. Does suffering come from God?

Reckless driver causes an accident...is that from God?

Over-eating gets you sick...is that from God?

9. Read Hebrews 11:25 – What does this say about sin?

It's pleasurable...but it can cause what? \_\_\_\_\_

This is called "natural consequences." Do you think this means that God is actively punishing that person? Why or why not?

10. Read Hebrews 12:1-11 In *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis says, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." What do these verses say about our relationship to God and hardships in our life?

How might you use these verses to encourage a friend dealing with hardship?

11. Read Job 33:23-33 Keep in mind that Elihu has no idea that there is a heavenly council fully aware of the entire situation Job has been allowed to endure. In Job 33:23, what does Elihu suggest could happen on Job's behalf?

12. Read Job 9:33 What did Job ask for here? \_\_\_\_\_  
 And now, Elihu is also suggesting a mediator...an "angel on his side."  
 Who does this remind you of?  
 Not sure? Read on...
13. Read 1 Timothy 2:5-6 (NIV)  
 We have "one God" and one \_\_\_\_\_ between God and men, the  
 man \_\_\_\_\_ who gave himself as a \_\_\_\_\_  
 for all men.

In Lesson Three of this Hope study we reviewed several Psalms. As we close today, re-read Psalm 25:1-3. These verses are a fitting reminder for the heart of Job here in the closing chapters of this account. Elihu is suggesting that Job is being kept from sin by God's punishments and Job's other three friends asserted that Job was being punished **because** of his sins. What none of them knew was that Job truly was blameless. Perhaps David was thinking about Job's account when he wrote the opening to Psalm 25.

14. Read Psalm 25:1-3. Think of these words in light of what Job has been enduring. How do David's words relate to what Job is going through?

\_\_\_\_\_

Four friends.

Four series of speeches.

Four wise, well-spoken, men....not a one had the full picture.

For all their truths and insights, they only had a slice of the story.

As you face your own pain and suffering, your own seasons of "why?" you'll likely hear from well-meaning friends who'll offer their thoughts and advice.

What insights have you gained so far that might help you better think through your own hardships or might help you in supporting a friend through theirs?

Write your thoughts here and be ready to share them with your group when we meet in a few days.

# ~ Lesson Four – Day Eleven ~

## Job chapters 34-42

Finally, God speaks.

Finally, after all this time, after all the suffering and loss and questioning, Job gets his audience with God.

Every religion of the world attempts to answer life's basic questions:

How'd we get here?

Who, if anyone, put us here?

How do we live while we're here?

Why is there suffering here?

Where do we go after here?

But Job really only wants one of these questions answered. Why? Why have I suffered like this?

He knows the answer to the other questions. He has affirmed God and acknowledged how we should live and where we'll go when we die...he just wants that one big question answered. And perhaps you do as well.

I have a few "why's" I'd like answered still too. In 1989, my friend Lisa Bebout was killed in a horrific car accident while en route to Ensenada, Mexico from Westmont College in Santa Barbara. She was part of a missionary outreach team from Westmont that we had served on together over the past three years. We would travel from Santa Barbara and minister with hundreds of other students to the very rural communities sharing the gospel in villages and orphanages in the outskirts of Ensenada as well as reaching people in the inner city. Lisa was devout and vibrant in her faith and committed to serving God. She was two months from graduating when she died. Losing Lisa, a precious friend and godly example to so many, left me gasping in pain and grasping for answers, "Why?!" The senselessness of it all...I still cannot reconcile the loss in my heart of Lisa's death, but I have learned as I've grown in my faith that while the unanswered "why" might hover in my consciousness, it is not the most important question to get answered. As we'll see in these final chapters, the biggest questions to answer don't come from us, they come from God.

1. Read Job 38-41. How many questions does God ask? \_\_\_\_\_
2. These are all rhetorical questions, right? I mean, God surely knows there is not definitive answer a mere man could offer in response. What do you think was God's point in asking all these questions?

3. Read Job 40:3-5. How does Job answer the questions?

4. Does God ever give Job a reason for his suffering? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Job 38:1. Who answers Job? Write the name EXACTLY as you read it in your Bible:

I'm hoping that from our previous studies you recognize this name for God. This is the yod-hey-vav-hey name, "Jehovah" God. It is unique in that you see it spelled out in all capital letters, and except for Job 12:9, it is the ONLY time in the book of Job this name for God is used. The friends all refer to God as Elohim (creator God) or El Shaddai (God Almighty) but Job alone refers to God as the "I Am", the self-existent one – the God of the personal relationship.

I have in this study deliberately avoided delving into the dating and authorship of the book of Job. I'll be addressing this in some detail when we meet together, but for now, you might find it interesting to consider this address for God (LORD) a clue as to where in the timeline of biblical history the book of Job could have been written and when did Job actually live. I'll leave it at that for now.

6. Read Job 42:1-6 (Job's final recorded words) What key character trait does Job demonstrate in his words here?

7. Read 1 Peter 5:6 and James 4:10 How do these verses speak of Job's ultimate response to God?

8. Read James 5:11. What does James say of Job and of the character also of God?

9. Write Job 42:2 here:

This is not only Job looking back and acknowledging truths of what God can do because of what he's seen already, but this is a statement for himself and for us today about what God can do for all time: no plan of God's can be thwarted. It's best that we be on God's side then, yes?

10. Read Job 42:7-9. What does God have to say to Job's friends?

11. Read Job 42:10 and Matthew 5:44 What precedes Job's final prosperity?  
Does that seem odd to you? Why or why not?

12. Read Job 42:11-16. Verse eleven says (NIV) "They comforted and consoled him ..." Can you just imagine the table conversation that night and for months, even years to come? We don't know how much his brothers and sisters and "everyone who had known him before" were aware of the details of the drama, the conversations and speeches. I can only imagine what Job might have said! List below all the blessings and restorations that Job received from the LORD and everyone:

And so, the book of Job concludes. Obviously, Job didn't write this book, since his death is noted at the end by the author (Moses?). There are many unanswered questions from this book – who wrote it? When was it written? When did Job live? There's even to this day disagreements amongst biblical scholars about whole sections, phrases and words in this account. But the unanswered questions are trivial in light of the biggest question of all: "How then shall I live?"

Were you expecting me to suggest that the biggest question to answer is "Why does God allow suffering?" or "Why is there evil in this world?" or [fill in your question]?

If you recall from the final chapters, even God Himself offers no firm answer to these kinds of questions and Job himself is humble enough to be satisfied without the final answer. He never is even told about the challenge of Satan and the agreement in the heavens with God or that God had stood up for him and defended his righteousness. Job is never privy to any of these behind-the-scenes dealings, but you and I are.

If Job, with his limited awareness of the cosmic drama surrounding his life and no clear answer to the probing question of why, could die at peace, then how much more can you and I with the full story be content to simply say, "I know that you can do all things: no plan of yours can be thwarted." And ultimately be willing to so totally submit to the Father that we can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him" for "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth." This is the most important answer to the most essential question.

My prayer for you today, is that you will find peace and confidence in fully putting all your hope in Him.

I look forward to seeing you soon. Until then, know that you are loved and prayed for,

*Jennifer*

## A Story of Hope from Courtney Ceballos



*I'd like to share with you ladies a testimony of hope. I know it seems oxymoron to mention hope with our status as believers but it's a truth we need to be encouraged in. Hebrews 6:15 says "this hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil..."*

*Our hope is embodied in Christ himself who has entered into God's presence in the heavenly most holy place on our behalf.*

*Isn't that an encouraging verse from the bible to let us know that we have Christ as an intercessor on our behalf.*

*Romans 8:34 says Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*

*How powerful that the LORD of LORDS & King of Kings loves us so much that He takes our prayers to God.*

*When I got married I was "saved" but backslidden so I didn't wait for the man God wanted for me. I chose the man who said he loved me, who said he was a Christian & that he'd take care of me. Well that was good enough for me, so I picked the man, planned, the wedding & all the while left God out of it. So you can imagine after the fun day of the wedding the reality check of actual marriage. I soon came to realize I started this marriage without God but I couldn't be in it without Him. My prayers of hope for my marriage isn't please change my husband but help me LORD to love & respect my husband the way that is pleasing to you. There's a beautiful song by Natalie Grant that says "I try to take life back right out of the hands of the King of the world, how could I make you so small when you're the one who holds it all. When did I forget that you've always been the king of the world" Did you forget? Do you have prayers that need answering? what we have so powerfully within us is a life of prayer.*

*Do you have a troubled marriage? wayward children? self control issues?*

*We all have our struggles.*

*My prayers are for my marriage because it's hard work & I find that is the ministry I struggle in. Psalm 22:5 says "to You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed". Do you realize you have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses says Hebrews 4:15? That we through Jesus can get through our trials. Don't think pleasing God is perfection cuz it's not. We all have struggles. What he desires is obedience.*



You are loved  
**AND**  
prayed for.